



BATHROOMS
&
DIGNITY

Designed and illustrated by Alicia Robinson-Welsh
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NOT  UR FARM



CONTENTS

Introduction	5
FARMWORKER STORIES PART I	
Chloe Lazarus	10
Helen R	12
Goatboy Lindo	14
Becky	16
Amy S	17
Plant toilet paper, designed by Richella Acosta	18
FARMWORKER STORIES Part II	
Frances Zuckerbrod	20
More Than a Porta Potty: A Farmworker's Fight for Dignity by Fritz Barbee	23
Helen Galioto	25
WATCH YOUR STEP by Jacquelyn Michelle	28
Jamie Nadler	30
Jessie Leigh	32
Kelsey	36
M	38
Why Dignity Matters: a Not Our Farm Manifesto	40
BATHROOMS & FOOD SAFETY	
Bathrooms & Food Safety Implications, by Billy Mitchell	44
Labor Movement - Cynthia Flores	45
Bathroom and Handwash Best Practices, by Billy Mitchell	46
A Farmowner Testimonial from Footprint Farm	48
COMPOST TOILETS	49
Compost Toilets 101	51
Humanure and food safety considerations	52
Compost toilet blueprint / build plan - Ash Abeyta	59
Some favorite compost toilets	60
Bathroom Dignity: A Cost-Benefit Analysis, Kathryn Kavanagh, NFU.....	73
Funding Resources that could cover bathrooms/handwashing	90
How to build a portable handwashing station for the farm	92
Reclaiming Urine as Fertilizer, Rich Earth Institute	94
Excretory Justice, excerpts from Sarah Nahar, M.Div.....	98
	100

**PLEASE USE TOILETS
PROVIDED IN THE FIELD**



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**POR FAVOR, USE LOS BAÑOS
DISPONIBLES EN EL CAMPO**

This sign, often used in food safety trainings, conveys an obvious message to workers. But if more farms actually provided toilets in the field like they should and made workers feel comfortable enough to take the breaks they need for their bodies' necessary functions, it wouldn't be so offensive and out of touch.

INTRODUCTION

Dear Reader,

If you know me or have talked to me about farming for more than five minutes, you know that bathroom issues on farms is the hill that I choose to die on. In the fifteen or so years that I've been farming, it is the singular biggest issue I have faced. Within the Not Our Farm community, lack of/unsafe bathrooms access is a widespread problem, too, one that we regularly receive stories about, and one that deeply intersects with other issues on farms like safety, assault, sexism and capitalist productivity/ableist culture.

I once worked on a farm that had several fields that were far apart from each other. You had to drive to them, and the only porta potty was at our home base where we washed produce. The porta potty was put in at the beginning of the season in February or March and not once was it ever cleaned. It was in a far corner of the field under trees and full of black widows and poop sludge and flies and gave off a smell that was repulsive. The farm owner was allowed to use the landowner's bathroom in her home, but none of us farmworkers (five women) were allowed to. We stopped using the porta potty pretty quickly when we realized it was never getting cleaned or restocked and took to the woods.

We named the porta potty Mons-turd and would make jokes about it coming to life and attacking us. One day I opened the walk-in cooler and found my coworker inside stacking crates and crying. I asked her why she was crying and she said it was because she had to poop and there was no bathroom for her to go. She was packing the trucks for market and also felt the time pressure of

taking a break and hiking up into the woods. She also wasn't comfortable pooping outside, which is fair. Anytime our boss saw us walking toward the woods, she loved to heckle us, too. She thought it was so funny.

On another farm, we didn't have a bathroom either and we regularly peed and pooped outside. It was a fall morning, really cold, and my fingers were numb. We weren't allowed to harvest greens with gloves on because the farm boss didn't want us to damage them so my fingers were constantly wet and cold. I had to pee really badly so I went to pee behind the truck but because my fingers were numb, I couldn't unbutton my pants. I kept trying, getting more and more panicked, and I peed my pants. I didn't have an option to get a change of clothes because I had gotten a ride from my boss to the field and I was too embarrassed and afraid to say anything, so I worked all day in pee pants hoping they would dry quickly.

I worked on a nonprofit farm that was on a historic site. The bathrooms were in the basement attached to this giant mansion. Definitely haunted, but that's another story. If it was off-hours, it was locked and there was only one key, an ancient one that you couldn't easily make a copy of. I would arrive at the farm around six A.M. before anyone else and when I say often, I mean nearly every day, my coworker would have forgotten and taken the shared key home with her and the door would be locked. So I shit in the area surrounding the mansion. More times than once. Yes, I went back to work without washing my hands because there was nowhere to do so.

I have countless more stories. Pee tunnels at the treeline edge of the field, coworkers speeding in farm trucks to the gas station because they were about to poop their pants. Farm owners responding to our requests for porta potties by saying they were “gross” and “too expensive.” Bosses getting upset if someone drove to a gas station for the bathroom because it was “taking too long.” Jokes about free bleeding in the field.

As I learned more about farm food safety and attended Produce Safety Alliance trainings where I experienced workers being scapegoated for e.Coli outbreaks and trainers joking about “pooping in the field” and talking about how farm bosses need to train staff not to do that, I got more and more angry about this reality that so many of us face. One day during a training I angrily shouted, “You try harvesting and farming for twelve hours without a bathroom and see how long you can keep from pooping in the field! It’s not like we want to.” So began my mission to raise awareness about lack of bathroom access and handwashing stations on farms.

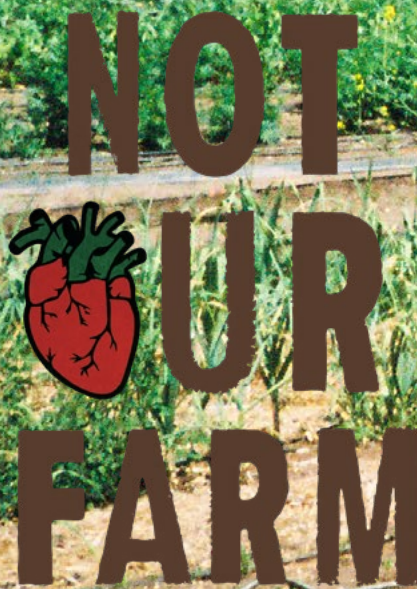
The Bathrooms & Dignity Project is very near and dear to my heart and I am so grateful for the support of the Local Food Safety Collaborative to embark on it. Deepest thanks to all the contributors to this book, many who bravely shared their harrowing bathroom stories, and farm owners and other food system workers who shared crucial information and resources with us. I hope as you read this you feel camaraderie with your fellow farmworkers, outrage for the conditions we endure, hope for how we can create more dignified spaces on farms, and understanding around the serious implications of lack of bathroom access for our community and ourselves. You might even laugh, too!

Let the shit talk commence . . . !

Yours truly,

Anita Adalja

Founder/ Program Manager of Not Our Farm



NOT
OUR
FARM

NOTE ABOUT NOT OUR FARM:

The majority of the workers that NOF serves work on small farms ranging from 0.25 acre to 10-acre farms, spanning from rural to urban areas, and for-profit to non-profit structures. Small scale farms are often used as an example of what farm work could be or as a solution to the exploitation and harm happening in industrial or large scale farming. Not Our Farm is here to say that small-scale farms are also part of the problem. They also commit harm and exploit workers. Many of the farms are not subject to FDA rules and regulations regarding food safety, which would

ensure that there is access to clean and safe bathrooms, handwashing stations, and break areas to eat. In addition, due to the small nature of these businesses, many of the farms are also exempt from OSHA safe employment standards, so workers are regularly in very hazardous, unsafe situations at their places of work. NOF seeks to serve this population of workers who are often not safeguarded by any federal regulations, who haven't had spaces or organizations supporting their unique farmworker needs, and who are often unsafe in farming operations based on the identities that they hold as BIPOC, Queer or Trans.



FARMWORKER STORIES



CHLOE LAZARUS

When I first started working on a farm, I didn't know what to expect. It was my first job where I wasn't babysitting or working in a home office for some individual so I wasn't clear on what my rights were or what should be provided. I was only fourteen years old. The first farm I worked at, in upstate New York, was a beautiful, family-owned farm with three generations working and living on the land. While it was a magical place where I learned the foundation of farming and sustainable agriculture, it was also where I was first introduced to the issues of bathrooms. The space wasn't public-facing and they didn't anticipate many visitors, so I was expected to use the farm owner's bathroom in their house. Luckily, it was a woman and she was kind so it was always clean, well-stocked, and accessible. But I thought, this is normal - why not.

The second farm I worked on, also a small-scale mixed vegetable farm in upstate New York, I worked for a millionaire. She was divorced and very strict. The farm comprised of three separate fields, one in her backyard, but two that were thirty-plus minute drives away in either direction. I was the only woman on the crew and I was still quite young, figuring out how to deal with my period while working. When we worked behind her house we were told to use the bathroom on the first floor of her house, but the door didn't lock and we got yelled at if we left any evidence of soil on the floor or on the perfectly white hand towels. I remember trying to hold it the whole day—pushing myself not to use the restroom so I wouldn't have to worry about running into one of the farm crew members who had assaulted me throughout the season inside that very house.

When we worked the fields away from the house, the situation was worse. I was alone with three men three times my age, without water access, without shade access, and certainly without bathroom access. They all went behind a tree to relieve themselves, never washing their hands before returning to work. I did not feel safe using the bathroom that close to them and without any privacy. When I was so desperate I simply couldn't hold it, I remember walking away from the farm at least twenty minutes so I knew I was far enough away from the men to feel somewhat protected. I washed my hands with my water bottle and hoped I would have enough water to get me through the rest of the hot, summer day.

One of the worst farms I worked at, yet another small-scale mixed veg farm, but this time in New York City, was situated on the property of a men's shelter for men who were recently rejoining society after incarceration. That part didn't concern me too much, but I did find out quickly that the majority of the men were pedophiles and as the only woman within a mile-radius, I was targeted. My employer had not shared any of these details, nor had they explained that the bathroom we were to use was inside the shelter. I had become used to trying to hold my bladder as long as possible after farming at this point for about eleven years. Even when a farm has a bathroom, it is always a hike away, or frowned upon to head to in the middle of a task. I got used to drinking only enough water so that I could survive the day without a massive headache but also hopefully without having to use the bathroom more than once, if at all, during my eight plus hour workday. At this farm, it was

no different. I tried not to use the bathroom, but of course it is inevitable. Many days the door to the building with the bathroom was locked and I was unable to access it no matter who I asked. In those cases the men on my team would simply pee behind the storage shed, frequently not washing their hands before getting back to the field or even to processing a harvest. While that option was disgusting, it wasn't even an option I had. When the door to the building was open, the bathroom I was faced with was repulsive and dangerous. Inside of a gymnasium, the bathroom was a single stall with two sinks. Neither sink turned on and there was never any soap. Actually, the sinks were usually filled with mysterious liquids. I tried not to look too closely, but also the lighting was dim so it was hard to identify. The bathroom stall did not lock and the toilet was never cleaned. Some days I would find the whole bathroom flooded with feces and vomit. Other days the toilet seat was covered in feces and the floor littered with used needles. A couple of times I entered the bathroom and practically ran into two unknown people engaged in a sexual act. Of course I complained, but of course I wasn't heard. I started small: I asked for toilet paper and for them to clean the stall on a regular basis. That was ignored. I asked for access to the shelter staff's bathroom, but I was told no. I asked for a porta potty so I could simply feel safe using the restroom and I was told it was too expensive. I lasted at this job for three years before I left. The bathroom was as horrible on my last day as it was on my first. I reported them to the Department of Labor, but nothing came of it.

Bathrooms and farming became a topic for me to figure out—particularly as a woman. I learned the magic of using a menstrual cup rather than a tampon so that I would not have to use my dirty hands in an unsanitary space to touch my body while menstruating. The cup gave me a longer window of time so that I could deal with my period before and after work, and hopefully

ignore it during the day. I became accustomed to finding plastic water bottles filled with urine in the field, behind trees, in tool sheds, and even in walk-in coolers, simply because men found this to be the best way to deal with bathroom issues. I practiced not touching my face after realizing that my coworkers weren't washing their hands and we shared all the same tools and spaces. I carried around my own roll of toilet paper, my own bottle of soap, and a bottle of hand sanitizer. I couldn't rely on basic labor rights to protect my access to a bathroom.

Of course the negative bathroom stories stick out in my journey through farming over the past eighteen years. I've had some better situations too, but I think what is most telling is that these stories are not unique and not uncommon. Farming already pushes our bodies to the limit. To also not be able to use the bathroom safely or hygienically, which has led to, in my case, physical assault, urinary tract infections, dehydration, and complete embarrassment, makes me wonder why this basic right is at the bottom of so many farm owners' priority list. 🌀



HELEN R (they/them)

Once, when texting a former farm boss advocating for my bathroom needs, I received perhaps the most astute and relevant question about bathrooms and farming I've ever read: "What do people with no penis do?"

I'm a chronically ill farm worker whose illnesses are mainly bathroom related—IBS, IC, endo...not the ideal able body for the many less than perfect farm bathroom setups I've experienced as a worker. In this instance, I was informing my boss that, no, I could not join the crew to go on the post-lunch field trip to a neighboring farm to squash potato beetles, because they had no bathroom at all. Although I am comfortable expressing my needs due to disability, asserting my need for bathroom access is one of the hardest moments for me. It's private and uncomfortable, in all parts of life.

Said farm boss continued the conversation by asking how long I could make it with no bathroom... could I just go for thirty minutes? Her husband has IBS so she understands these things, she says. But I am not her husband. I am a third season worker making fourteen dollars an hour who does not want to say to my boss that my bladder and my bowels and my uterus are so out of my own control that I simply cannot do what she is asking. I should not have to be explicit about what comes out of my body to work somewhere with a bathroom.

