

Peach Cobbler

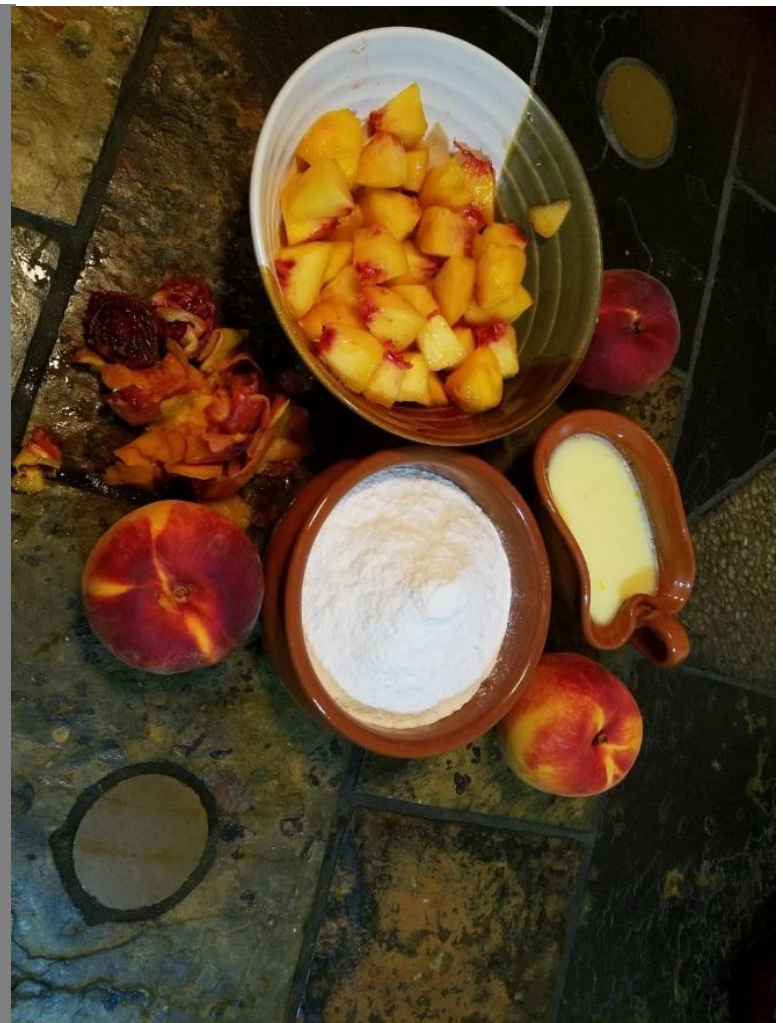


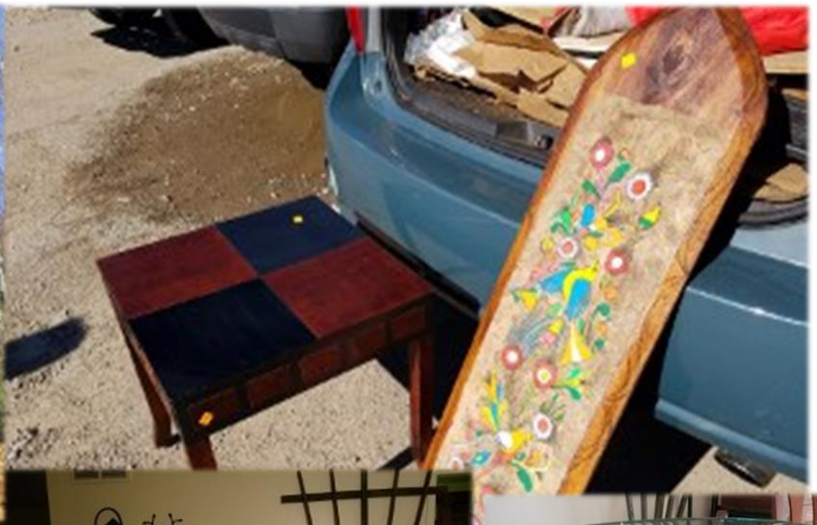
cottage@peachcobbler.com



SPRING 2020

- Throwback Titbits
- Construction Corner
- Horticultural Haven
- Repair and Recovery
- Errors and Omissions
- Volunteers and Visitors
- Secondhand Scrounging
- Tracking with Tech

