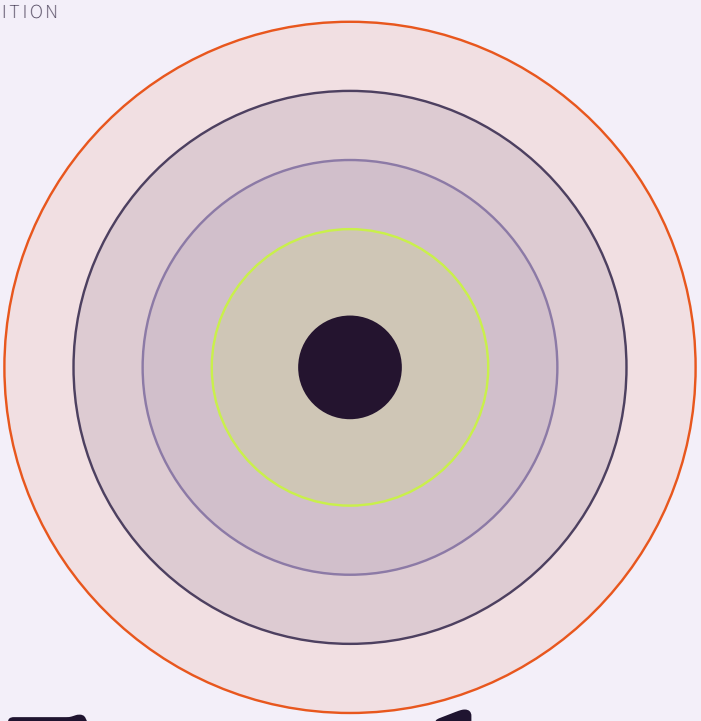


The Encyclopedia of Country Living: The Original Manual for Living Off the Land & Doing It Yourself

A reading of the book by Carla Emery (1974)

1. ACTION BOOK

CONTENTS

Inside this edition

The book in a minute 4

The takeaways 5

Your action book 7

Before you go 8

PART TWO · THE ACTION BOOK

The setup checklist 10

Bake one loaf from scratch each week 11

Walk the garden for ten minutes a day 12

Put up one batch while it is in season 13

ABOUT THIS EDITION

This is HourLife's reading of The Encyclopedia of Country Living: The Original Manual for Living Off the Land & Doing It Yourself, in our own words. It is not a substitute for the book.

BEFORE YOU START 01

The book in a minute

Carla Emery grew up on a Montana sheep ranch and raised seven children on a farm near Kendrick, Idaho. In 1970 she advertised a book of old-fashioned country know-how and then mailed it to subscribers chapter by chapter, printed on a mimeograph, finishing the first edition in 1974. She kept revising it for more than thirty years, and it is still in print in a 50th anniversary edition from Sasquatch Books. The book moves from plants to animals: soil and seeds, grains, garden vegetables, herbs, fruit trees and firewood, food preservation, then poultry, milk animals, bees, rabbits, sheep and pigs, with recipes all the way through. Emery writes like a neighbour at the kitchen table rather than an expert, mixing instructions with stories from her own garden, kitchen and family.

Below are the 9 ideas HourLife readers vote up most, each in our words with a note on what it asks of you, and then the steps that put them to work.

WHAT READERS KEEP

The takeaways

1

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Country living is not one big skill but hundreds of small ones, learned a season at a time.

The book is huge because the life is: grain, goats, jam, soap, firewood, bees. Emery never expects anyone to do it all at once. Treat it as a reference you open when the season hands you a new job, not a course you have to finish.

2

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Grow what your household will actually eat, then grow a little more to put by.

A bed full of vegetables nobody cooks is just weeding. Garden Vegetables is the longest chapter in the book, and it reads best from the kitchen backwards: start with the meals you make, then choose the plants.

3

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Preserving is how a glut in August becomes dinner in February.

Emery covers canning, drying, freezing and root cellars, and the right one depends on what you grow and where you can store it. Home canning advice has changed over the decades, so check processing times against a current tested guide.

4

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

An animal is a daily promise, not a weekend project.

Before the chapters on poultry, milk animals, bees and pigs, the book has a whole chapter on the basics: choosing stock, barns, fences and what happens at the end. Pick animals for the time you really have, twice a day, in every kind of weather.

5

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Grain is not only for big farms; a small patch can still end up as bread.

The Grasses, Grains & Canes chapter treats wheat, corn, barley, amaranth and their cousins at household scale, from growing them to cooking with them. Even if you never sow a row of wheat, knowing how it is grown and milled changes how you bake.

6

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Use the whole of what you raise, so each part feeds another.

The chapters keep handing work to each other. Fat becomes soap, hides can be tanned, kitchen scraps feed the hens and manure feeds the garden. The loop is the point: less waste, and less to buy.

7

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Write it down, because memory makes a poor almanac.

The book itself began as a mimeographed recipe book and was revised edition after edition for more than thirty years. Keep your own record of sowing dates, yields and mistakes, and it becomes the most useful book on your shelf.