Navigating the bathroom world is such a challenge for me and so many other farmers. Now I work on a small no till farm, and our porta potty is within a five-minute walk at all times. But at my last farm, a larger, thirty acre veggie farm, I was not so lucky. You'd need a vehicle to drive a few minutes to a bathroom, or take a long haul

walk with a full bladder to get to one. Somehow I managed only two instances of pooping in the field in the three years I worked there. Still, they're both burned in my mind as something that felt humiliating, unfair, and straight up unsafe for being involved in food production. The feelings of panic, that "I am not gonna be able to get on this golf cart and make it to a bathroom," are so upsetting. It's a loss of control of dignity, because the conditions provided force discomfort and lack of safety and privacy.

Like the many other ableisms in the world, ableism in farming assumes a monolith of body experience. That all farmers are able to work in hard, strenuous conditions for long hours with the littlest and cheapest possible options for taking care of body needs (e.g. one porta potty vs multiple bathrooms with running water). Because of my illnesses and because I have chosen farm work for myself, I've had a real crash course in self advocacy around bathroom access. Luckily, I've never had an employer who is entirely unreceptive or unwilling to make accommodations for me. Still, having to do this advocacy pathologizes me in a very uncomfortable way.

Speaking up with frequency about bathroom access has made me known at the farms I've worked at as someone who is sick, and as someone who needs more accommodations than others. While these things are in some ways true, being forced to be public about my personal health information in order to sustain myself via reasonable accommodation strips my agency and personhood in controlling my own narrative around my body and what it can do. Particularly at the aforementioned 30 acre farm with the boss texting me about genitalia, I feel subjugated into

a narrative that just doesn't fit me. I don't work there anymore, but when I did, it was over and over and over again that we had to talk about it, with my name at the center of the conversation about having bathroom access.

"Helen needs the porta potty cleaned,"

"Helen needs someone to let them use their bathroom in the winter when the porta potty is gone,"

"Helen can't work unless we repair the bathroom post storm,"

and on and on. Pinpointing one person as needing something so basic as a bathroom and harping on it so strongly creates a narrative that normalizes lack of reasonable workplace conditions for people who are "able bodied." This is not true

or fair to anyone. We ALL deserve bathrooms less than five minutes away. We ALL deserve bathrooms shielded from the elements. We ALL deserve running water for handwashing. It is not a high bar to ask to provide these things.

The last time I visited that former farm, I was hit right in the face with this reality of a narrative that doesn't let me choose. Ex farm boss was asking around if anyone was sick before lunch potluck, landed her eyes on me and said "And we KNOW Helen's sick but not in a way we can catch." My cheeks went red—this was a group of farmers I didn't know all too well. This was not what I wanted known about me.

Having to advocate for bathroom access is vulnerable. It's hard. It's putting into a bosses hands personal information about how your body works. And many people will not hold this carefully and respectfully as they should. But to my farmy peers with irritated bowels and bladders—don't let it stop you. There are farm owners out there who will let you show up and hold your space just right. 🌱

GOATBOY LINDO

Good morning, hustlers. This is a story about my single worst on-farm bathroom experience ever.

For a few years, I was in charge of a goat silvopasture program on a very fancy farm at a very fancy nonprofit in a very fancy part of the country. The goats were rotated across almost 300 acres of forest in a state park preserve, some sections of which had no bathrooms. As a result, my work sites were extremely far-flung, yet always adjacent to some type of public trail. Do you see what I'm getting at? If not, I am implying that we'd pee in the woods, trying to camouflage like Bigfoot, no more than 300 feet from rich hikers!

To be honest, the peeing in the woods itself never bothered me much. It sure wasn't my preference, but I became pretty good at "drip, drying." Eventually I started carrying a clean bandana and hand sanitizer for just this purpose. (Although, sometimes I would forget the sani and just repeat "pee is sterile," three times to convince myself it was true. I looked it up and it's not.) The thing that really bothered me was having to go to the bathroom with a risk of being seen. Unlike my coworkers with penises, I have to take my whole butt out of my pants to dispense urine, which leaves me in a very vulnerable position. There were a couple of times where I was nearly caught by the aforementioned hikers; and even more times where I caught one of them. ("Oh sorry! Don't worry about it, I do it all the time.") Beyond the embarrassment, I worried that there could be a legal risk involved, too—in public urination, or indecent exposure, whatever. But I coped by peeing as deep into the woods as possible without accidentally putting my cooter on poison ivy.

Now that you understand the circumstanc-

es, let me get to the story: my single worst on-farm bathroom experience ever. On this particular day, I was totally drowning in fencing and had convinced the livestock manager to have a coworker help me. The coworker in question was not happy about this. So I assured her that with two people, we'd be able to finish goat work quickly, and I could promptly return her to the comparatively flat-terrained, unthorny sheep work. However, on this particular day, I was also dealing with Day Two of my period. For me, this is the heaviest, crampiest part. But we persevere. It was all going fine; maybe even going well! I realized that I had to pee, but I was comfortable stopping for a second and heading into the woods.

Now unfortunately, when you have your period, your body doesn't distinguish between colon muscles and uterus muscles when it sends hormones down to generate muscle contractions. It just says "send the cramp juice that way" and your bowels respond accordingly. What I thought was going to be a demure, mindful piss turned out to be involuntary menstrual diarrhea. In the woods. 100 feet from a coworker that was annoyed at me and 300 feet from the trail. With no toilet paper. With no hand sanitizer. With no hope of making it out of this not permanently scarred.

My first reaction (still squatting) was to put my head in my hands and sigh. I knew this was the last time I could touch my hands to my face for a while. My second reaction was "okay, maybe a leaf?" I found some benign-looking maple leaves and tried to remove the diarrhea residue from my ass without touching it, like picking up stew with injera. (Injera, I'm so sorry, you don't deserve that comparison.) This could have gone



on for thirty seconds or ten minutes, I have truly no idea. My final reaction was to think, “well, at least I’m wearing period underwear,” and pull up my pants in the hope that any poop residue would be absorbed by my damn Thinx.

After that experience, I went back to work and tried not to think about it ever again. Until now, when I’ve submitted it for publication in this zine. Upon reflection, I have no idea what could have made that situation better. I have no idea what type of infrastructure could have prevented that, unless we were to station public bathrooms all over a heavily-wooded park. But I sincerely hope that someone who reads this story will think of something, because frankly: it sucked shit. 🍑

BECKY

I work in leggings pretty much exclusively if it's over 75 because I can't stand the feeling of loose fabric brushing up against my legs when I'm hot, or the idea of applying sunscreen 5 times a day.

A few years ago I started working for some Quaker farmers that were actually from the rural area where they farmed; up to then I had only worked for former city dwellers like myself. I was self conscious about wearing such tight clothes, fearing it might offend their more conservative (I assumed) sensibilities. So when legging season rolled around I thought I'd solve the problem by wearing running shorts over my leggings for the sake of modesty.

For bathroom access, at first we were using the plumbed toilet in the pump house, which was adjacent to the field. However, using it meant that the folks who lived there had to vacate the premises. One of them was pregnant, so this became quickly inconvenient for everyone. That's when the farmers decided to clean out the old outhouse in the woods. It was a good solution, except they didn't add a curtain since in their experience the critters interfered with it. In theory, the trees provided the same service a curtain could, but that wasn't quite true yet in May.

One day I needed to pee as we were wrapping up harvest, so I told the two women I was working with (one of the owners and another crew member) that I would walk to the outhouse and they could pick me up in the truck on their way out. It was a good plan! But by the time I was done peeing and trying to get myself together, they were headed straight towards me in the truck. That's when I discovered just how tangled up running shorts with built in underwear can get in a pair of sweaty leggings. The panic of the truck

bearing down on me didn't help, and I still laugh to think about how I must have looked struggling with all that spandex.

"The panic of the truck bearing down on me didn't help, and I still laugh to think about how I must have looked struggling with all that spandex."

After that I gave up on the running shorts. I shouldn't have cared what they thought about it in the first place,

but of course I soon realized they couldn't have cared less. Pretty soon after that the folks moved out of the pump house, and I was spoiled by a nice indoor toilet with running water for my two seasons on that farm. They put all that work into sprucing up the outhouse and I think we only used it for a couple weeks. But I always remembered my twisted up moment of terror every time we drove past it in the truck. ☹

AMY S.

*Let me tell you about the time fire ants
chewed up my bare ass.*

January 2022 I was working full time on a tech billionaire's vanity farm just outside of Austin, Texas. About an acre was cultivated with a no-till organic vegetable garden and we were laying down cardboard, mulch, and compost for new rows. The farm used to be a cow pasture, so it was just open fields, very few trees.

The farm manager was empathetic but had no power or funding to requisition any kind of restroom facilities. The worst of it was the tech billionaire had remodeled an old house on site into offices for his employees to have a "bucolic work space" and eat raw fresh produce harvested from the farm. The new offices had floor to ceiling windows so the tech workers had an expansive overview of the farm, and us working the farm. Quite the feudal vibe, to be honest. The farm hands, with our muddy boots and compost-smear faces, were not allowed in the office.

The irony was that I never saw any tech employees make the drive all the way out there to work. The vegetables we washed and the farm manager carefully packed into the refrigerator in the office slowly wilted until they were undesirable enough for one of us to take home. The tech offices sat empty and we farm workers went about our business, occasionally scoring some softened winter kale.

We each found a corner of the farm to use to relieve ourselves. The farm manager, out of solidarity with us, didn't use the office bathrooms either. He preferred the other side of the pond, behind some

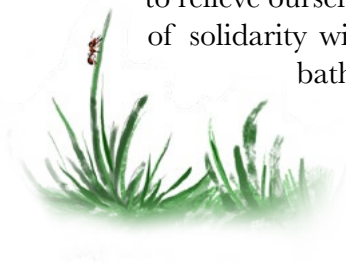
willow, but it was a walk.

My first day on the job, I used a weathered and disintegrating round hay bale closer to the fence line. I was out of view of the other workers, but in full view of the highway, about 100 yards away. I figured drivers were going too fast and it was too far away for them to notice me squatting.

About 15 seconds into my wee, I felt the first bites on my bum and immediately realized it was fire ants, having lived my whole life in close proximity to the tiny fuckers. I shrieked and, with my pants around my ankles, danced and waddled, pee still flowing, frantically slapping the ants off my butt. I cared not in the moment who saw my nudity. I only wished to keep the stinging pain away from my most tender parts.

I managed to cut my flow and finish swiping and stomping the ants off my ass, legs, pants, and boots. I found an anthill-free area, somewhat less sheltered by the hay bale, and squatted again to finish, this time being very careful to hover well above the tickle of the grass.

Even though it was my first day on this job, it was far from my first landscaping or farming job. I didn't know the bathroom situation when I started, but it was sadly common enough in my experience that I knew to bring my own roll of toilet paper and hand sanitizer out to the fields, a trowel to dig cat holes if necessary (always well away from any cultivation or water sources), as well as a plastic grocery bag to pack the trash out. I cleaned up the best I could, rinsed off with the farm hose a bit, and went back to work. For the next three days, I had itchiness and raw discomfort in the most private of crevices. Benadryl cream helped but a little. ☹️



Farmworker Approved: Plants to use as Toilet Paper



Lamb's Ear



Corn Lily

Mullein



Moss



Slippery Elm



Corn cobs w/o kernels



Collard Green leaves



Blue Spur Flower



Osage Orange



Cauliflower leaves



Tall Grass

Stay Away From:



Poison oak



Poison ivy



Skunk cabbage (can cause burning)



Anything with bristles or thorns!

Ideal Poop Tips:



1. find a spot to poop away out of the field (the farther the better and preferably downhill) that is as private as can be and not close to a water source
2. clear the area and make sure there aren't any biting insects or poisonous plants around
3. dig a hole 6-8 inches deep & around 6 inches wide
4. poop and use your plant toilet paper
5. cover the hole up
6. wash hands with soap and water, if available

*digging a hole helps the poop decompose quicker, reduces risk of contamination, keeps others from stepping in it and animals from eating it.

Farmworker poop kit

Keep it in your farm backpack!

Includes:

- roll of toilet paper in waterproof bag
- Hand trowel
- soap & water bottle
- hand sanitizer (not a substitute for handwashing - always wash your hands if you can, but this is better than nothing)
- menstrual supplies



FRANCES ZUCKERBROD

In the fall of 2023, I was working as an apprentice on a small farm in the rural Midwest. The apprentices and management team--nine people--lived in an older farmhouse with two indoor toilets, one outdoor composting toilet, and a shower in the upstairs bathroom, the outdoor greenhouse, and the basement.

As apprentices, our primary responsibility was to care for, hand-harvest, and prepare vegetables and mushrooms for sale. In addition, we built a high tunnel, assisted with a large research project, and assisted with perennial care, all for room and board plus a small stipend (a significant

amount of which was paid later than promised).

The outdoor composting toilet was only set up to compost urine, and was cramped and uncomfortably warm for most of the season. In order to go into the house, one would have to take off their work boots, which took some time. It was not encouraged to go to the bathroom in the woods or anywhere near the crops. Fortunately, I was not menstruating at the time, which made things easier for me, but I know at least some of the other workers were. Additionally, I was suffering from medication-related bouts of nausea, and there were a couple of days when I had to spend my time indoors doing research or resting due to this.