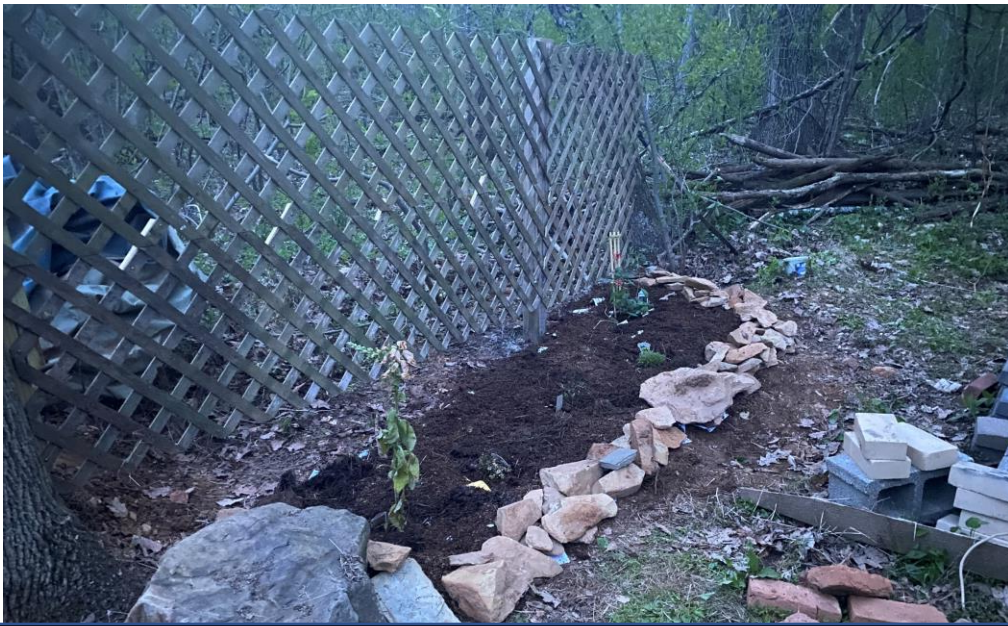




Throwback Titbits

The big event that occurred over Fall of 2017 was that our well got dug. It took a while to get the machinery up to the drilling area due to the high precipitation that season; but we did finally strike water at 200ft with a flow of well over 10 gallons per minute. The well installers also cleared a nice path up to the well. We could not do much work on the land; but attended our first Rooting DC event and discovered the joys of secondhand scrounging in Architectural Salvage stores like Community Forklift and Second Chance. We purchased a lot of items through Craigslist including garden trellises, a 300-gallon water tank, a glass sink, furniture items for the test house and 1500 feet of drip lines from a vineyard. However our biggest purchase was a secondhand Chevy pickup truck. We realized that renting a truck on an as-needed basis would not work and decided to buy one instead. It was wrapped in bright green color, part of the reason for the great price. Towards the beginning of spring we even had a couple of ex-colleagues (Matt and Tony) visit us on the land.





