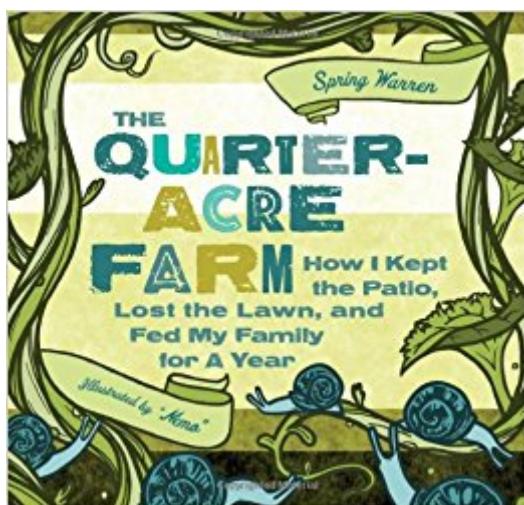


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# The Quarter-Acre Farm: How I Kept The Patio, Lost The Lawn, And Fed My Family For A Year



## Synopsis

When Spring Warren told her husband and two teenage boys that she wanted to grow 75 percent of all the food they consumed for one year; and that she wanted to do it in their yard; they told her she was crazy. She did it anyway. *The Quarter-Acre Farm* is Warren's account of deciding; despite all resistance; to take control of her family's food choices, get her hands dirty, and create a garden in her suburban yard. It's a story of bugs, worms, rot, and failure; of learning, replanting, harvesting, and eating. The road is long and riddled with mistakes, but by the end of her yearlong experiment, Warren's sons and husband have become her biggest fans; in fact, they're even eager to help harvest (and eat) the beautiful bounty she brings in. Full of tips and recipes to help anyone interested in growing and preparing at least a small part of their diet at home, *The Quarter-Acre Farm* is a warm, witty tale about family, food, and the incredible gratification that accompanies self-sufficiency.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Finally, a book about local eating that doesn't make me feel bad about myself! Warren entirely avoids the genre's stinky mire of holier than thou preaching, and instead tells the honest and informative story of her edible experiment. The recipes following each chapter are tasty, and the illustrations are stunningly beautiful." Novella Carpenter, author of *Farm City: The Education of an Urban Farmer*; Reading Spring Warren's book is like chatting with a good friend over coffee as she relates her garden adventures (some hilarious) and muses on the meaning of almost

everything. This is an instructive, useful book, based on sound garden experience and in-depth research, and it's an intimate tale of one woman's relationship to food and family. "Georgeanne Brennan, author of *Potager: Fresh Garden Cooking in the French Style* and *A Pig in Provence*;" Spring Warren's memoir of a year feeding her family from her suburban garden resonates with the American dream of self-sufficiency; what she comes to know of growing food is impressive, the recipes superb; and it is beautifully written, enlightening, and very funny. "John Lescroart, New York Times best-selling author" "A wise and tender-hearted book that will teach you as much about life as it will about gardening." "Thrity Umrigar, best-selling author of *The Space Between Us* and *The Weight of Heaven*

Spring Warren is the author of the novel *Turpentine*, a bronze medalist for the 2007 ForeWord Magazine Book of the Year Award and a San Francisco Chronicle Notable Book of 2007. Warren comes from Wyoming, where her family has lived since 1870. A true gal of the American West, she grew up in Casper and at a ranch in the Black Hills that her parents still own. She's been a schoolteacher (children bring cow testicles to school for show and tell in Wyoming), raised pigs, killed rattlesnakes, hunted, and fished. When she moved toward writing, she was a working as a short order cook, selling worms and maple bars to campers, and teaching swimming lessons in the shadow of Devil's Tower, and was living in a trailer where she washed clothes in a wringer washer and dried them by the heat of the wood stove. Warren now lives in Davis, California, an educational hub of the agricultural world, in the Central Valley, the world's most productive agricultural region.