In addition to the farm work, everyone living in the farm house was expected to keep an assigned area of the house clean and to cook or clean up after a certain number of meals per week. This included the bathrooms and showers, but it proved difficult for us to consistently keep up with cleaning on top of meal preparation and farm work. The house was also older, with plenty of ways for pests to get in--and they did. The result was that we had to eliminate moth-ridden food from the kitchen and clean it, a neglected kitchen compost bin might wind up full of flies, strips of old fly paper hung from the ceiling in several common areas, and the environment added to the overall stress of everyone in the house. The upstairs bathroom was the most private indoor option for showering, since you could lock the door and draw





the curtain. Anyone could go into the basement or greenhouse, and the basement didn't have a curtain that completely closed off the shower. Therefore, the upstairs bathroom got a lot of use. I don't remember exactly when someone complained about the black spots of mold on the ceiling, but it was well after the black mold had appeared, and they had not been addressed at all before I left.

I understand that both the apprentices and management were overworked and underpaid, and that none of us had experience handling home repair. However, I know at least one

apprentice on the farm that season had a mold sensitivity that caused issues for them at the place they were living after they left the farm, which also had mold issues. It also was, as I mentioned, one of many things that made the environment stressful. While the organization's attempts to practice different regenerative growing strategies and educate apprentices was admirable, I believe more priority should have been given to doing a smaller number of projects well and creating an environment suitable for apprentices and farm staff to work and live in. 🌱



MORE THAN A PORTA POTTY:

A FARMWORKER'S FIGHT FOR DIGNITY

by Fritz Barbee (formerly LJ Parnell)

PORTA POTTIES—we all know ‘em and grimace when the time comes where we inevitably have to face the smells and use what we got.

I’ve worked on six different farms in the past four years. Out of the six, only two had access to full blown plumbing installed toilets with sinks to wash our hands. Out of the remaining four farms, two had porta potties and at the others we used the woods. Honestly, even at the farms that had bathrooms and porta potties, I often used the woods out of a cultural standard to “not take up too much time” given the distance to reach said bathrooms, or other factors which I’ll get into.

One of the farms that did have fully functioning toilets was on church land, with church patrons complaining about us farmers dirtying up the bathrooms. Thus, every time I used the bathroom I had to double wash everything - once washing my hands and then once washing the sink and the counters. Then I would reverse exit so I could follow my foot tracks with a swiffer, leaving no trace! The bathroom was probably about half an acre away from the land that we were actually farming. So the short commute, plus the elaborate cleaning dance that was necessary to use the facilities often led me to just take a few steps to the woods instead. Luckily, this was a flower farm, so sanitation issues weren’t as much on the forefront. However, the next summer I noticed this same issue at a large vegetable farm I was working at. At this farm, we carried large gatorade jugs of

water where we were to wash our hands on the back of the truck after using the bathroom in the woods. However, these jugs (and soap) were often empty and went unnoticed or deprioritized (by management and workers) as the season went on and burnout increased, which deeply affected the sanitary standards of our harvests. This not only put us at risk but also compromised the safety of the produce we harvested, creating a ripple effect that could impact consumers.

One of the farms that had a porta potty had a much more widely known and used spot behind the shed where folks would pee outside. I noticed myself trying to time my mornings in certain ways so that I wouldn’t have to ~make a deposit~ and therefore ~use the porta potty~ while I was at work. On a recent visit back, I found myself peeing in the same spot I used to when I worked there simply out of habit, even though I know if I asked the owner she would’ve let me use the facilities up at her house. I think that really exemplifies the issue of bathrooms for farmworkers. If we farm workers are already participating in physical labor, which can often be a painful and grief-inducing process, how are we to ask for the basic necessities like using the bathroom? What internal energy can be sourced from that depleted space when we are already being reflected back that our basic needs are just that—something we must ask for rather than be transparently and generously offered?

The farms that do have bathroom facilities

available for workers are often ones who have the monetary resources to provide this need to their employees. But in doing so, where is the cultural shift to ensure that farmers feel empowered and encouraged to take whatever time and energy necessary to use said facilities? Or better yet, were farmers consulted as to where and what makes the most sense for the location(s) and design(s) of the facilities?

The most user-friendly and accessible bathrooms that I've seen on a farm were in upstate NY at a farm dedicated to ending racism in the food system. The facilities had various sized individual rooms with toilets located outside only

150 ft (my guess) away from the main farming area, and there were shared automatic sinks outside of the bathrooms with automatic soap dispensers. There was a room with a shower available as well as a shared boot and farm gear area for those who needed to borrow. They even

had personal hygiene kits alongside most of the sinks with items like sunscreen, tampons/pads,

mouthwash, and more. I could tell that in the design of these facilities, the farmers and farm volunteers (I was a volunteer) were not only considered, but centered. At this farm I felt seen and cared for—the resources I needed were generously and abundantly offered. This makes sense for a farm whose mission is humanitarian and life focused, rather than profit driven. Nevertheless, no matter the type of farm, no matter the resources available, every farmworker deserves more than a porta potty. We deserve to be treated as human beings with basic needs that are not just acknowledged, but prioritized. 🌱

"I could tell that in the design of these facilities, the farmers and farm volunteers (which I was) were not only considered, but centered."



HELEN GALIOTO

In 2022 I worked as a farm apprentice on an organic no-till farm in North Carolina. The three other apprentices and I each had our own “tiny home” on the property, and we were provided two compost toilet outhouses on each end of the hill that the property was on. These outhouses were in pretty convenient proximity to the main work areas of the farm. My tiny home was in the middle of the farm’s hill, and since the bottom-of-the-hill outhouse was en route to the packing shed where we would report to work every morning, this was the outhouse I primarily used. It was pretty nice for what it was, and there was always at least one orb-weaving spider in there who provided enchanting entertainment for me as I sat to do my business.

While it was convenient to get to during the day on my way to and from work and during lunch breaks, the outhouse was more challenging to navigate to at night. The farm was pitch black once the sun set, and in order to get to the outhouse I would need to bring a flashlight. It wasn’t that I couldn’t find the outhouse otherwise—after a few weeks my feet had memorized the path they trampled out in the grass going downhill, and they could feel it out no matter how blind my eyes were. It was the fact that an abundance of anthills dotted the path, always changing location so that even my astute feet could not keep up with them, and I needed the flashlight to scope out the field.

It was also the fact that any point in time the receptacle at the bottom of the compost toilet would need to be changed out, and when it was that time a flashlight was necessary so as not to

accidentally sit in the heaping, stinking pile of a reason that the receptacle needed to be changed out.

And it was the fact that the outhouse was right behind one of the other apprentice’s tiny homes, so you also needed a flashlight to avoid bumping into his hanging laundry, his outdoor worm bin, or even him. Nighttime was also the time when this apprentice would call his long-distance girlfriend, making me an unwilling eavesdropper to his tortured love life.

All that, combined with my less-than-ideal housekeeping tendencies that caused my flashlight to frequently go missing, my mind became more and more resistant as the season progressed to that downhill night walk. You know that feeling when you’re already snug as a bug in bed, and nature calls but you really, really try to act like you didn’t hear it until the call becomes overwhelming? Now imagine the call requires you to go outside with all the aforementioned obstacles.

Hopefully the reader can empathize enough to see where my mind was at when I decided to introduce a chamber pot, fashioned out of an empty Cafe Bustelo 10 oz can, into my tiny home. The chamber pot was initially intended only for urine, which I learned from some online research could allegedly be used for destroying anthills. So, it was actually practical and not lazy of me at all to store my pee in this can in the comfort of my own home for future landscaping purposes. There was one night I had to poop and reeeeeeally didn’t want to leave my tiny home, so I used the chamber pot and told myself it’d be a

one time thing. However, the ease of not having to go outside to use the bathroom was too irresistible and it soon became a very regular thing. It got to the point where as soon as the sun set, my body, like clockwork, urged me to unburden its bowels. It was like my body was a beast that knew if it demanded this at the most inconvenient time, I would relent by giving it the most convenient of bathrooms, in the privacy of my own tiny home and without even the need to get dressed or put my shoes on.

As my coffee addiction persisted, one empty Cafe Bustelo can turned into a collection, each with a big X drawn on with sharpie to differentiate it from the cans I used for tupperware. Filling the cans was easy—most of the time (I'm not proud to admit that there were a few times my aim was off). Dumping them out was a little trickier. I'd alternate between emptying them out in the woods near my tiny home or directly into the compost toilet receptacle. I had to figure out a time I thought I wouldn't run into anyone, but this didn't always work out. One time I ran into one of the apprentices while emerging from the woods, and when he asked what was going on I told him that I was picking blackberries from the nearby bush. Another time I ran into the other apprentice whose tiny home was in front of the bottom-of-the-hill outhouse just as I was en route to empty my chamber pot. I found myself in a lengthy conversation with him, holding my poop behind my back the entire time. I inevitably got behind on emptying my chamber pot(s), and while I covered them with whatever fragrant wildflowers from the woods I could find, having anyone over to my tiny home was always at least a mildly stressful ordeal. One strong enough whiff would be enough for shit to hit the fan.

When I moved out of my tiny home at

the end of my apprenticeship, I made sure to do a very thorough cleaning to hide any lingering notes of what felt like my dirty little secret. Writing about it now is the first time I'm even acknowledging this whole B-plot to my time living and working on the farm. The farm was honestly such a lovely place to work, and I don't think this should reflect negatively on its work conditions or hygiene standards. In theory I am really down with the ecological benefits of compost toilets, and the ones on the farm were always stocked with hand sanitizer and located close enough to a water pump. And I'm happy that money in the budget went towards a decent wage for the apprentices rather than the installation of indoor plumbing for four tiny home units we were barely in during the day. If there's anything to take away from this anecdote, maybe it's to be prepared for the inherent difficulties of farm living, and to be vigilant of the formation of new habits, especially those born out of convenience. ☹



WATCH YOUR STEP

By Jacquelyn Michelle

I haven't had a real bathroom at work for five years.

Water to wash your hands after changing your menstrual cup or having diarrhea? Please pull up your pants, buckle, and walk yourself back to the office trailer.

Somewhere warm to poo, when the sub zero temps don't blow up from the opening between the toilet and the bucket? We like to call this the Coors Light Train.

Feeling a little uncomfortable when the splash back of the full rubbermaid bucket lands on your butt cheeks? Well, I guess someone should have emptied the bucket earlier.

But here is the kicker. You don't have a real bathroom anyway, so why put yourself through the legs freezing to the bucket seat? Or the profuse sweating when it's hot outside and you're pooping in a box with no ventilation? Most of the time you think, what is the point? I'd rather just poo in the great outdoors. Fine, so you do.

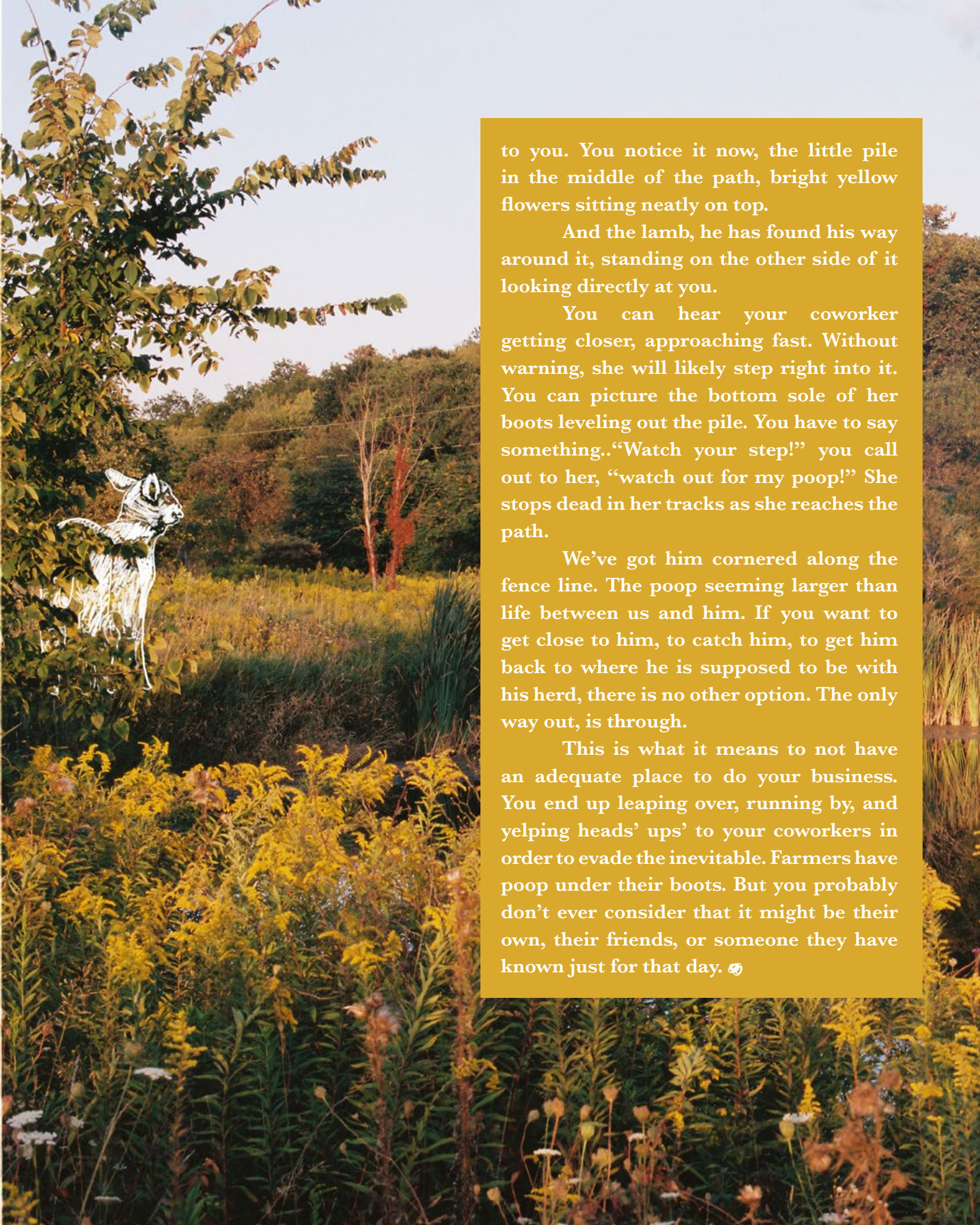
It's the heat of summer, and you're in the middle of a routine chore round. It has to happen now, so, you choose a spot in the woods. Today, a walking path, because you know the risk of your cheeks brushing up against poison parsnip. And you know the devil that is ivy on the soft spots. So here you go. The buzzing of mosquitos, tempting to put your well trained squat off balance as they swim in the warm air around your skin. In the end, you find the perfect maple leaf, just the right size to wipe, keeping the hands relatively unscathed. That's a win for the day. Stalks of Goldenrod are flourishing around you. Thinking their flowers

would be the perfect coverup, you pick a few, and lay them atop of your poo. Feeling triumphant to use Mother Earth's gifts to help settle it all back into the ground.

