

A Guide to Becoming Self-Sufficient on 1/4 Acre



Self-Sufficient Homesteading Might Be All You Want. But Why?

Have you ever dreamt of getting a larger house, growing your own food, and raising a livestock? This would mean fresh food, access to nutritious and delicious produce such as eggs and milk and no worries about the harmful chemicals in your diet.

If truth be told, each one of us has at one time or the other, fascinated about it. From calm and serene, undisturbed life, to focusing more on the natural life, the homesteading life seems to appeal to all.

There might be a few things which can prove to be obstacles such as taking care of full-time jobs and commitments before taking the plunge.

In addition, careful planning has to be done. An amateur homesteader might waste money starting off with too little or too much capital. It can also mean over-evaluating your skills and thinking you can start eating from the cultivation of your farm, pretty soon. Careful planning is needed because you can't quit your day-jobs and immediately start moving in a homestead to raise the goats.

A self-sufficient homestead can be an interesting and challenging project. You'll learn to create your own power for the farm as well as cultivate produce in a limited space. Rearing animals is another essential ingredient of a self-sufficient homestead.

Other essential skills to be self-sufficient are knitting, crocheting, quilting, hunting, foraging, and a lot more.

Homesteading means pursuing your passion and picking up daunting and inspiring tasks.

While earlier 'homesteading' may have meant going out into the wilderness and making a living, modern homesteaders still have an active life in a modern society and enjoy the natural perks of their little homestead farm. You can live in a small town and stay well-connected to others by means of internet and modern amenities. It can truly be the best of both worlds.

Not sure how to become self-sufficient on ¼ acre and earn a living at the same time?

Luckily, it's highly possible.

This guide has been written to help you understand and implement the basics of small-space farming, enjoying every bit of it, and generating an income from it.

Thrilled to know how?

Flip the pages!

CHAPTER 1: THE LAND

Buying Land for Homestead



Whenever you are buying land for the homestead, keep in mind the do's and don'ts and beware of everything.

Imagine that you are scanning through the classified real estate ads. Suddenly, your eyes fall on the estate of your dreams. The listing proclaims that the real estate is of forty acres. With south-facing slopes and lowest down payment, the real estate seems to be good to be true.

While you visit the estate, the agents persuade on making the payment for the estate, citing the reason that it won't be available for purchase, for long.

You have nearly made up your mind for the payment but the phrase 'Let the buyer beware' springs to mind.

Surely, making as big an investment as in a property for homestead, you need to exercise a bit of caution.

Here are some things you need to consider before settling for a property for homestead:

Mineral rights

The United States is one country which gives the citizens to own minerals. In many countries of the world, citizens only have surface rights and mineral rights are possessed by the government.

Having mineral rights is important

Otherwise, it may be that a person has hundreds of acres of gardens and orchards. The real estate agent may also ensure a person that holding mineral rights is not so important. Even if it is not now, the impending threat of having land mined by the government for minerals, is not impossible!

It may be that in future, some minerals are discovered on your homestead and the government starts mining them bulldozing your property. You won't have any legal recourse then and might only get the compensation for the cost of materials.

Emergency

No matter how attractive the property, be mindful of the distance between your homestead and the medical facility. This is one of the important things to consider when buying land.

You need to realize that big tools and equipment are used on a homestead and they can lead to any accidents, even if the person is an experienced one.

In such a case, there should be a hospital or doctor within a distance deemed reasonable by you.

Access



The next thing on your list is the ease of access to nearby facilities and cities or towns.

It should be remote enough to provide you the serenity or comfort of a quiet life. However, it should also be easy to access for most of the people.

There is one thing to be mindful of that the internet has brought many things within reach. Many things can be ordered at home. However, the remoteness of the place will also take its toll on the social life of the children. If it is in too remote a place, it might not have access to the broadband internet or even a phone line. In this case, you'll need to pay for getting power to run them.

In addition, see that who will be maintaining the road leading to your property. As some certain homestead farmers learn to their shock, not every property is near the country-maintained roads.

