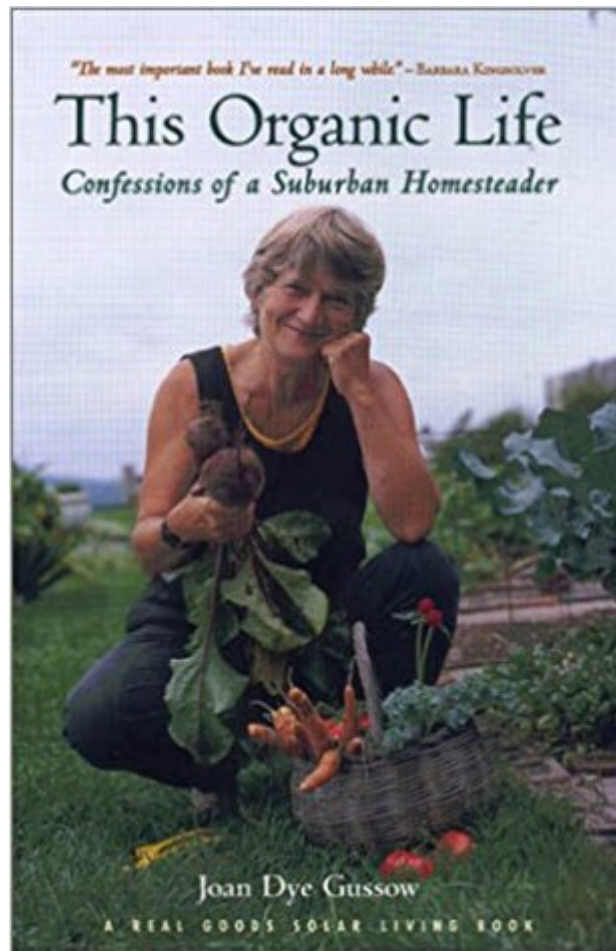




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# **This Organic Life: Confessions Of A Suburban Homesteader**



## Synopsis

Joan Dye Gussow is an extraordinarily ordinary woman. She lives in a home not unlike the average home in a neighborhood that is, more or less, typically suburban. What sets her apart from the rest of us is that she thinks more deeply--and in more eloquent detail--about food. In sharing her ponderings, she sets a delightful example for those of us who seek the healthiest, most pleasurable lifestyle within an environment determined to propel us in the opposite direction. Joan is a suburbanite with a green thumb, with a feisty, defiant spirit and a relentlessly positive outlook. At the heart of *This Organic Life* is the premise that locally grown food eaten in season makes sense economically, ecologically, and gastronomically. Transporting produce to New York from California--not to mention Central and South America, Australia, or Europe--consumes more energy in transit than it yields in calories. (It costs 435 fossil fuel calories to fly a 5-calorie strawberry from California to New York.) Add in the deleterious effects of agribusiness, such as the endless cycle of pesticide, herbicide, and chemical fertilizers; the loss of topsoil from erosion of over-tilled croplands; depleted aquifers and soil salinization from over-irrigation; and the arguments in favor of "this organic life" become overwhelmingly convincing. Joan's story is funny and fiery as she points out the absurdities we have unthinkingly come to accept. You won't find an electric can opener in this woman's house. In fact, you probably won't find many cans, as Joan has discovered ways to nourish herself, literally and spiritually, from her own backyard. If you are looking for a tale of courage and independence in a setting that is entirely familiar, read her story.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Two decades ago, when nutritionist Gussow was giving fiery speeches about the importance of eating locally and seasonally, she realized that it was time to put her convictions into practice. In this combination memoir, polemic, and gardening manual, she discusses the joys and challenges of growing organic produce in her own New York garden. Initially, Gussow had planned to write about her misadventures in buying a 150-year-old house on a Hudson River floodplain. That story was incorporated into this book, but many of the boring remodeling details should have been omitted. Interesting points include a description of establishing her new garden, tips on making compost and on growing fruits and vegetables successfully in a northern climate, and various recipes using the garden bounty. Throughout, Gussow stresses the need to live responsibly "in a society where thoughtless consumption is the norm." Her constant reminders that industrial agriculture produces tasteless, environmentally destructive food well intentioned though they may be start sounding like a litany after a while. Yet, despite its flaws and self-righteous tone, this work offers encouragement to urban and suburban gardeners who want to grow at least some of their own produce. A suitable addition to gardening collections in public libraries. Ilse Heidmann, San Marcos, TX Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Library Journal-Two decades ago, when nutritionist Gussow was giving fiery speeches about the importance of eating locally and seasonally, she realized that it was time to put her convictions into practice. In this combination memoir, polemic, and gardening manual, she discusses the joys and challenges of growing organic produce in her own New York garden. Initially, Gussow had planned to write about her misadventures in buying a 150-year-old house on a Hudson River floodplain. That story was incorporated into this book, but many of the boring remodeling details should have been omitted. Interesting points include a description of establishing her new garden, tips on making compost and on growing fruits and vegetables successfully in a northern climate, and various recipes using the garden bounty. Throughout, Gussow stresses the need to live responsibly "in a society where thoughtless consumption is the norm." Her constant reminders that industrial agriculture produces tasteless, environmentally destructive food well intentioned though they may be start sounding like a litany after a while. Yet, despite its flaws and self-righteous tone, this work offers encouragement to urban and suburban gardeners who want to grow at least some of their own produce. A suitable addition to gardening collections in public libraries. (Ilse Heidmann, San Marcos, TX)"I love the 'sustainable hedonism' term that has been applied to Joan. Her homespun storytelling serves as an inspiration to all of us that we can be good stewards of ourselves and the