Meanwhile, your coworker is calling you because while you were taking a fiver, she opened up the sheep to their next paddock. It happens to be the time of year where the mouths to feed are beginning to outnumber the regrowth of the grass—so to the woods, go the sheep. It also happens to be right after lambing season, and those little wollies are getting better at moving with the herd, but they aren't quite there yet. With little surprise, she calls to say there were indeed a few who didn't understand the task at hand. And sheep, when there is no clear leader, could run in circles for the rest of their lives, unsure of where they are headed. Sometimes, this can be a blessing, but today it was our curse.

The woods are thick, and brambles grow up and through one another. Only a small animal, a foot or two off the ground, could navigate in this kind of Narnia. Unable to see each other because of the thicket, we are yelling over the crunching of leaves beneath our feet. Trying to explain what we are seeing, where we are going, attempting to blindly herd a small wether lamb back towards the fence line. The minutes pass, and it feels an impossible feat. Every direction we push, he turns and runs, lost to the depth of the woods, yet again. We start over, and over, and over.

Until, we end up near a path. One that, you notice, is lined with Goldenrod. The trees, and bends of the dirt start looking utterly familiar



to you. You notice it now, the little pile in the middle of the path, bright yellow flowers sitting neatly on top.

And the lamb, he has found his way around it, standing on the other side of it looking directly at you.

You can hear your coworker getting closer, approaching fast. Without warning, she will likely step right into it. You can picture the bottom sole of her boots leveling out the pile. You have to say something..“Watch your step!” you call out to her, “watch out for my poop!” She stops dead in her tracks as she reaches the path.

We’ve got him cornered along the fence line. The poop seeming larger than life between us and him. If you want to get close to him, to catch him, to get him back to where he is supposed to be with his herd, there is no other option. The only way out, is through.

This is what it means to not have an adequate place to do your business. You end up leaping over, running by, and yelping heads’ ups’ to your coworkers in order to evade the inevitable. Farmers have poop under their boots. But you probably don’t ever consider that it might be their own, their friends, or someone they have known just for that day. ☹

JAMIE NADLER

The bloody tale

The summer between my junior and senior year of college, I worked and lived on a farm for three and a half months. I was the only woman out of six of us who also lived on the farm. The dominant male environment proved challenging in its own right. My accommodations were on the top floor of the shop (where they fixed the tractors), and I slept on a mattress on the ground in the back corner. And the only bathroom for all of us to use was a porta potty.

During that time I was using a menstrual cup for my period. The porta potty was always challenging because it was gross. But during those 5–7 days every month, I was most uncomfortable, and the bathroom situation proved tremendously challenging. I didn't want to give up my commitment to the environment by not using the menstrual cup. Still, every time I had to pour my blood into the shared chemically treated porta potty hole and then secretly take the cup into the shared kitchen to use a sink to rinse it out, I highly questioned my choice. I was so embarrassed that I staked so much toilet paper on top of the blood in the porta potty to pray the men wouldn't know or notice that I was on my period. It was such a masculine environment. My period was a harsh reminder that my body works differently.

My period became so hard that I finally worked up the courage to ask my boss if I could use the bathroom in his house on the days during my period. He agreed, which was a lifesaver to have

a peaceful place to clean myself up. However, the bathroom I could use was the one shared with his 10-year-old daughter, who was very curious and invasive about what was happening to my body. I can relate to my curiosity when I was 10, but at this moment, as a live-in farm crew employee, it was not my job to educate my boss's daughter on how periods worked.

The bathroom in the house was a lifesaver, but of course, I could only use it in the middle of the day and the early morning. At night, I was still stuck with the porta potty.

There was one night in particular that was most dramatic. I had just started my period. Therefore, it was at its heaviest. I woke up in the middle of the night, needing to go to the bathroom since I had overfilled the cup and bled through to my underwear. That same night, it was torrential rain outside. Forcing myself up, I grabbed my raincoat, tried to sneak past my two roommates, and quietly exited. The shop I stayed in was about 200 yards from the porta potty. Hyping myself up, I sprinted in the pouring rain in the pitch black to the poorly lit porta potty, where I used my phone flashlight to light up the place. As carefully as possible, I took care of my situation while praying not to accidentally drop the menstrual cup in the doom hole of the porta potty. While still a mess, I ran to the shared kitchen, where I used the sink and paper towels to try and clean myself as best I could. To ensure I didn't leave bloody towels in the garbage can, I returned to the porta potty and tried to cover up my tracks. And finally, I sprinted back to my bed in the pouring rain, where I

changed my clothes and got back into bed.

The fact that this was my reality was shocking. The situation made it so hard to take care of myself in a civil and sanitary way. How was this ok? 🤔



JESSIE LEIGH

The farm I worked on was a portion of land in a coastal North Carolina town being leased by two other entities a landscaping company and a community garden whose patrons lived in a gated subdivision just down the road. The farm had no bathroom and we were expected to take a trowel into a woodlot on the edge of the property and go wherever we couldn't be seen. This wasn't mentioned to me during my interview and it didn't come up until my third day of work, when I asked a coworker where the bathroom was. No toilet paper, and no warm water or soap were provided.

As a person who menstruates and has a gastrointestinal related autoimmune disorder, this situation was a nightmare and really embarrassing. I was the newest employee of the farm and felt uncomfortable asking any questions because the owner was constantly visibly stressed and had a habit of yelling at employees when we asked questions. We were all frequently reprimanded for not working fast enough, talking too much, or taking too many breaks. Because of this I was afraid of getting yelled at for taking too long on a bathroom break and the lack of toilet paper would make it so that I'd often try to just hold it in for eight hours of work until I got home. I was nervous about using the wooded area because there was not much privacy from both the field

or the road and copperhead snakes are common in the area. It made me consciously reconsider bringing certain foods for lunch and I was limiting how much water I was drinking. Not only was this personally difficult, it posed a safety issue to our customers because we packaged microgreens, lettuce, and everything else without gloves. Using the disposable latex gloves was discouraged by the owner who said they were expensive to keep resupplying.

Some days when it was too hot not to hydrate, I would quickly climb behind a dumpster that sat alongside the refrigerated shipping container where the microgreens were grown and the main garage where I did most of my work

"I was nervous about using the wooded area because there was not much privacy from both the field or the road and copperhead snakes are common in the area. It made me consciously reconsider bringing certain foods for lunch and I was limiting how much water I was drinking."

seeding out trays. It was one of the more high traffic areas of the farm and I was terrified of getting caught but I knew that when everyone was out in the field I'd have a few minutes of privacy and I could bring a paper towel with me to then drop into the dumpster before running back to my work station. It was also the only way to go

to the bathroom without walking past the rest of the crew which felt mortifying for me, especially with the communal number two trowel in hand. Days when I was menstruating were especially challenging. I'd wear a pad and would change

behind the dumpster, I was methodical about it so that I could be quick. I'd have baby wipes in one pocket of my overalls, a new pad in the other, and a paper bag from the farm supplies in hand. I'd change as fast as I could, chuck the bag into the dumpster and then wipe my hands on my way back to my station the whole time in a nervous sweat.

A few weeks into working at this farm, the open woodlot of longleaf pines neighboring one edge of the property started to be cleared out by a developing company. I remember the field manager/owner's girlfriend saying "There goes our bathroom!" She carried a reusable water bottle with her every day that had a sticker on it depicting a woman squatting and peeing and seemed completely unbothered by the lack of bathroom.

I tried a couple of times to ask about potentially building a composting toilet and was only told "we've thought about it" and "it's on the idea board" so, I reported the farm to OSHA. The farm had less than 10 employees and the OSHA case worker told me that because of that number they could not enforce that a bathroom be provided; however, they would still contact the farm about the situation. The OSHA caseworker seemed genuinely sympathetic and when she called me during work hours she could tell that I wasn't able to speak freely and offered to call me back later. She told me that they deal with situations like this all the time but for the most part they are on larger farms with predominantly migrant workers. A few days after my call with OSHA, the owner of the farm held a team meeting where he, shakily and on the verge of tears, berated us all for "choosing a bureaucratic channel" instead of coming directly to him, he

told us that "we are a small farm, we're a family" and that if we had just asked for a porta potty they would have ordered one. He felt betrayed and was melodramatically distraught over OSHA's involvement in the request for a reasonable place to drop a deuce. The meeting was held just to shame and intimidate the crew before telling us he had put in a call for a porta potty to be placed on the property and specified that OSHA was not making him do that. Until the porta potty arrived, if we really needed to, we could take a break to drive down the road to the gated subdivision to use the bathroom of the leasing office. This still was unreasonable as multiple people on the crew were often dropped off at work and so would have to ask another crew member to borrow their car just to get to a bathroom. The owner of the farm was also the only person who spent two full days a week out delivering orders, meaning that he had access to bathrooms whenever he needed them. The team meeting was incredibly demeaning, unnecessary, and generally just a weird glimpse into the dynamic at this farm.

Without reporting them to OSHA there never would have been a toilet placed on that farm, especially considering that it was asked for multiple times and met with no action. If they had known that I was the one who reported them, I undoubtedly would have been fired even though that kind of retaliation is illegal. The porta potty arrived one month into my time there and even though I don't believe they knew it was me, I was still uncomfortable at this farm because of the constant yelling and reprimanding for inconsequential reasons. The dynamic on the farm was toxic, there were multiple times where the field manager was brought to tears by her boss-boyfriend in front of the whole crew, seeing that

after my battle for a bathroom made it hard to stay there. I quit after only three months of work. The agricultural community in that area is very small and the farm is well known and beloved among stores and restaurants, this also made it hard for me to find new work after leaving the farm. Working at that farm and experiencing the way the owner reacted to the request for a bathroom completely reshaped and deepened how I think about small or local businesses. This farm presented itself a certain way at markets and on social media, and I think it's easy for people to assume that because it's a small and local farm that it must be equitable and "good." The reality is that I don't think most people are stopping to question if the farms they are supporting, even on a local level, are providing easy access to bathrooms or other basic amenities that most workplaces are required to have. This issue is broad and intersectional and needs to be addressed more. 🌀



KELSEY

Several years ago I worked at a farm in North Carolina that had bathrooms, but they were special compost toilets. I was not aware of the bathroom situation before arriving at this farm. The bathrooms (two total for the crew) were constructed in a way that urine would go down a special tube to a mystery place, and poop & toilet paper would go into a plastic storage tub under your seat.

At one point there were six of us on the crew and the one bathroom that was more central to the farm was used most (it was also closest to my tiny home and another member's tiny home). The tubs filled up quickly with poop, often. There were times I had to use a stick to push it around so it didn't pile to the level of the seat. During the summer months we would rely on soldier flies to help decrease the solids, which helped but didn't solve the problems. The problem at this farm was that when a tub filled up, there were almost never extra empty tubs nearby to use, or when the farmers did bring over empty ones they would take a few extra for their own house—leaving this bathroom with almost none. Tubs were also needed at the other crew bathroom, further spreading available tubs thin. I never received any help moving the tubs out of the bathroom (poop is very heavy) and no guidance on where to put the full ones—I pulled them about ten feet from the bathroom. I would sometimes wait for other full poop tubs that I previously pulled out to lessen as the soldier flies consumed and I would take one of those tubs, now half filled with liquified poop, and

put it back in the bathroom. I had nothing else to use.

I mentioned this several times to the farmers and they hardly took the time to bring back empty tubs. There might have been two times that this bathroom got an empty tub during my ten months at that farm. Apparently there were empty poop tubs along the property line in the woods somewhere, but no one ever showed me where that was. The tubs were so full and heavy that a tractor would have been needed to remove the tubs to a place to empty them. There were about six or eight tubs filled with poop near that bathroom, some from before I arrived at that farm. At least it didn't smell bad, but at the same time, leaving all of that there was unsanitary and slightly barbaric. Crew members were never permitted to operate the tractors at this farm, so we couldn't move them ourselves if we wanted to.





M

Access to bathrooms at both of the farms I've worked at was rife with challenges. The only option at the first farm was in an abandoned farmhouse on the property that was in the middle of a renovation and low-key housing one of my coworkers (despite there being no electricity or running water, he made do with a sleeping pad on some plywood and a thick layer of drywall dust). We had to flush with five-gallon buckets and the only spigot was about 250 ft away from the house. It also took several weeks for management to provide hand soap. The organization that operated this farm also tended a couple dozen micro-farms at various residences across the city, and so I was frequently driving across town from plot to plot and would often have to use the bathroom at a gas station.

In retrospect, this all felt very uncomfortable and degrading. This was my first farmwork experience and so I didn't really have any expectations and didn't address it with management. They gave the impression that this was normal, just part of the reality of working on a farm—and that using the woods to pee should be a point of pride or a measurement of one's toughness.