Construction Corner

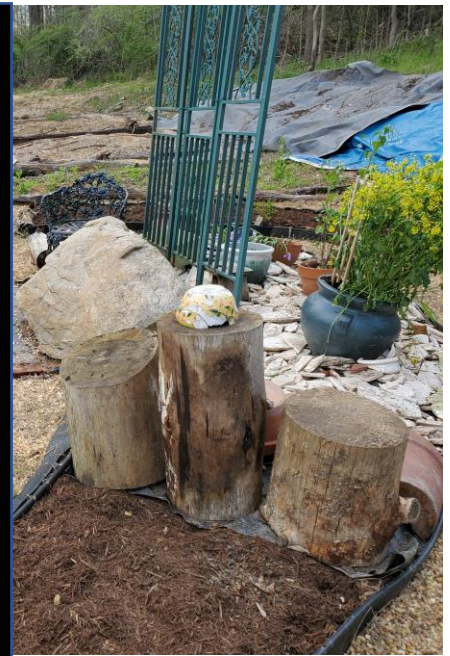
Early Fall is not the best time for construction. Also, Girija spent most of the past 2 months recovering from a procedure to fix her torn tendon in her foot. Meanwhile, Alan worked on increasing the height of the storage shed that we had built. He also added shelves inside the shed and moved the tools into the shed. He also managed to move the generator for the well inside the shed, close to the door. Later in the season we did a good amount of work in the bathtub area and put up wooden mesh fences and a long bamboo fence along with planting some vines meant to attract hummingbirds and butterflies. We also built up the bond beam over the long cob wall and reinforced some loose verticals along the straw bale wall.





Horticultural Haven

The mild winter allowed us to have a head start on fixing up the garden. We did not complete fixing all of the garden paths and beds; but the hope is to fix up different sections every year. Besides using paper and cardboard to prevent weed growth, we also put down thick weed cloth and broken white tiles in the bed outside the arbor. We spruced up the arbor area with logs, tiles, and potted plants. We also bought some saplings and seeds to plant in the bathtub area that would attract hummingbirds – primarily trumpet vines. Since the 'Map of India' section of the garden was collecting water, we decided to convert that into a little rock garden and planted some moss and stone plants. We mounted small clay pots on the fence using steel hose clamps. The fungal spray on the fruit trees seems to have done them a lot of good. The 5 trail paths have finally been marked – both with colored luminescent tape along the trail and signs on broken slates at the end points. Whenever we could, we laid out fallen logs along either side of the trail to serve as guideposts. Alan also hacked arrow markings into fallen wooden logs in the more wooded trail at the back of the land which has a lot of undergrowth. As you can see, the trails are color coded – red, pink, orange, yellow and green.