In the case of such a predicament, the property owners themselves will have to look after them. In winter days, there will be no one but the homesteading farmer who will have to clear the road when it's snowing. He/she will have to look after things such as gravel, grading, and maintenance cost. Also, if you need to go to the town, you may have to ride in your snowmobile.

Also, see it from the perspective how it looks like in the spring. In the summer, the road to the property might look good and packed, but it may be impossible to drive on it in spring.

Areas having lots of snow or having cold climate face many challenging issues. These issues mostly take place in early spring. This time period is referred to by the locals as 'mud season' or 'spring break up.'

When the ground freezes very quickly and rapidly, it can become very soft when all the surrounding things are thawing out. Because of this, you'll need to know what kind of access you'll have the year round.

Fencing



Is the property fenced or not? This is an important aspect as fences are helpful in marking the boundaries of your property.

If the property is not fenced, you'll need to factor in the price. Barbed wire and t-posts can be a bit on the costly side. To cut down costs further, you may do it on your own but it will need some skills and know-how.

Restrictions

Does the property you're buying come with any restrictions? It's better to find out all about them before purchasing the property. You may later learn that it has many government restrictions and you may not be able to build your own home on the property. This will be a wastage of your money and time.

Other restrictions which you may come across can be on the use of temporary housing or mobile homes. This can be difficult for those homesteaders who might prefer to have a temporary housing before constructing a permanent house.

Are you legally allowed to use it for agricultural purposes, or does the property only allow dwelling?

In the case of conservation restriction, you'll need to see if you're allowed to clear land, cut trees, or build a dam.

Will you be allowed to raise any farm animals? In addition, will the homesteader have the permission to construct an outhouse or should he/she put a septic system in the home?

You'll also need to be mindful and see if the property has been earmarked for expropriation. It may be that there are plans for a highway to be built through the property which is why its current owners are selling it. While it sounds far-fetched, it is possible.

Slopes

The slope of the road matters too.

A north slope or east slope can be equally problematic for the homesteaders. This is because an east slope gets little sunlight, during winters. This can mean that in the case of snow, the road will be very cold, icy, and covered in snow. The road then will also be one of the last to thaw out.

South or west sloping access roads are generally preferred.

Water



Undeniably, this is a necessity and one without which a homestead can't properly function. Water will be needed for agricultural activities as well as raising any livestock. You'll also need it for carrying out daily chores.

A homesteader may have access to two types of water which can be:

- surface water (pond, creek, spring)
- Underground

Surface water is ideal for homesteaders as it's easy to access. It takes lesser energy to procure surface water.

Springs have their own advantages as they can be enclosed at the source in order to stop any contamination.

In case, these water sources are not available, count in the cost of procuring water.

A solution to the lack of water can be to place a tank in the ground and store water in it.

No matter the source of water, the more important question is, how much water do you have? It's also best to have sufficient water in stock so you'll have it even during the driest times of the year. Summer months can see many creeks and springs dry up.

You can ask the locals to get an idea. Ask them about the water source in the area as well as the water available on the property you're getting. You can also obtain a copy of the well log which is usually filed when a well is drilled.

Land Characteristics

What type of land is it?

If you're purchasing it for raising livestock, then the land will need to be different for pasture for cows. An orchard will require a different type of land. Poultry can be based on any type of soil.

For agriculture, the best type of soil is sandy loam. This contains three of the basic ingredients namely, sand, clay, and silt.

To find out whether these three ingredients are on the sandier side or more on the clay side, you could do a 'squeeze test.'

This requires you to dig some 8 to 10 inches of sand and squeeze. If it is too sandy, it will not be able to retain its shape.

In addition to this, you'll need to consider the drainage, natural wind breaks, and local wildlife. Flooding potential also holds a significant place.

Taxes

In the scenic views and serene environment, taxes may be one of the last things on the mind of a homesteader. Nonetheless, they can't be ignored and are significant.

You'll need to find out the required amount due in taxes every year. This is needed because you may later discover that the land costs a fortune in taxes.