The second farm operation I worked at had two locations with bathroom access at both being in the respective homeowners' houses. One was in the farmowners' (my bosses) personal home and the other was in a guest house which was nearly always occupied by guests who weren't made aware that I may use their bathroom—or it was locked if no one was around. It was incredibly

awkward to interrupt unsuspecting guests and use the bathroom that was right outside their living space (I already struggle with stage fright!). I often took to peeing outside at this location and contracted several UTI's during that season, with one escalating to the point of needing antibiotics and having to take two days off due to extreme pain, peeing blood, and not being able to stand up straight (for which I was effectively punished and shamed for by my bosses).

"The lack of consistent, clean and comfortable bathroom access made me feel especially humiliated when I was menstruating."

The lack of consistent, clean and comfortable bathroom access made me feel especially humiliated when I was menstruating. It's already taxing enough to work during a period, and the energy, planning, and effort it took to simply change my tampon made me feel disenchanting, disconnected, and unsupported in my job. It was challenging for me as a young femme person with little experience advocating for myself to address these issues with my bosses, however, I feel I shouldn't have had to take the responsibility to bring up dignity and safety in regards to such a private/personal/necessary matter. The overall culture I was enmeshed in prided itself in the "grit" and "hard work" of farming that often was displayed through dissolving boundaries, ignoring safety protocols, and working oneself to exhaustion. ☹



WHY DIGNITY MATTERS:

A NOT OUR FARM FARM MANIFESTO

You might be wondering how farms can operate without having bathrooms. Farms are businesses, right? Farms literally grow food, and not having bathrooms is a clear food safety hazard. If we found out that our local coffee shop or grocery store didn't have bathrooms for the employees and the staff were pooping and peeing in the alley next to the dumpster and then coming back inside without washing their hands, we would be shocked! And if the health inspector were to be called, they would surely shut down the business. So—how is this happening so often on small farms and going under the radar?

Not Our Farm has spent a long time wondering this, too, and we have learned a few reasons why this has gone unchecked on small farms:

1. OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) has clear restroom and sanitary requirements. It addresses how close bathrooms need to be to the workers, how many there need to be per number of workers, and states that the use cannot be restricted unreasonably.

Why doesn't this protect small farms?

If farms have ten employees or less, which most small farms do, OSHA restrictions do not apply and there is no way to report infractions.

2. Farm food safety regulations—specifically the Food Safety Modernization Act's (FSMA) **Produce Safety Rule**—state that workers must have access to bathrooms and handwashing stations. There are very clear requirements such as what the bathroom needs to be stocked with, when workers must wash their hands, and the distance from the field to bathroom.

Why doesn't this protect small farms?

The Produce Safety Rule is only required and enforced (with an inspector coming out to the farm) if farms fall under certain sales brackets. So if a farm is not making a certain amount in sales, compliance is not required. Many small farms are not making enough in sales to be “covered” by this rule and are exempted. And even if you are “covered” by this rule, visits from inspectors also vary state by state and don't necessarily occur on a regular basis. Please visit <https://www.fda.gov/food/food-safety-modernization-act-fsma/fsma-final-rule-produce-safety> for more information.

*USDA Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) standards also have specific bathroom and handwashing station requirements, however, this is a voluntary food safety certification that farms will pursue for specific customers like institutions and large corporate retailers. So if a farm is not pursuing this certification, they will not be audited and held to the standards.

3. If farms are regulated by FSMA or have this optional GAP certification, they can still get away with not having access to bathrooms for their workers. We have heard and experienced *first hand* farms telling their auditors or inspectors that workers are allowed to drive off site to use the bathroom and even write that in their food safety plans when in reality that is not allowed or what is happening. Unless an auditor or inspector does an unannounced visit or interviews workers who feel safe enough to be honest, they are not going to know the truth. We also often hear about this happening on large scale farms where farm operators will bring porta potties out on the day of the inspection and have them removed after the inspection is over.

4. Not having bathrooms on farms has been normalized in our society because it's outdoor work—dirty, compared to camping—and speaking up about bathroom access has been either discouraged, feels embarrassing or too vulnerable. Some fear they will be seen as not being able to cut it as a farmer. Because of this, many people just think that it's part of the package if they want to farm and they just have to deal with it.

Dignity and safety for farmworkers around bathroom access is crucially important because of all the reasons listed above and more.

It is incredibly frustrating and dangerous that there aren't clear laws to protect workers in agriculture and we know that this stems from the racist history of agriculture in this country, rooted in enslavement, stolen land and genocide.

We also know that the bathroom and handwashing regulations that have been put in place for some farms were not instituted to promote worker dignity and safety; they were put

in place to reduce outbreaks that were weakening the agriculture industry and profits. History tells us that laws are not necessarily put in place to protect the people and thus cannot be relied upon. What can and should be relied upon is our shared humanity and the understanding that people's dignity needs to be protected regardless of what is legal or regulated or who is watching.

"Ethical behavior is doing the right thing when no one else is watching—even when doing the wrong thing is legal."

- Aldo Leopold



*We also highly recommend that you read the report from the Food Chain Workers Alliance, Bi-National People's Tribunal from NYC March 2024 - <https://farmworkertribunal.org/>







BATHROOMS &
FOOD SAFETY

BATHROOMS & FOOD SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

By Billy Mitchell, Food Safety Enthusiast

Clean and easy to access bathrooms and hand wash stations are necessary for an enjoyable farm experience. It's also incredibly important for food safety!

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) website (www.cdc.gov/clean-hands/data-research/facts-stats/) shares important data about the importance of washing hands. If our hands are contaminated with germs (also called pathogens), like Salmonella, E. coli O157, and norovirus, we can make other people sick. One common way our hands can get contaminated is after we go to the bathroom. According to the CDC, "a single gram of human feces—which is about the weight of a paper clip—can contain one trillion germs." Germs can also get on our hands after we touch animals, other people, and contaminated soils or surfaces. That's a good reason to keep a clean bathroom! Contaminated surfaces, like gross bathrooms, can contaminate our hands and spread disease - potentially harming the people we care about and feed.

According to the CDC, proper hand washing and hand washing education:

- Reduces the number of people who get sick with diarrhea by 23-40%
- Reduces diarrheal illness in people with weakened immune systems by 58%
- Reduces respiratory illnesses, like colds, in the general population by 16-21%

The science and steps behind hand washing can be simple.

- 1) Rinse your hands with clean water (water with no detectable generic E. coli)
- 2) Lather up your hands with soap.
- 3) Scrub your hands to remove dirt and germs.
- 4) Rinse off the soap with clean water
- 5) Dry your hands (not with your dirty pants!)

On your farm, you may not have access to hot or warm water. Dr. Don Schaffner, co-host of the food safety podcast "Risky or Not" and department chair of Food Science at Rutgers University, conducted research that showed "water temperature did not make any difference. We studied 60, 80, and 100°F, so no matter what temperature you'd like to use, don't worry, you will remove about the same number of bacteria to get your hands clean."

The general recommendation for how long to wash your hands is 20 seconds (basically you sing the Happy Birthday song twice). Most importantly, wash your hands until they are clean.

For a deep dive into more hand wash science and outbreaks, please see "Outbreaks Where Food Workers Have Been Implicated in the Spread of Foodborne Disease. Part 9. Washing and Drying of Hands To Reduce Microbial Contamination." <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0362028X23021002?> 🍷

WHAT GOES IN...

NUTRITION AND HYDRATION

- by Cynthia Flores
Labor Movement



...MUST GO OUT.

URINATION AND DEFECATION

FARM WORK DEMANDS ATHLETIC PERFORMANCE.

In order to perform at a level that promotes physical capacity, efficiency, longevity in a day, and mental stamina to meet work demands (think manual dexterity for harvest, decision-making), **APPROPRIATE NUTRITION AND HYDRATION ARE ESSENTIAL.**

~ Physical labor challenges individuals differently ~

~ Hydration and nutrition needs vary ~

Whether you stand or squat, having privacy, a clean environment, and an appropriate facility should be a norm. **EVERY BODY has to go.**

Some individuals may **PURPOSEFULLY** and **DELIBERATELY** decrease fluid or food intake to avoid a woods walk, a field squat, or a perceived inefficient long walk to use facilities.

This is in opposition to maintaining daily health needs and performance. Athletic performance demands adequate hydration and nutrition.

TREKKING INTO THE WOODS OR WEEDS SHOULD NOT BE THE NORM OR EXPECTATION FOR ANY BODY WORKING IN AGRICULTURE OR A FOOD-RELATED JOB.

Maintaining athletic performance throughout a day, week, or season demands daily, and often frequent food and fluid intake. Waste removal from the body, therefore, is daily and may be frequent.

Lack of bathroom or outhouse can affect athletic performance, which, in turn, can affect farm productivity.



THREE BIOLOGICAL REASONS

for a bathroom or outhouse near far fields:

1. Urination
2. Defecation
3. Menstruation

THREE HUMAN REASONS

for a bathroom or outhouse near far fields:

1. Privacy
2. Dignity
3. Hygiene



Labor-Movement

Move Well - Work Well

BATHROOM & HANDWASH BEST PRACTICES

A well-stocked and clean bathroom is important for food safety and overall happiness on the farm. We've all probably been in a gross bathroom before—dirty floors, no hand soap, an abundance of cobwebs (think haunted house amount of cobwebs!) and/or a sink or toilet so gross you'd rather not touch them. Not only does this make it hard to reduce food safety risk, it's just an uncomfortable experience! Below are some best practices to help reduce risk and increase happiness for your handwashing areas and bathrooms.

★ **Easy to access** - it should not be difficult to get to the bathroom or wash hands.

★ **Clean** (no detectable generic *E. coli*) **running water**. If using well water, it's best to get a water test. You would not want to use surface water (like collected rain water or pond water) because it's hard to know the quality of that water.

Toilet facilities should be within one-quarter mile of all workers, including those working in the fields. If there are no portable toilet facilities near the growing fields, workers should have access to transportation to travel to the toilets. Driving to a gas station or other non-farm location to use a public restroom is **not acceptable** because cleanliness of those facilities is often variable.

-UMN Extension

by Billy Mitchell



★ **Hand soap**.

★ **A way to thoroughly dry your hands**.

Examples include paper towels, cloth hand towels that you use once and launder in between uses, and electric hand dryers.

★ **A trash can** for single use paper towels (and other trash)

★ **A Laundry basket** (or other container) if using cloth hand towels

★ **Working Lights** - if it's easy to see, it's easy to clean.

★ **Toilet paper** - the worst feeling is to use a bathroom and then realize there is no tp!

★ **Cleaning supplies** and tools dedicated to the bathroom. It increases your food safety risk—and ick factor—if you're using the same brushes and brooms to clean the bathroom and other areas of your farm.

★ **A mirror** - it's just nice!

★ **A handwashing sign** - it's always best to consistently message your commitment to food safety. Design your own at <https://signs.youngfarmers.org/>

★ **A sign on the bathroom!** Especially for visitors, it's nice to know where to go.

★ **A boot scraper** before you enter the bathroom or building where the bathroom is. The less dirt and mud you bring in, the less dirt and mud you need to sweep/mop/clean up later. :) 🌀

A FARMOWNER TESTIMONIAL FROM FOOTPRINT FARM

by Taylor Mendell

We interned on a couple of farms initially and the one that we started on had no septic system at all while we lived there. Our options were composting toilets or peeing outside and in retrospect, it was really unsanitary and there were so many UTIs amongst our team that year! We would also take turns shoveling out not fully composted humanure into wheelbarrows, wheelbarrowing it through the farm, and dumping it in a pile. That was our introduction to what is okay on a farm.

The next farm we worked on was more of an established, visitor facing farm. They had a hostel and an event space—so they had true bathrooms. We had to get in a golf cart and go over if we wanted to use a toilet with plumbing. That is what we had to do if we had to poop. It was this weird “I have to leave the whole group, it’s going to take ten minutes to drive up the property, and I have to use the only golf cart.” It made it an awkward thing.

When we started our farm, there was no infrastructure at all. It was just the two of us. We built a wooden shed and put a bucket in there with a toilet seat and used that for a couple years. We had a couple employees and we were still using that. It was okay with that group, but the thing that was really tricky was that it was in the woods and there were a bunch of mosquitoes so your butt would get bitten by mosquitoes while you peed.

We were very driven to have a real toilet with plumbing with four walls and a door and a lock, so we intentionally designed a bathroom

into the building that we eventually built here. Downstairs is the wash/pack and bathroom and we live upstairs where we have our own bathrooms.

The thing that comes up now is that our bathroom is at one end of the property, so you still have to leave the group to use the bathroom. Our current crew doesn’t like peeing outside very much, so there are frequently people coming back to use the bathroom.

As owners, we really try to balance people feeling comfortable enough that they can leave the group, but it’s also okay to pee outside because it’s so far away. One of the reasons I think people come back to pee is because our hand washing sink froze one winter and the pipe now has a crack in it, so it technically works to wash hands, but it’s annoying to turn on and there’s a risk of getting sprayed. We were wondering if we should have a big igloo cooler with water and soap as a wash station instead, but just knowing how we are at maintaining things, I don’t think it would get filled and cleaned often enough. Our solution has to be connected to running water, so we are moving a sink out there this fall and buying a new on demand water heater.

Periods are a big deal. It’s important to have a space where people feel comfortable managing tampon disposal or cleaning menstrual cups, and where they can wash their hands with warm water. One of the things is that our bathroom doesn’t have insulation in the walls. You can still hear everything. Privacy is very important, it’s a

big piece of dignity, and once in a while I think: “Should we go back and add insulation into the bathrooms?” People haven’t brought it up as a need though.

The last thing that came up this year was hand drying. As a group we initially didn’t want to use paper towels—as an environmental thing. I bought a bunch of hand towels and we would wash them every week.

