

# Spring is Sprung: It's a Trap!

A quick fun May The Fourth Blogpost about Ohio's quirky weather patterns so far this month.

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## Spring 2023 Is In Bloom

On Easter weekend, we managed to put together a few lovely bouquets of flowers from the emerging gardens at Mezzacello. Enjoy!

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## Notes on Infrastructure and Ponds

A photo reminds me what to do to properly winterize the pond's bio filter system. The pond is due for a refit this spring.

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## The Enclosed Sustainable

# Ecosystems of Mezzacello

What is a truly enclosed, self-sustaining ecosystem? It requires that the energy and materials going in are accounted for and amplified coming out.

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## Producing Food and Eating as an Art

One of the benefits of Mezzacello is the the unique differences between Jim and I. The marriage of different perspectives on some of the things we already value. We find ourselves delving into aspects of things that we otherwise might not have. Jim enjoys the animal husbandry science, and culture of the farm, whereas I'm more about the herbs, fresh food and formal garden beauty. He enjoys producing food, but not so much the art of cooking. He likes to say "I produce food, Rick creates art with it." I could say I cook, but I rely on his farming for produce.

His French background has gotten me into French cooking, which I might have been a little intimidated about ...until breaking it down and learning a few techniques. I cut my teeth on Jacques Pepin and his Fast Food My Way, working through his books in a kind of Julia & Julie way.

It makes it a lot easier to be creative and effective when you have access to fresh, seasonal food. We raise chickens, ducks and rabbits. All three are essential to French cuisine. So we have adjusted the vegetables and herbs to augment this French menu. I have modified the garden to meet the needs of some German cuisine as well.

Every lesson learned is a new opportunity to create tasty and fresh food with a minimum of processed food from the middle of a modern grocery store. Julia was a strong proponent of preserving food and using fresh ingredients in unique ways. Jaques Pepin continues that legacy with his “Fast Food My Way” series. I am also a fan of Jamie Oliver’s terrific new cook book, “5 Ingredients”. Both of these honor the spirit of an urban garden and the spirit of Julia. We’d love for you to share some of your recipes! Tag #Mezzacello in your posts! as Julia, Jacques and Jamie are all fond of saying, Basta! and Bon Appetite!

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## **The “Keeping Up With The Jones’” Effect**

When you are doing something you’ve never done before you are doing something new. It’s easy to think that you are exactly where you need to be. What I mean when I say “Keeping Up With The Jones’” I don’t mean judge yourself by other’s standards; I mean knock yourself out of complacency. When you are an artist, you need to be inspired. Inspiration and not envy is the prime motivator of this post. I know my systems will sustain me. But I can afford to ramp up the beauty and grace a little bit.

I love exposing my mission at Mezzacello to the public. The Mezzacello mission is to Grow, Sustain, Maintain, and Explain. All of these require that I do the work and when the work is done I need to reflect (I am human after all). I recently finished a major expansion of Mezzacello. I am proud of that work. Now I have been inspired by other beautiful gardens that I have seen. I have a new benchmark, but the same mission.

Min this instance keeping up with the Jones' will make my mission even more powerful. One of my ecosystems is the garden of the soul (the formal gardens). The gorgeous garden of my new friends Seamus Patrick and Jeff Allan Marion inspired me to think how I could bring more beauty and sustainability to that ecosystem. I can't commit to this extravagant of a garden, but what style! Now I'll Spend the time in self reflection and come up with a strategy, a budget, a goal, and a timeline. Grow, sustain, maintain, explain.

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## Spring and the Art of Yard Maintenance

April is here. The grubs and pests are waking up, but the plants aren't yet sending up their tender shoots. It's the perfect time to let the ducks and chickens forage.

Both species of birds are the perfect gardeners friend if used correctly. It's about balance. Ducks will eat anything with tender shoots. Chickens will turn any garden into a barren wasteland. The art of incorporating livestock into an urban garden is understanding their natures and knowing when their nature will be useful or destructive.

The formal gardens need their soil turned. Everything needs a little bit of loving early on. Later in April I will plant a "chicken garden" that the little dinosaurs can obliterate to their hearts content. But today, they are welcome soil turners. Just like nature intended.



Poultry in the formal gardens



The great grub finders