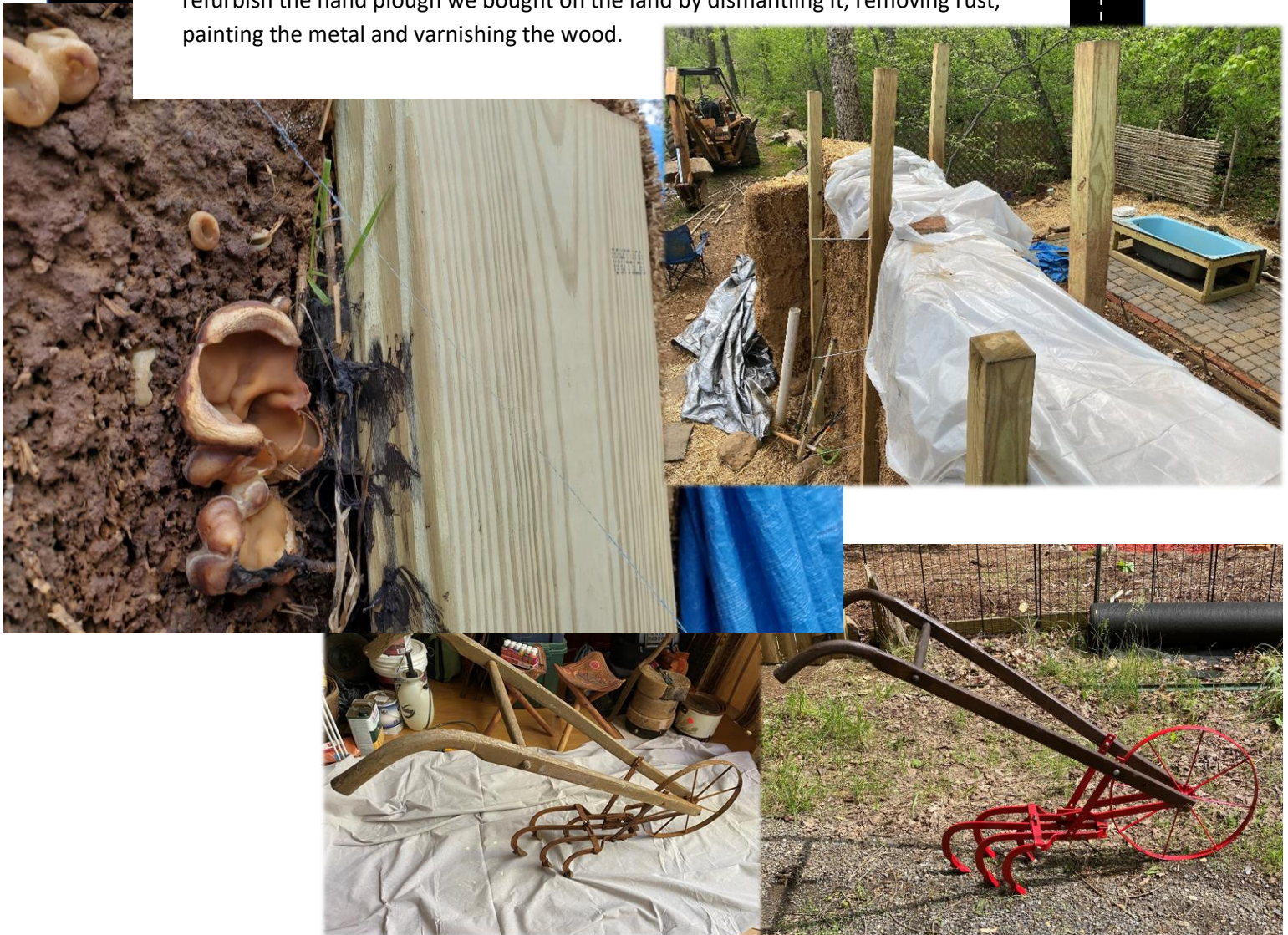
Horticultural Haven cont....





Repair and Recovery

Despite all the effort we put in to cover the strawbale wall with tarps, we had a couple of spots at the top of the wall with water damage. In order to prevent water ingress from the top, we have now covered the top of the bale wall with sheets of plastic that are weighed down using stone. This is then covered with the tarps like before. As you can see in one of the photos, the moisture caused fungi to start growing in a couple of places. Parts of these bales had to be removed. We ended up removing one layer of bales since it was too tall compared to the bond beam we had laid out over the cob wall. A couple of fruit trees had cankers growing and we had to completely pull out one pear tree and burn it. Alan also managed to refurbish the hand plough we bought on the land by dismantling it, removing rust, painting the metal and varnishing the wood.