We have a food safety certification through CAPS, a farmer to farmer peer reviewed food safety certification. UVM extension does a lot with it. One of the things they talked about is that it is important to use single-use hand towels in case someone doesn’t wash their hands well and then uses the towel, so we switched over to paper towels this year. 🌱





COMPOST TOILETS

ALL ABOUT MY COMPOST TOILET / HUMANURE

from a small farmer in Georgia

Our main farm building is an old brick motel. It has two wings and where those join there is a standalone brick room. It has a concrete floor, brick walls, a sink and a window. There was a hot water heater there back in the day, like an independent water closet. This is now our bathroom.

The toilet is a design that comes from the Humanure Handbook, which was my first exposure to composting toilets.

SET UP

There is a wooden box that fits over a 5 gallon bucket with a toilet seat built into it. It's a normal toilet height and seat. The toilet seat has a cover

on it, so when it's closed, it looks like a toilet with a cover. To access the bucket underneath to empty, you lift up the wooden box lid, which the seat is attached to.

THE POOP BUCKETS

- We use standard 5 gallon buckets (orange Home Depot buckets)
- Orange = bathroom
- We only use that color for toilets, nothing else.

The buckets are either empty in the bathroom, full and stacked with lids in the bathroom, or empty at the location where we process the manure.



THE POOP/PEE PROCESS

For the user, the process is exactly the same as using the bathroom except you 'flush' with sawdust. We are exclusively flushing with sawdust that is from a saw mill. Sawdust absorbs liquid and covers smell. Its lightweight, very carbon-y, and cheap (or free!)

STEPS

1. Poop or pee in the toilet
2. Put a layer of sawdust in the bucket to flush
3. Wash your hands

Cotton tampons or anything completely compostable **can go in there. **Nothing** plastic or that you wouldn't want to flush.*

***Workers are expected to refill the flush bucket with sawdust and can swap full buckets for empties, but do not empty buckets.*

Buckets should be solid, nothing sloshy. Make sure to add enough sawdust, which we train is the minimum amount to cover the deposit and toilet paper. Buckets are considered full when they are $\frac{3}{4}$ way filled, or about 3" from the top. They are removed, the lid is put on and they are stacked in the room. They don't smell. You would never know what was in them. By the time you empty the bucket, often the material will have shrunk down another two inches.

BUCKET EMPTYING + MANURE PROCESSING

- I empty 10-11 buckets at a time, every two weeks. We have a total of 13 or 14.
- The manure is processed in clearing

in the woods, not in or near our production spaces.

- It's a fenced area not in the field, in a segregated part of property.
- It's down hill of any growing space.

The full buckets are transported from the bathroom to the woods in a golf cart, with a used greenhouse plastic for a barrier (only used for this purpose). That gives an additional physical barrier during transport. I also clean the golf cart after transport as a hygiene protocol.





COMPOST AREA CONSTRUCTION

I developed a system where I make above ground pallet bins old pallets, often pallets that are too broken or old to lift a load but are still intact. Using old bailing twine, I tie 4 pallets tied together on all four corners at the top and bottom and the pallets sit upright along the fenceline.

UNLOADING/EMPTYING PROCESS

- Unload the buckets in a semi circle around the “active” pallet pile I’m adding to.
- Remove all the lids, lids facing up to dry if any condensation has collected, which is common.
- Make a nest of straw/mulch material in the pallet pile*
- Dump them all in one after another.
- Put the buckets back in the semi circle.

*We use mulch hay, which are round bales that are really old and not usable hay for livestock. We get them for free.

When we start a pallet pile, we put a generous layer of mulch hay at the bottom of the pile. We put a generous layer of mulch hay on top to finish. There is a lot of brown material/C (carbon) going in there, all the N (nitrogen) is from the manure and urea.

CLEANING PROCESS

A separate dedicated clean water bucket lives down in the woods. It’s only used for transporting 4 gallons from our closest hydrant to where I’m working. I usually get that clean water first to the vicinity, leaving it 15 feet away from where I’m working. Once the buckets are empty, I take clean water and pour 5 inches in the first bucket only.

***(important side note:** I have a way of pouring from my days being a photo chemist before farming. I have a healthy understanding of contamination risk from photography - chemicals can only go in one direction because of contamination and if contamination happens, you’ll notice it in the prints. These are also dangerous caustic chemicals used in color photography. I was taught ways of pouring chemicals without splashing. Pouring without splashing is crucial and translates to working with humanure! Also attention to dripping from the toilet brush. I only drip into a poop bucket, NOT onto the ground. The outside of the bucket is not washed or cleaned, so it is kept entirely dry through the whole process.)

A toilet bowl brush lives next to whichever pile is

the active pile. I use that to swoosh water around in that first bucket. Then I take that dirty black water and pour it to the next bucket and do the same thing one by one to all the buckets. The same two gallons of black water is being poured one by one down the line - that final water goes in the pallet pile. (I cover what I've dumped with final layer of straw for the day, which contains any potential smell or attractiveness to flies.)

*I want to use as little water as possible. Water is a great way to spread contamination and it is also unnecessary to use that much.

There is not much to scrub, what is residual in the buckets is sand from the saw dust. Saw dust and leaves come out but sand falls to the bottom. There is always a trace amount of sand at the end. The first round of water is really visibly dirty, but once it's completed, the buckets are visibly clean. The remaining two gallons of clean water are used to do the same pouring process again without the brush. This is mostly to give a very clean finishing step so the interior of the bucket can dry completely and not have an odor. It's the finishing touch.

The buckets are wet and clean but not sterile, like a cleaned toilet bowl. I let them dry in the sun for 1-2 days. The sun is an amazing resource for making things not smell and preventing bug larvae and other stuff like that. The lids are left facing upright to bake also - they are not washed, I just let them sit in the sun. In 10+ years we have only replaced a few buckets, but we replace lids every 2-3 years as necessary, they tend to crack and the seal gets loose and annoying.

I take the golf cart back and clean it and put it away immediately, I do not transport empty buckets in the cart. Greenhouse plastic is folded in

on itself (contamination side on the inside) and stored in the bathroom.

After the buckets are dry and before I carry them back to the bathroom, I put a small handful of dry leaves or pine needles from the forest area at the bottom of each bucket so the first use is not in an empty bucket. (Reasoning - I don't want anything that is going to stick to the bottom of the bucket, or splash. I want to minimize cleaning/scrubbing. The final bottom layer when dumping is a different material, and that helps the whole unit to slide out with the leaf layer. It comes out like cranberry sauce in the can.) I carry the buckets back to the bathroom manually since they are empty and light.

*The process takes a half-hour every two weeks for 5 people. ***Faster than cleaning a regular bathroom!***





HARVESTING HUMANURE

I have 8 free standing pallet compost piles.

A couple have been rebuilt over the years and this is after 12 years of continuous humanure collecting. The material is constantly shrinking down.

I have two that I'm working on at the same time and alternate if they get too full too fast. It can take a year to make a pile full and once it's full, I stop adding and let it sit. These are static piles.

You should wait at least a year and we wait way longer than that - we wait until the bin is falling apart and we need more space – about 2-3 years of completely static action. We feel it's safer to not be constantly entering those bins and disturbing them, which would be another point of potential contamination.

When I'm ready to harvest the humanure, I cut the corner string and the pallets are almost disintegrating at that point, so I can access the humanure and move it.

There are very few tools coming in contact with these bins - nothing does until the end. We use a tractor with a front end loader and a shovel and wash both.

I've only ever harvested a few times in 12 years. It's more a waste management process for us than a resource harvesting opportunity because we are a small commercial producer and I know it would be an issue for us to be using it on the farm. It would be an issue with our OG certifier and Department of Agriculture, it would require transparency with customers, and be more trouble than it is worth..

I've only used it in my personal flower garden at my house for ornamentals, but fruit trees would be another good option. The risks are mostly in fecal coliforms, harmful bacteria, and theoretically viruses or other pathogens that can

live a very long time. We are not concerned with heavy metals as this is not 'sewage sludge' in the same way that municipal sludge is contaminated. It was more a way of dealing with not having accessible plumbing than a golden opportunity for compost and manure.

FARMER NOTES

None of this is complex, but attention to detail matters! !It's good to be anal (no pun intended).

The only tool besides the golf cart to move the buckets (because they are quite heavy when full) is the designated clean water bucket and designated toilet bowl brush. Make sure there is no way any tools/supplies would ever integrate into the farm system.

The main risk is *spills*. This is why only one person transports and empties. A bucket failure at any point between the bathroom and the processing location is what we have deemed the biggest and highest risk in our system.

FARMER PHILOSOPHY

I really love humanure. It doesn't have to be primitive or gross or not take into account food safety or general safety. I don't want anyone to think of composting toilets as the equivalent to raw sewage in the streets during plague times. We have the knowledge to handle poop with more consideration and science than that.

There are ways that this could become more normalized and safer in the future. The reason that it's safe right now is because I'm doing it in a way that is well considered with attention to detail, and I am aware of and actively manage for the risks.

There is not enough clean water for everybody. To poop into clean water is deeply problematic. All it does is create a waste

management issue. Water is added to ease of transport through pipes, but the more water we introduce the bigger threat to safety and resources.

Composting toilets are a gray area in the law, and it varies state to state. The main thing that is regulated in my state is the sewage handlers. Porta Potty handlers are licensed professionals, licensed to handle raw sewage - that is knowledge, skills, and training. There are poop professionals everywhere who deal with shit, it's just whether they are wearing a uniform and working with blue liquid or not. It's an industry.

As long as there are humans who are eating, we are going to be pooping and peeing, we can deal with that with worse ways or better ways. In many ways in farming, humans are actually 'the livestock'. The more concentrated we eat and live, the more concentrated we poop. We are growing food for us, and then pooping it out, and then buying and transporting fertility inputs so we can keep growing food, whilst creating a toxic nutrient accumulation elsewhere. This is actually very similar to how CAFO's are from a resource perspective. This alternative system has problems and risks, and so do the default standard systems. We should be thinking about our manure output as much as we are thinking about our food input, if we want safety and long term sustainability.

Poop is a part of life and it can be a resource or make us sick. It is a dilemma, but it is not 'bad', just a fact of life we need to handle properly. We coexist with it and we are going to forever. ☹

HUMANURE AND FOOD SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

-Use humanure on non-edible crops only !

Any food that will be sold / for commercial production cannot be amended with humanure unless it has been regulated by EPA and is considered a biosolid.

- Consider using humanure to remediate pastures, wind buffers, pollinator areas

- Store your humanure piles far away from edible crop growing areas (preferably down hill)

- Do not build piles in areas that are prone to flooding

- For extra precaution, you can build a berm around the compost piles to avoid any seepage

-Have designated tools to handle compost toilet and humanure

- clearly label all bathroom buckets

- have a designated poop shovel / humanure shovel

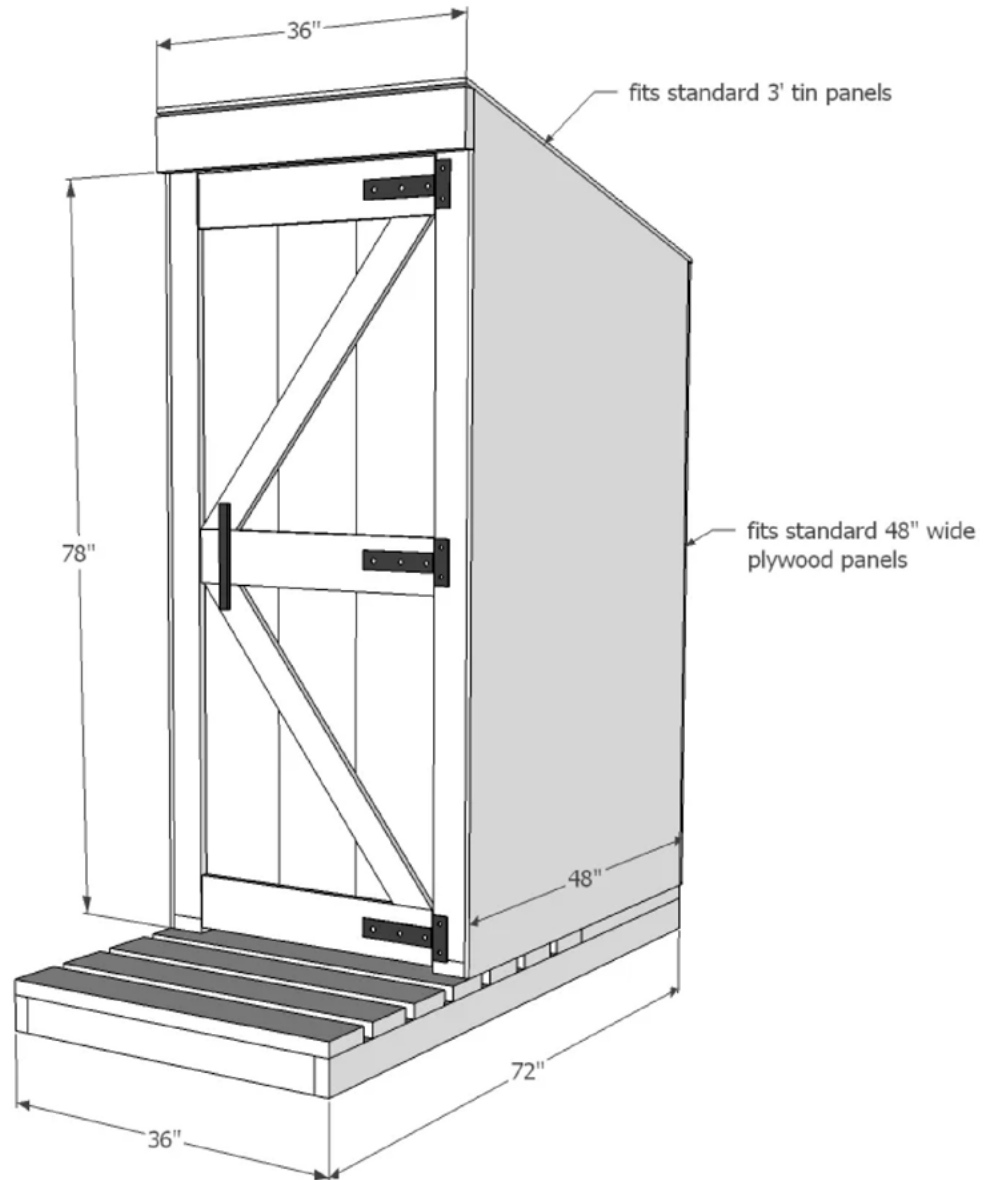
-Be sure to have clear handwashing protocols in place after handling humanure