I thoroughly enjoyed *The Quarter-Acre Farm*. I originally looked for it on because I saw a comment by the author, Spring Warren, on a Facebook post about the White House garden, where she mentioned her new book. Once I found it and saw several positive reviews, I decided to get my own copy. I had a horrible time deciding between buying the Kindle edition so I could have it RIGHT AWAY or the print version so I could see the illustrations other reviewers mentioned. I finally sprang for the print version and am glad to have done so - Spring Warren's storytelling is wonderful, but Jesse Pruet's pictures add a whole new level of fun and intrigue to the book. As for my review title - Barbara Kingsolver's *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* is the standard I hold a lot of "homesteading" books to. That book taught me SO much about so many subjects that it's an excellent yardstick for me. Kingsolver's book is highly educational, makes me think, makes me feel involved due to her tone, and offers recipes that are approachable and "doable" for folks like me who aren't going to

become pro chefs any time soon. Warren's format in *The Quarter-Acre Farm* is similar to the format of Kingsolver's book; a chapter full of personal stories and interesting insights and research, along with a recipe to top off each chapter. How did Warren bump Kingsolver from my top 3? With her humor. While Kingsolver shares some fantastic stories, Warren's tone is more approachable and less professorial. Even her chapter titles bring fun to the read: "Pole Dancing" (which gave me a chuckle but then taught me very important things via her pumpkin trellis experiment) - "Magical Fruit" (yes, that would be the beans, of course!) - all sorts of things made me chuckle, smirk, and in some cases try to roar with laughter as quietly as possible so I wouldn't wake my sleeping children. Spring Warren definitely shares plenty of insights from her own trials and triumphs in the garden that will be useful to me in my own garden; many authors in the gardening and homesteading arena do this. What she did that very few do is make everything educational AND fun to read. I highly recommend *The Quarter-Acre Farm* to anyone interested in gardening, whether on a hobby scale or for a full-scale local eating/self-sufficiency effort. I will be rereading this book and plan to have my children read it as one of our more non-traditional texts in our homeschool as well. I'm preparing now for the giggles from my 'tween daughter when we go over snail reproduction. (Trust me, it's worth a giggle - and who knew snails were that strong, too?) I suspect the story of her sister's hair dye venture will bring forth plenty of knowing nods from my kids as it did from me. The reviews on the back of the book say it all. One author described reading this book as being like sitting down for a chat with a friend over coffee; I would thoroughly agree, but I expect I'd be asked to weed a bit as well. (Which made me laugh all the harder to myself, because I think Warren would convince me quite easily to do so!) I'm not certain if the Kindle edition of this book includes the illustrations; I plan to find out in the near future by ordering it. If you want to be able to see those, I would highly recommend the print copy. But if you don't care about the pictures as much as just having a phenomenal read, get either version. Hopefully you'll learn as much and laugh as much as I did, and walk away hoping for more from Spring Warren and her garden.

I'm a beginning home gardener but grew up with farming grandparents, and though this book was a simple, easy read, it really couldn't hold my interest nor teach me much more about gardening that I didn't already know. I applaud the author's efforts to feed herself almost solely from her garden, but some of this didn't ring true for me. It takes a lot of time to get even a small farm going, and I wonder if she had a lot of help or spent a ton of money to get her quarter-acre farm fully operational and productional in the first season. (Which is a record!) These specifics are not mentioned. I don't mind entertainment in the gardening book arena, and this book seems to lean more heavily toward wit

and entertainment than sharing actual knowledge, which is fine. However, I consumed Marni Jameson's book, "The House Always Wins," which is written in a similar prose and storyline as Spring Warren's book (albeit Marni's book is her home improvement story). However, not only is Marni's book laugh-out-loud hilarious, but she also manages to squeeze in a ton of how-to information that really helps a homeowner. Though I did learn some interesting things in Mrs. Warren's book, I felt The Quarter-Acre Farm was a little skimpy in both areas. Again, I hope Mrs. Warren continues her gardening journey and I applaud her success, but her book left me hungry for a little more substance.

More on an armchair gardening book. Not really a how-to book, but you'll be able to glean some practical information for yourself, if you carefully read it to take notes, or mark pages, so it's not easy to use as a guide. Even the recipes are full of narrative and self-indulgence. Too late to return - sorry I bought it. I'll regift it.

It is an interesting book that shows how much food production can be done on a quarter acre of land. Spring Warren had to get very creative, if not obsessive, about creating decent menus for her family to eat. I would not want to have to eat her recipes day in and day out. I want more variety in my life. I read the recipes which were interesting but this is not a real recipe book. I would have liked the book better if she focused more on long-term food production on a quarter acre rather than just doing it for a year. Some sections were quite interesting - like the section on snails. It's a good book, but not a great one on the subject.

This is the story of one woman who decides to rip up her lawn and grow her own food even though she's the only member of the family who wants to do this. As a gardener I laughed at the over abundance of zucchini she got tired of. The book didn't grab me from the start, I'm not sure why because the writing and flow was good. It was one of those books you keep going back to yet it's easy to put down and come back to later. I'm glad I read this and would recommend this to anyone who wants to start a garden or loves gardening. You get to follow along through the ups and downs and in the end find out what her family thought of her experiment.

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