The New Neighbor Who Has 100 feet

Well year two of #ProjectMartian has been a learning experience to be sure! My original idea was to test if we could send greens and browns to Mars to recreate compost and soil on Mars (we can). But I neglected one key plot point; Life will stow away. To cut corners this busy year I added horse manure (The Manure that Infected Mars) and I forgot that there would be organisms that would come with that UNPROCESSED material. Well, I only needed to learn that lesson ONCE. I have been turning the soil, allowing the chickens and ducks into the Martian Garden beds (They love centipedes and pill bugs) and using a flamethrower occasionally – think Ripley from "Aliens". I say to those centipedes near my tender shoots – "Get away from her you bi…" well, you get the idea. But the real secret – ironically is the diatomaceous earth (Martian Regolith) is the best answer. So I will be applying DE and Borax and making life very hard for these Earth-based composters. Stay tuned!

[/media-credit] Compost centipedes deposited from horse manure. But they LOVE the moist environment in a martian bed.

I let the chickens eat more than I destroyed with fire. Full Disclosure. I will post the Chicken and Duck #FeedingFrenzy next, I promise.

Spring 2021 at Mezzacello

Well it’s nearly Easter in this year after COVID19. My enclosed sustainable ecosystem is readying itself to come back to life. I decided this cold sunny day was the perfect day to record Mezzacello.

This is right before it goes through it’s next big expansion. So here is a little slideshow from April 1, 2021. Let me know if you have any questions. There is some bit of trivia or an active experiment going on in everyone of these photos.

Spring 2021 and the Brunerform

An update on the gardens this spring and a candid little confessional and observation on Spring, Beauty, Life, and Fashion.

The Vision for the Formal Gardens

Six years ago around this time we started mapping out the "rooms" of the formal gardens. We cut out the sod and recycled as much of the dirt as we could and turned the rest into sod rolls for our neighbors. We had 60 rolls of sod. Then I aerated the beds well, and in a few select spots dug the swales which I filled with old wood and dead branches. Then I covered everything over with dirt, compost, weed fabric and mulch. We had nothing to put in the beds. By sheer luck, a neighbor posted on social media they had some boxwoods they wanted to re-home. But we knew we needed something more. So Rick went about making cuttings of the Annabelle hydrangeas we found in the neighborhood. He stuck them right in the ground and let me use my systems to nourish them. This was our first hedgerow.

It's fun to think about those tiny boxwoods – all 36 of them! Rick put them to use to frame the formal garden rooms. They were all donated from a neighbor who had inherited them from the previous owners of their house – who happen to now live down the street from us. So we made three truckload deliveries and Rick planted every last one of them. It was hard work. They are so much bigger and more vigorous now. The systems for developing compost, the manure, the additives, and the water swales really make a big difference!

> ***It's funny to see Mezzacello this way. Today the flowers and hedgerows frame everything so well. And the 36 Hornbeams are all almost 4 meters tall now and a solid wall of green.***

I did almost all of the labor here. Rick helps, but it is my job to fertilize and plan systems. This one I cannot take credit for. Rick is the genius behind this plan. I thought he

was being over generous in his proportions and scale. I was wrong. This garden has matured beautifully. I can only imagine what our neighbors must have thought of the “racetracks in the grass” that was our yard in 2015. Rick had a vision. And it is today one of my favorite places in the world.

Update

Three Years of the Wrong Message

In 2017 we decided we were going to create a website for Mezzacello. We had a list of things that we wanted it do. What we did not have was a clue, or content. I had the site built. I was advised at the time that what I really needed was content. That was only partially true. The site needed blogposts, yes. But what I also needed was to think about what people thought when I sent them to the website. I thought it was enough that we were capturing and curating content in the blogs. Now I see that I have been asking people to curate my message from blogs. That is a lot to ask of anyone. It all came to a head when I submitted for a grant last summer. The committee came back to me and said, You have a nice website, but there is no there there. Arrrgghhh! Gertrude Stein was right! I was Oakland in 1910! This was my website last week.