HUMANURE AND COMPOSTING TOILET RESOURCES:

- The Humanure Handbook (published 1995) by Joseph Jenkins
- Grey Water Action: <https://greywateraction.org/composting-toilets-faq/>

Compost Toilet Build Plans

submitted by Ash Abeyta



Prep -

Shopping List & Cut List

Shopping List

- ☐ 3 - sheets 1/2 exterior plywood
- ☐ 1 - 12' treated 2x4
- ☐ 1 - 10' treated 2x4
- ☐ 4 - 2x6 @ 6 feet long (recommend treated or weather resistant)
- ☐ 1 - 2x2 @ 29" (recommend treated or weather resistant, try using a railing spindle)
- ☐ 11 - 2x4 @ 8 feet long
- ☐ 3 - 1x10 @ 8 feet long
- ☐ 1 - 1x6 @ 8 feet long
- ☐ 1 - 1x4 @ 8 feet long
- ☐ 3 Gate Hinges
- ☐ Gate Latch and Handle
- ☐ 54" piece of 36" wide tin
- ☐ Roofing screws to match, roofing screws can be up to 2" in length
- ☐ 3" decking screws, self tapping
- ☐ Nails or screws for attaching plywood to framing
- ☐ 1 - 1/4" exterior screws for building the doors
- ☐ Toilet seat

Cut List

BASE

- ☐ 2 - 2x4 @ 72"
- ☐ 3 - 2x4 @ 33"
- ☐ 7 - 2x6 @ 36" long
- ☐ 1 - 2x2 @ 29" long
- ☐ 2 - 2x4 @ 24-1/2" long

WALLS

- ☐ 2 - 2x4 @ 48-1/8" (long point to short point, ends cut parallel at 15 degrees off square)
- ☐ 2 - 2x4 @ 80-1/4" (longest point, one end cut at 15 degrees off square)
- ☐ 2 - 2x4 @ 74-1/4" (longest point, one end cut at 15 degrees off square)
- ☐ 2 - 2x4 @ 68-1/4" (longest point, one end cut at 15 degrees off square)
- ☐ 2 - 2x4 @ 46-1/2"
- ☐ 2 - 1/2" plywood @ 48" x 83-3/8" (longest point) cut down to 70-1/2" (shortest point)

TIE IN

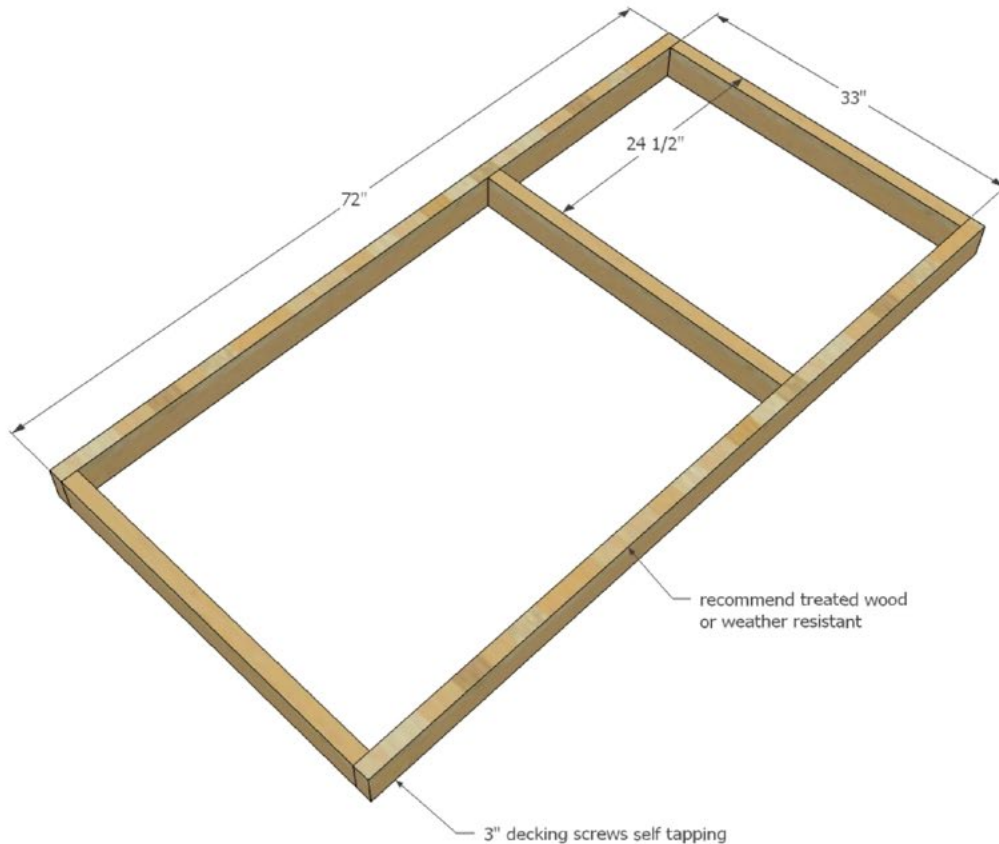
- ☐ 1 - 2x6 @ 36"
- ☐ 4 - 2x4 @ 35"
- ☐ 2 - 2x4 @ 28"
- ☐ 1 - 1/2" plywood @ 36" x 52" (roof plywood)
- ☐ 1 - 1/2" plywood @ 36" x 44" (scrap from roof piece)
- ☐ 1 - 1/2" plywood @ 36" x 26-1/4" (scraps from walls)

DOOR

- ☐ 3 - 1x10 @ 77"
- ☐ 3 - 1x6 @ 27-3/4"
- ☐ 2 - 1x4 @ 38" - long point to short point, both ends cut at 37-1/2 degrees off square, end are parallel

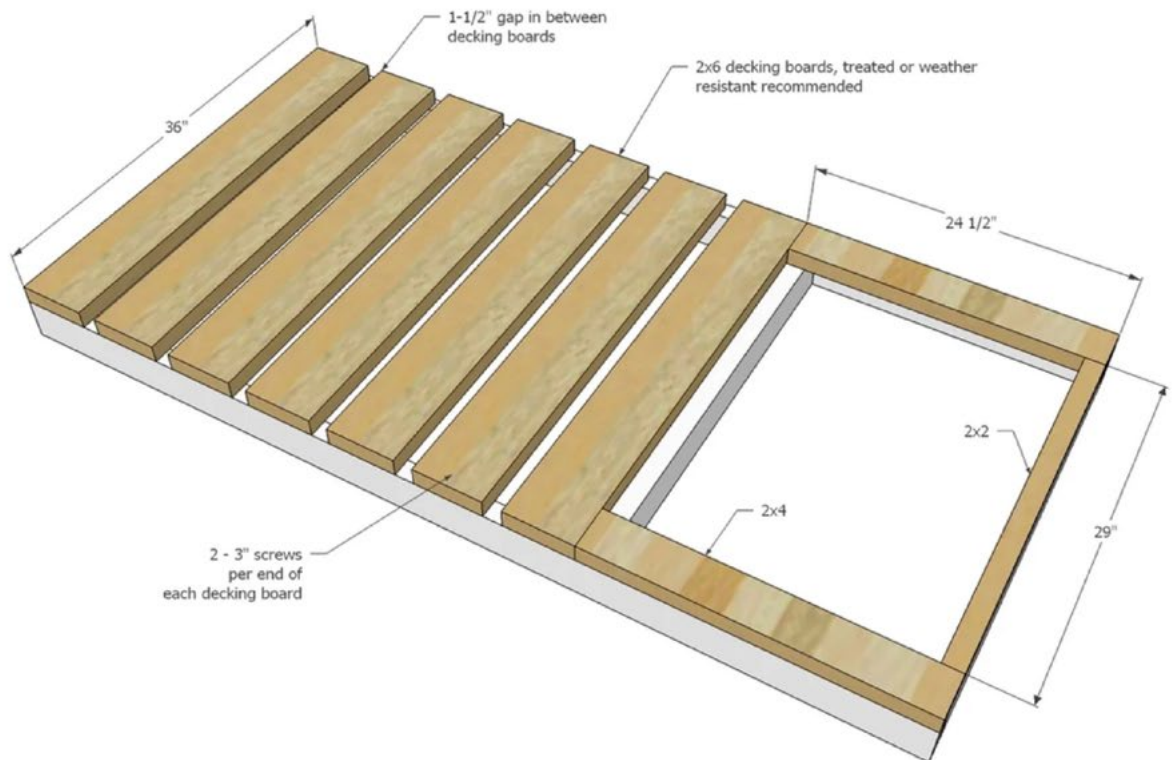
Step 1 - Build the Base

Build the base with treated or weather resistant 2x4s. If the base isn't fully supported on the ground or with beams, consider using 2x6 or larger boards for additional support.



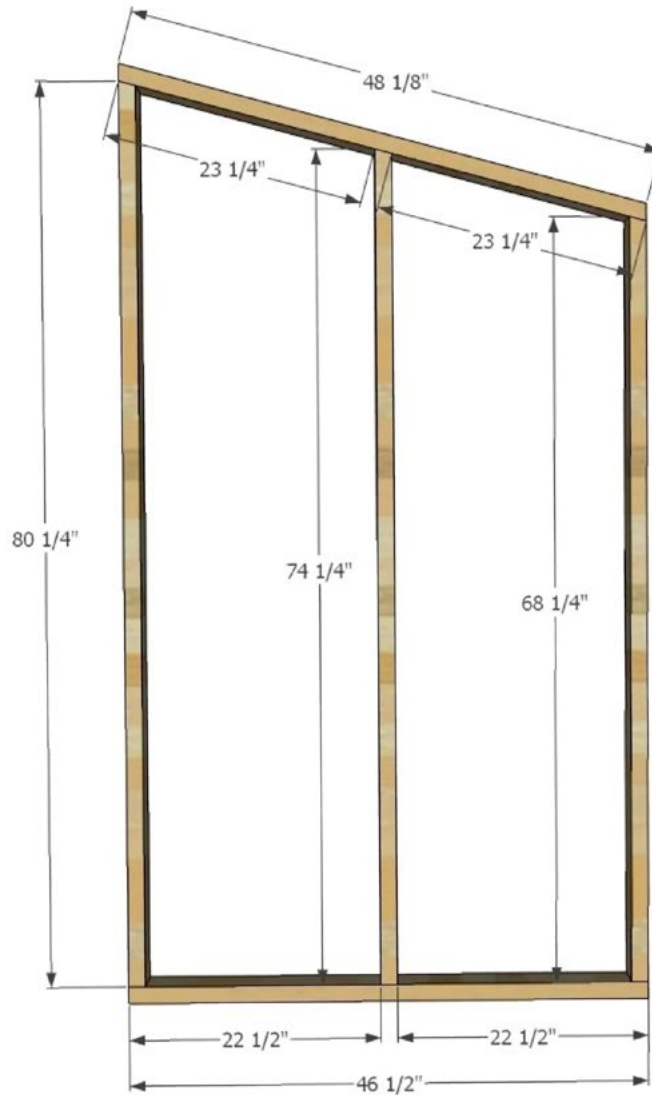
Step 2 - Add the Decking

Attach weather-resistant or treated wood planks to the base frame to create a solid platform.