8

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

A setback on the land is information for next year, not proof you chose wrong.

Emery's own path had hard turns. In 1976 a flood and mudslide wrecked the school of country living she had opened in Idaho, and she kept revising the book for decades afterwards. A lost crop or a bad winter tells you what to change.

9

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

You do not need a farm to take up an old skill.

Baking bread, drying herbs and putting up one jar of jam all work in a city flat. The book even has an appendix on reading antique cookbooks. Take the skills that fit your life now and leave the rest on the shelf for later.

PUT IT TO WORK

Your action book

Do the setup steps once, then keep the habits going. The setup changes your week; the habits keep it changed after the first good one.

The download puts this whole reading and a printable action book in one PDF: the setup checklist, then a page of real calendar days for each habit, starting on the day you choose.

SET UP ONCE

- [ ] Find your frost dates
- [ ] Choose one project for this year
- [ ] Start a homestead notebook
- [ ] Check the rules before you buy animals
- [ ] Get a current canning guide

KEEP UP DAILY

- ◯ Bake one loaf from scratch each week
- ◯ Walk the garden for ten minutes a day
- ◯ Put up one batch while it is in season

30 days · Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026

Part two, after the reading, prints each of these as a page to fill in by hand.

THE LAST WORD

Before you go

Pick one step from the action book and do it today. An idea from a book starts to count once it changes what one ordinary day looks like.

PART TWO

The action book

Change the setup once, then keep it up. 5 setup actions to do once, and 3 habits to mark each day for 30 days.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026

Print it, or write on it in any PDF app.

SET UP ONCE

The setup checklist

Each of these is done once. Do one a day, and check it off when it is done.

- [ ] SETUP 1

Find your frost dates

Look up the average last spring frost and first autumn frost for where you live, from a local extension service or weather records.

Write both on the inside cover of a notebook.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 2

Choose one project for this year

Pick one new skill, such as a vegetable bed, three hens or a shelf of preserves.

Write the others on a list for later years.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 3

Start a homestead notebook

Set up a ring binder with a page for each month and a tab for each project.

Record what you plant, when, and what happens.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 4

Check the rules before you buy animals

Read your local rules on poultry, bees and livestock, including limits on roosters and distances from neighbours.

Then talk to the neighbours.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 5

Get a current canning guide

Before you can anything, get a recent tested guide, such as the USDA's or the National Center for Home Food Preservation's, and use its processing times.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

DAILY HABIT 1 OF 3

Bake one loaf from scratch each week

Choose one plain recipe and bake it every week for a month.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
						1
2	3	4	5	6 ○	7 ○	8 ○
9 ○	10 ○	11 ○	12 ○	13 ○	14 ○	15 ○
16 ○	17 ○	18 ○	19 ○	20 ○	21 ○	22 ○
23 ○	24 ○	25 ○	26 ○	27 ○	28 ○	29 ○
30 ○						

December 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
	1 ○	2 ○	3 ○	4 ○	5 ○	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 2 OF 3

Walk the garden for ten minutes a day

Go out with a cup of coffee and look.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
						1
2	3	4	5	6 ○	7 ○	8 ○
9 ○	10 ○	11 ○	12 ○	13 ○	14 ○	15 ○
16 ○	17 ○	18 ○	19 ○	20 ○	21 ○	22 ○
23 ○	24 ○	25 ○	26 ○	27 ○	28 ○	29 ○
30 ○						

December 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
	1 ○	2 ○	3 ○	4 ○	5 ○	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 3 OF 3

Put up one batch while it is in season

When something is cheap and plentiful, preserve one batch that week: a jar of jam, a tray of dried herbs or a bag of frozen beans.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
						1
2	3	4	5	6 ○	7 ○	8 ○
9 ○	10 ○	11 ○	12 ○	13 ○	14 ○	15 ○
16 ○	17 ○	18 ○	19 ○	20 ○	21 ○	22 ○
23 ○	24 ○	25 ○	26 ○	27 ○	28 ○	29 ○
30 ○						

December 2026

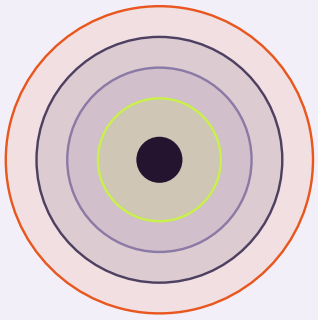
MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
	1 ○	2 ○	3 ○	4 ○	5 ○	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP



Learn one skill this season, write down what happened, and let next year's notebook start where this one ends.

HOURLIFE NOTE AFTER CARLA EMERY

Read it online, and vote on the takeaways: hourlife.com/books/the-encyclopedia-of-country-living

Made November 6, 2026 · HourLife, hourlife.com

The Encyclopedia of Country Living: The Original Manual for Living Off the Land & Doing It Yourself · The reader's edition