So I culled together the data that lives in my heart and in my mind. But that doesn’t get to people through OSMOSIS. So I had to grow my site. It was a group effort though. Several of my friends came through and told me what I need to do. It was an effort – an ecosystem of experience and insight. My website is

a garden. The blogs were the seeds. I added time and energy and I harvested the best of the crop to show you at market, and keep Rick and I sane. Now when I send people to the website, there will be a there there, Madam Stein.

[media-credit id=3 align="alignleft" width="150"]  [/media-credit]

Come on! If you are going to have a champion it might as well be Gertrude. She had ZERO F@<#s to give WAY BACK in 1933. She had wisdom, insight and she KNEW who she was and did not pretend. I do not pretend to be a farmer. I farm in three dimensions; the earth, the culture, and in the innovation. It's good enough for me, and I believe it is the way forward. If you choose not to see this, well, you'll find there will be no there there as well. This is the new now.

Welcome to Mezzacello 2.0

Jim and Rick and the Beanstalk

Here at Mezzacello one of the greatest gifts besides the food, the joy, the work, and the peace, is getting to watch life survive and thrive for its own merit. We forget in a mass produced world that life is in fact a miracle. I do not discount miracles. It's a big word and a strong word and loaded with culture subtext, but sometimes life is about

little miracles.

Case in point when I was burning down weeds and dying plants at the end of #ProjectMartian. I had some extra green bean vines (ironically named “Kentucky Wonder”), so I threw those in the Brazier as well. Beans being what they are – vines – dropped six of their beans outside of the Brazier. They did not want to perish, nor did they want to become potash for the rest of the plants here at Mezzacello. They wanted to be green beans. So these are my magic beans. It may seem silly or frivolous, but I’m going to plant them in the spring. Who knows? Maybe there will be a great big beanstalk that grows up into the clouds and I will find a goose that lays golden eggs?

Probably not, because science rules here and there’s not enough biomass to grow something that large, I don’t have a permit to grow something that tall, I could never get enough power for the lighting system it would require, I am afraid of heights, I know my farm is an airport flight path and I KNOW what is in the clouds and in lower Earth orbit. But a boy can dream! And that is one of the other miracles of life; we dream. Dream on people it’s good for the soul.

The Evolution of the House

This house has a history! 160+ years of history is not getting fixed in just one season. But we love her and she loves us back.

The Foodist: Roasted Zucchini Chips

These crunchy and tasty chips are a delight in winter and summer! Easy to make, and easier to eat! And 100% vegetarian.

Compost on Mars

This summer I have been focused on #ProjectMartian and accelerating and amending compost to recreate the growing conditions of a forest floor. The key to this system has been the balanced approach of biomass (green and brown) ethanol, caffeine, sucrose, ammonia, and water. All in sufficient volume to encourage microbial life and accelerate the decomposition. The first four test cases I perfected a series of steps and processes. Each time, getting better and perfecting the technology.

The system I have been perfecting this summer is the #BioLEGO Project. A 1,000L bioreactor that is filled with 20L of biomass and 20L of water and accelerant. After every other application later a layer of 20L of manure and 20L of shredded paper seeded with ammonia, bone meal, blood meal, calcium, phosphorus and trace amounts of acid, magnesium, and a little bit more glucose. Then start with the next layer. 10 times. Then close the bioreactor and let it oxidize for 20 days. Start the next bioreactor.

Three 1,000L bioreactors will create 12 1 cubic meter garden beds. These will grow enough diverse food to support two adult humans, 8 poultry, 4 rabbits and with sufficient access to water and land, 50 fish, two goats or two cows. This is not

taking into account all the microbial, bacterial, fungal, insect, and small predators life requires in a balanced ecosystem.

Living on Mars will require converting the living, dead, and inert materials into life again. Understanding that web of life will be critical! We take it for granted here – as most of this is hidden to us. It is a critical requirement on this planet as well, but the systems are more sophisticated and nuanced. The Earth's ecosystems are far more developed and interdependent. This is NOT all we will need to support life on Mars, but it is a good start. What else will we need? A lot. But this is a manageable start.

Ecosystems Exist in 3D, X, Y, and Z

A philosophical treatise on the deep relationship between the soil below, the ground and the air above. Told by a tree