earth, all while having a splendid time!"--Janet Luhrs, author of *The Simple Living Guide*, and *Simple Loving* and editor and publisher of *Simple Living: The Journal of Simplicity*"It's very rare to be moved by a gardening book, but *"This Organic Life"* has an uncommon depth of feeling."--New York Times Book Review"Reading *This Organic Life* could be dangerous... It might make us excited about doing things differently..."--The Times Argus"highly readable... helps us understand the true cost of food, and the joys and challenges of growing and eating it."--HopeDance Magazine --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Absolutely loved this. I thoroughly enjoyed this book and loaned it to a friend, who also loved it. Interesting combination of memoir and gardening ideas and lifestyle; by a very talented writer.

This book was one I checked out at the library and then needed to own. Yes she really does meander at times, but I as a woman understand her thought process of jumping from thing to thing at times. The wealth of knowledge and the story on her life with her husband and garden are priceless. The industrial food machine doesn't want you to know how they are treating the animals, the conditions they are kept in or what they are being given to treat the e coli that is a symptom of the conditions they are forced to live in. You need to buy local, find a farm or source of meat where the animals have been fed grass. Your vegetables should be as local and in season as you can get them and organic at the least. The run off from these industrial operations is poisoning our vegetables, and people are dying. People are dying because a few large corporations do not care, and are not regulated by the government because they are now serving on the very boards that are meant to regulate them. It needs to change, it changes with you and what you spend your money on. ( It took me 10 more months after writing this original review to go vegetarian. The animals being fed grass isn't good enough at this point in the big scheme of things, at least for me, and where I am at. One step at a time. )

Interesting story of a long time organic gardner. It is NOT A HOW TO ORGANIC GARDENING BOOK. It is more a memoir of a dedicated home farmer and her life story of keeping her garden and the two homes at which she kept them. She is dedicated to eating locally. She makes her opinions forcefully as well as supplying the evidence to support them. To someone who grows what she eats, it is great that she addresses what to do about "killing pests", 4 legged and otherwise. Takes away some of the guilt we experience when we try to let everything live.

I just love this book. This is my second time reading it. Joan Gussow does such an excellent job of drawing the reader into her world. I feel like I'm in her garden and experiences the triumphs and failures she endure with the plants she grows for her own sustenance. I don't have a garden right now and so I can vicariously enjoy the details that she describes so well of her journey. She and her husband move from one house and garden to another house that they make their home and "Forever" garden. She is so real and down to earth and a gardening localvore neird before it was popular to be one. A great and easy read with lots of tidbits of information to learn from her mistakes.

I was hoping for more of a how-I-did-it book for a suburban homesteader. It is, instead, an interesting memoir about how one woman and her husband moved from one home to another and the trials and tribulations of transforming a piece of land with a less-than-habitable home to a liveable one with a nice garden.

The author was mentioned by another as a kind of heroine of sustainable living, and he mentioned she's a PhD in nutrition so I ordered a Kindle sample. I liked the book so much that I then bought both print AND Kindle. It has wonderful advice, great stories, and what sound like really good recipes. Go on and get you one!

As a former student of Joan Gussow, I have had the pleasure of visiting the garden that she so eloquently describes. After reading her book, it has further "energized" me to get my act together & get things ready for a garden next spring (which means I must get the beds & soil ready now). Joan is an inspirational person & it is so nice that more people will have the ability to learn from her through her book. It will make you think twice before you buy imported produce. Support your local farmers!

Down-to-earth, poignant, and humorous book that any gardener or even non-gardener would enjoy. Information given can be applied to any gardening endeavors, regardless of the location of the garden.

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