Errors and Omissions

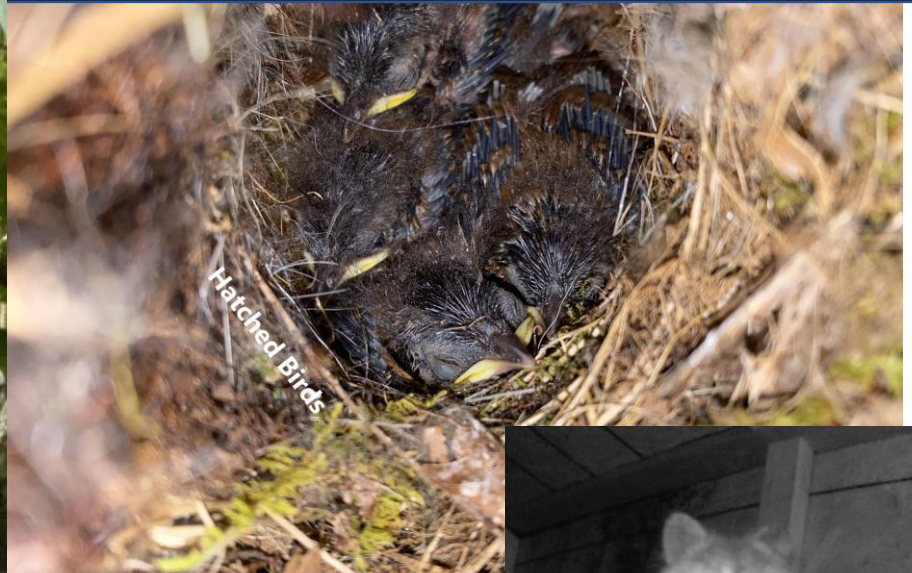
We have learnt a lot about weed suppression by looking at online articles. The hay that we used as mulch seems to have had seeds that have taken root, ending up covering all the garden paths. We had to do a lot of manual weeding to get rid of it. This time around we are sticking to wood mulch for the beds and paths. We also covered the paths with cardboard before putting down red mulch. For the vegetable beds themselves we put down newspaper followed by mulch. We also put down salt in the paved brick circle and arbor area since we will never be growing anything there. We hope this helps us control the weed growth in future. An example before and after photo of the arbor area is attached.





Volunteers and Visitors

The social isolation requirements for the COVID-19 lockdown meant that we could not have any friends or family visiting the land. However this did not prevent other wild animals from visiting. The fact that we are now using a trail camera means that we can capture some of the stealth visitors. Since we started putting out food in the chicken coop for the black cat we had seen earlier, we had left the camera there a few times. We saw two other cats and a couple of racoons come and eat from the food bowl. Much to our delight a bird built a nest in our new storage shed and laid 4 eggs which hatched and have successfully flown the nest as fledglings. We also accidentally broke a blue egg whilst clearing weeds around a fruit tree. The bird feeder filled with sugar water has started attracting a lot of hummingbirds both male and female.





Secondhand Scrounging

Due to the lockdown, we are not visiting people to purchase items through Craigslist. We did pick up a free load of horse manure since the transaction did not involve any personal interaction. An ex-colleague who was moving to a new house gave us a beautiful Chimera along with hand tools and a few power tools. The electric tools included a tiller, blower, trimmer and edger. We might end up purchasing a second low power generator to use these tools around the garden. They would also be useful at the construction site for operating power tools like our circular saw in future. We also got a beautiful chalkboard for the test house kitchen from NextDoor.





Tracking with Tech

We have now purchased a slightly more expensive version of the first trail camera we purchased and have used it to track the bird in the storage shed, the racoons and cats in the coop and deer that visited our veggie garden. We set it up in one of our trails; but it could not catch any activity – we are hoping to eventually capture deer, cayote and bear in the trails. Since the racoons are nocturnal creatures, we have now put down a timed dog feeder (Girija used it for her old dog) in the coop to serve out the cat food. We have timed it to dispense food in the morning with the hope that the cat will have access to it and not the racoon. A separate page has been created on our website with links to photos and videos captured using the trail camera.

We are back on track with regular tweets and you can follow us @peachcobblair.

Expenses for the project are being tracked using an Excel spreadsheet. We are using a separate bank account into which both Alan and Girija contribute equal amounts periodically. A separate credit card is used for most transactions unless it is a cash purchase through Craigslist/Nextdoor. We are using a free version of WaveApps as our accounting software, which is setup with multiple expense accounts like agriculture, oil/gas etc. which line up with the pages in the Excel spreadsheet. A link to the spreadsheet is provided under “FAQs→How much will all this cost”.