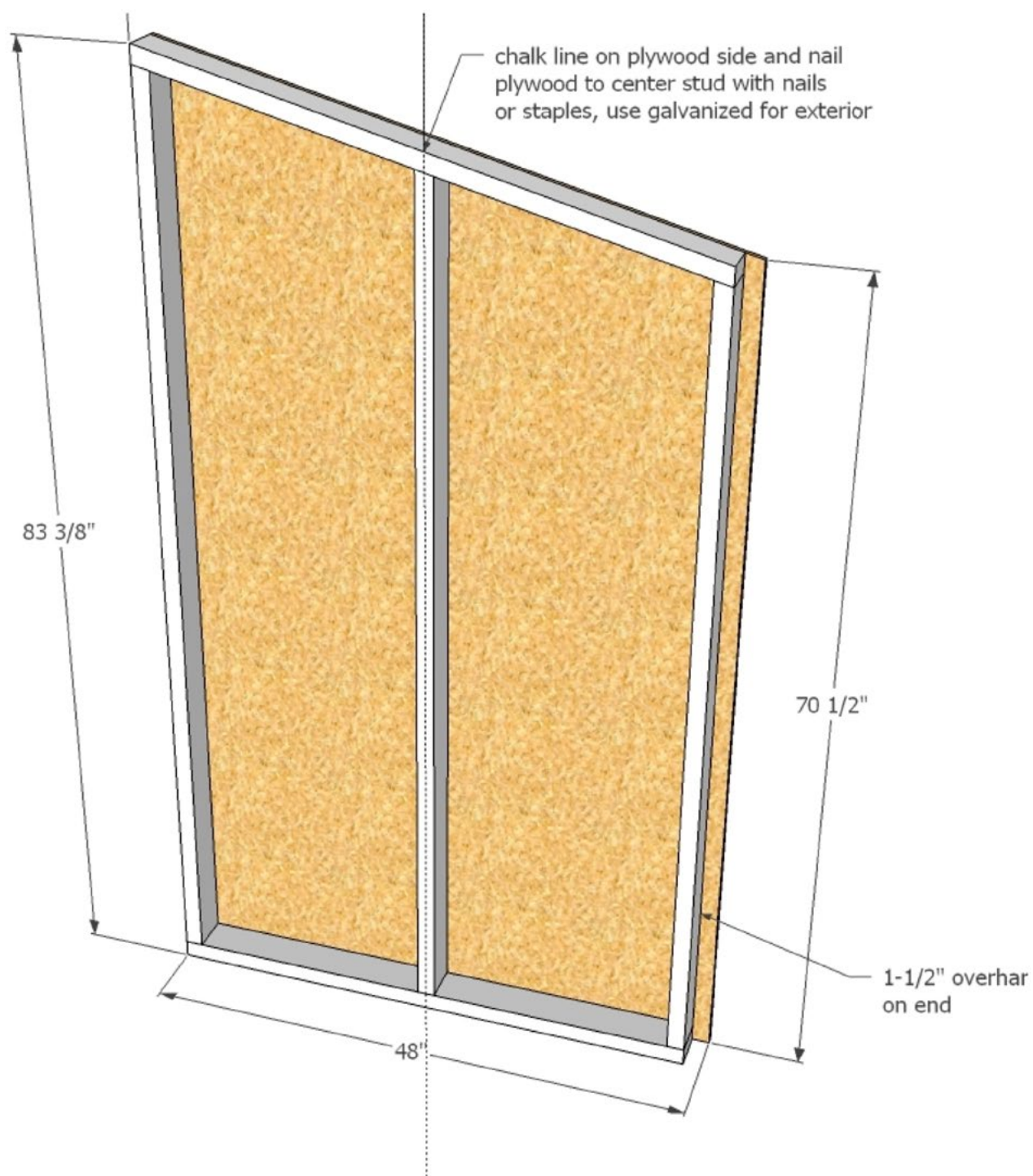


Step 3 - Build the Walls

- Construct two walls using 2x4 framing.

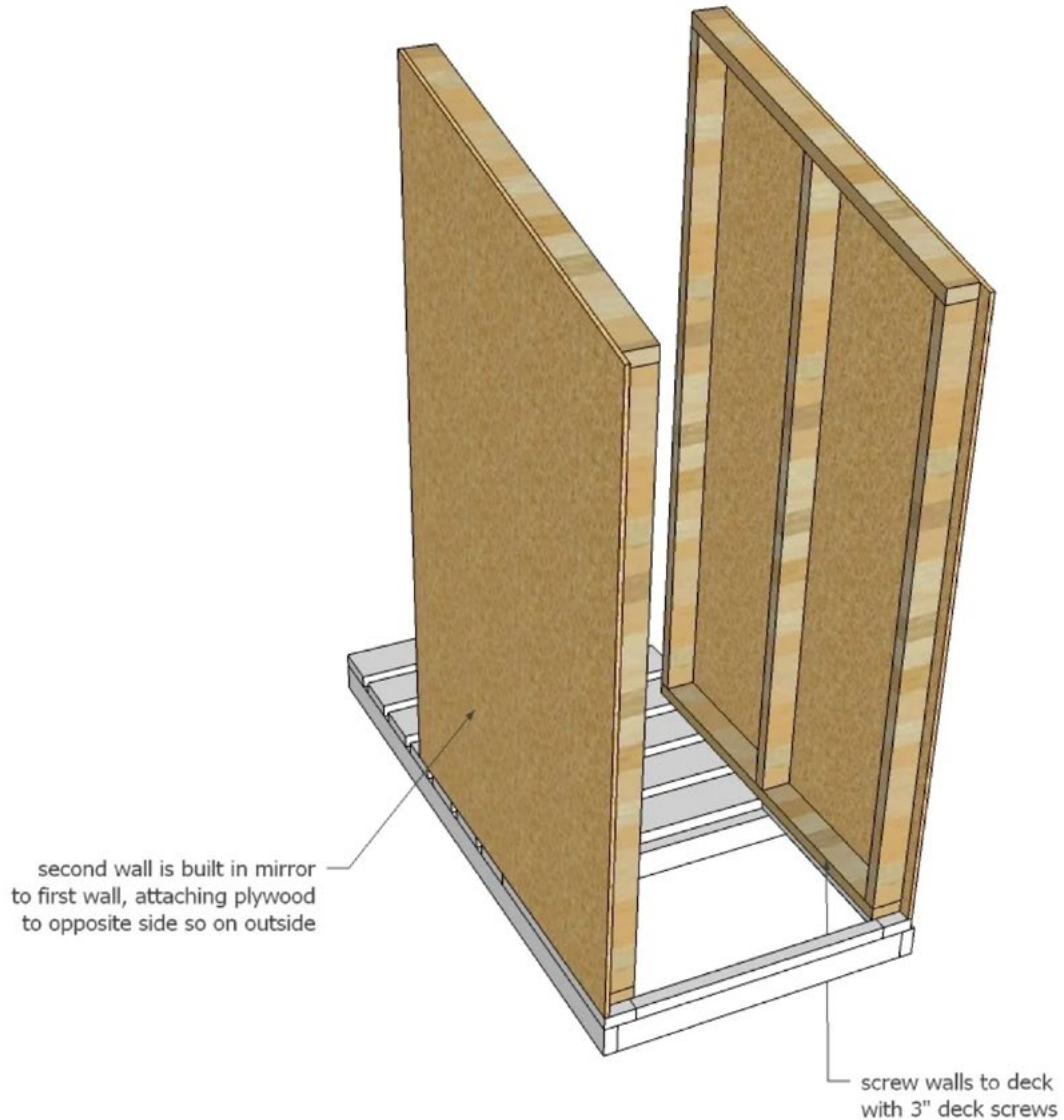


- Attach plywood to the outsides of the walls, considering walls are to be built in mirror. On the short side of the wall, the plywood overhangs the back by 1-1/2".



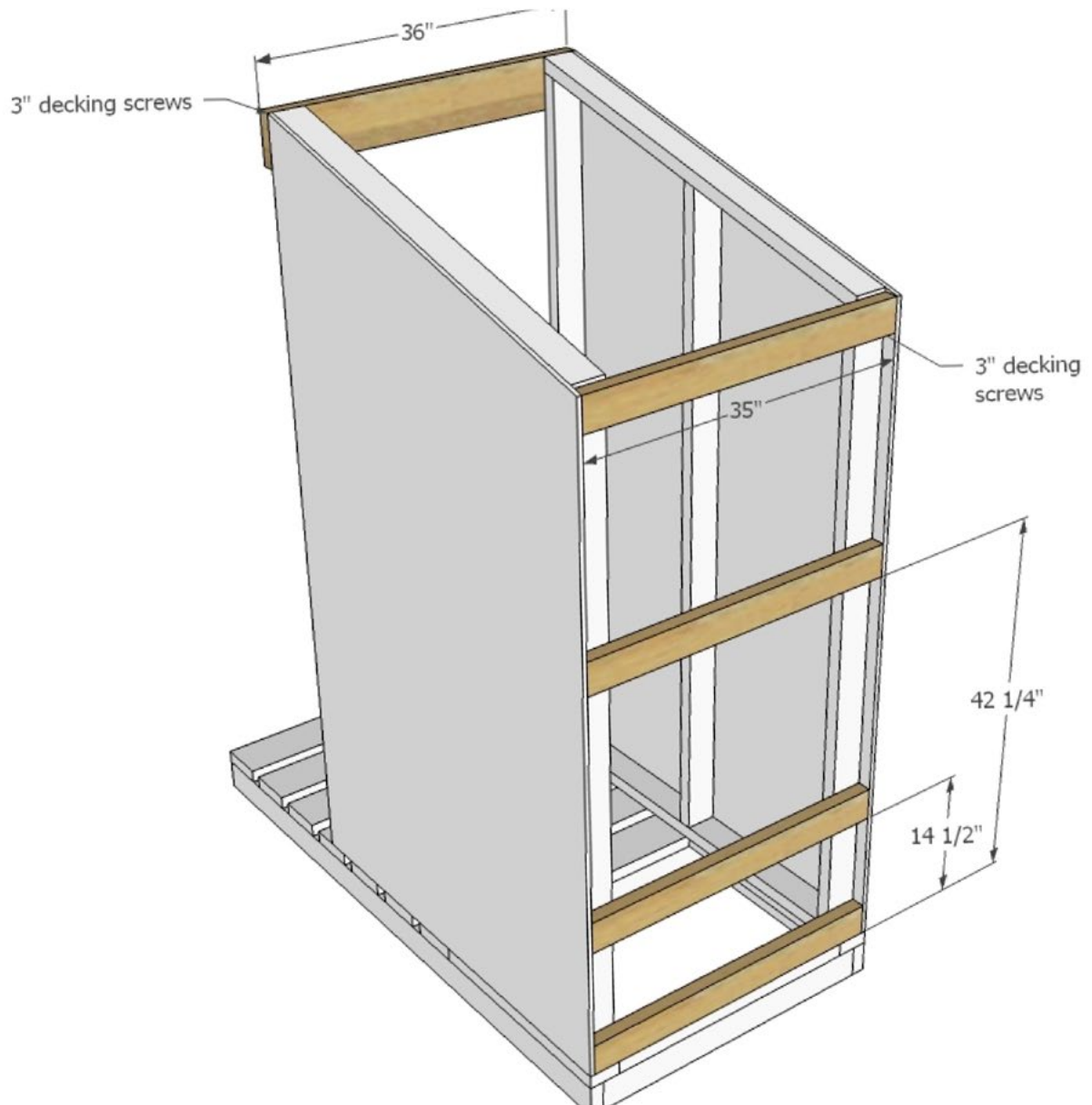
Step 4 - Attach Walls

- Screw walls to deck with 3" screws.



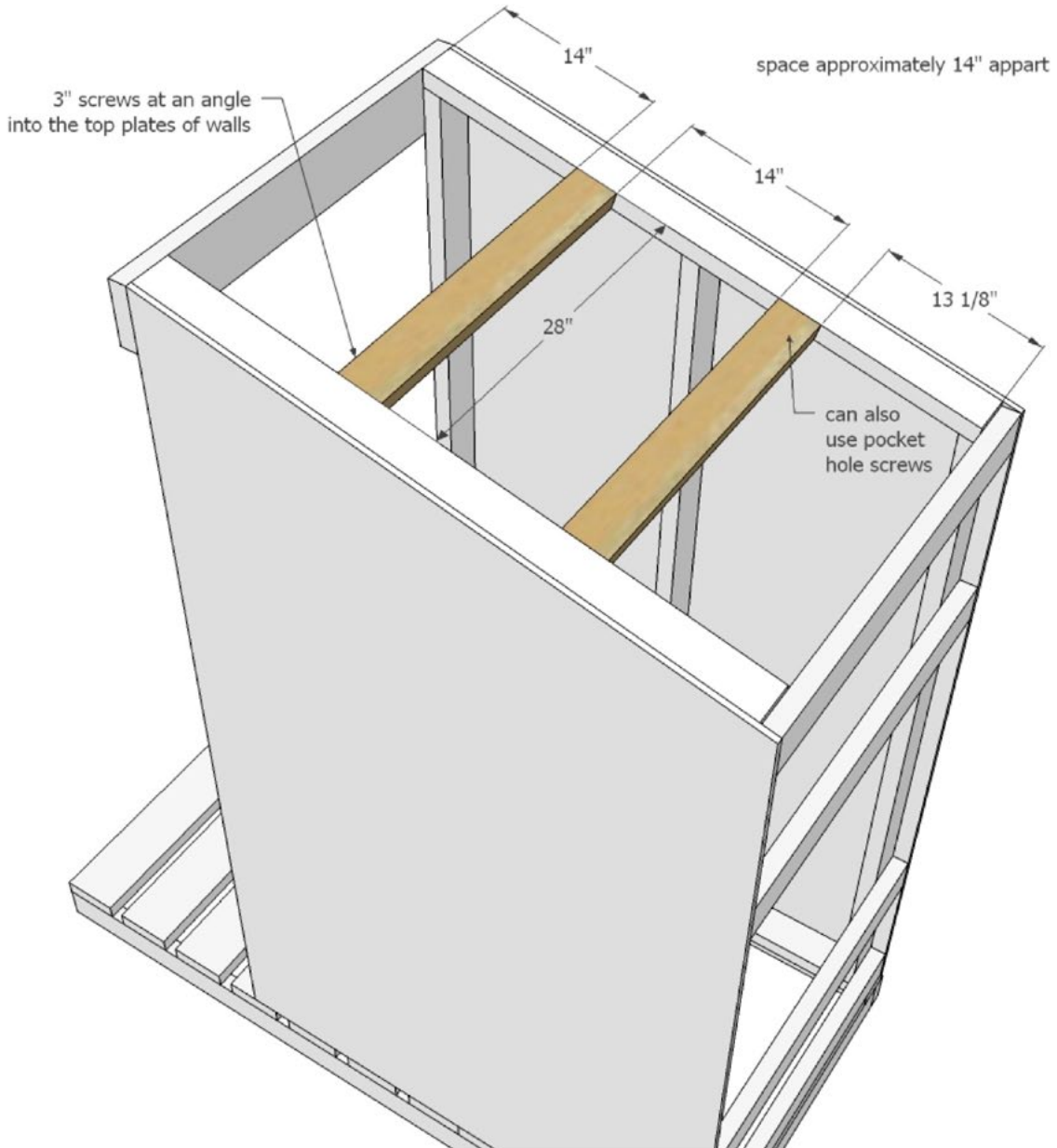
Step 5 - Tie In!

- Attach 2x4 and 2x6 boards to walls to tie in the walls at the front and back.



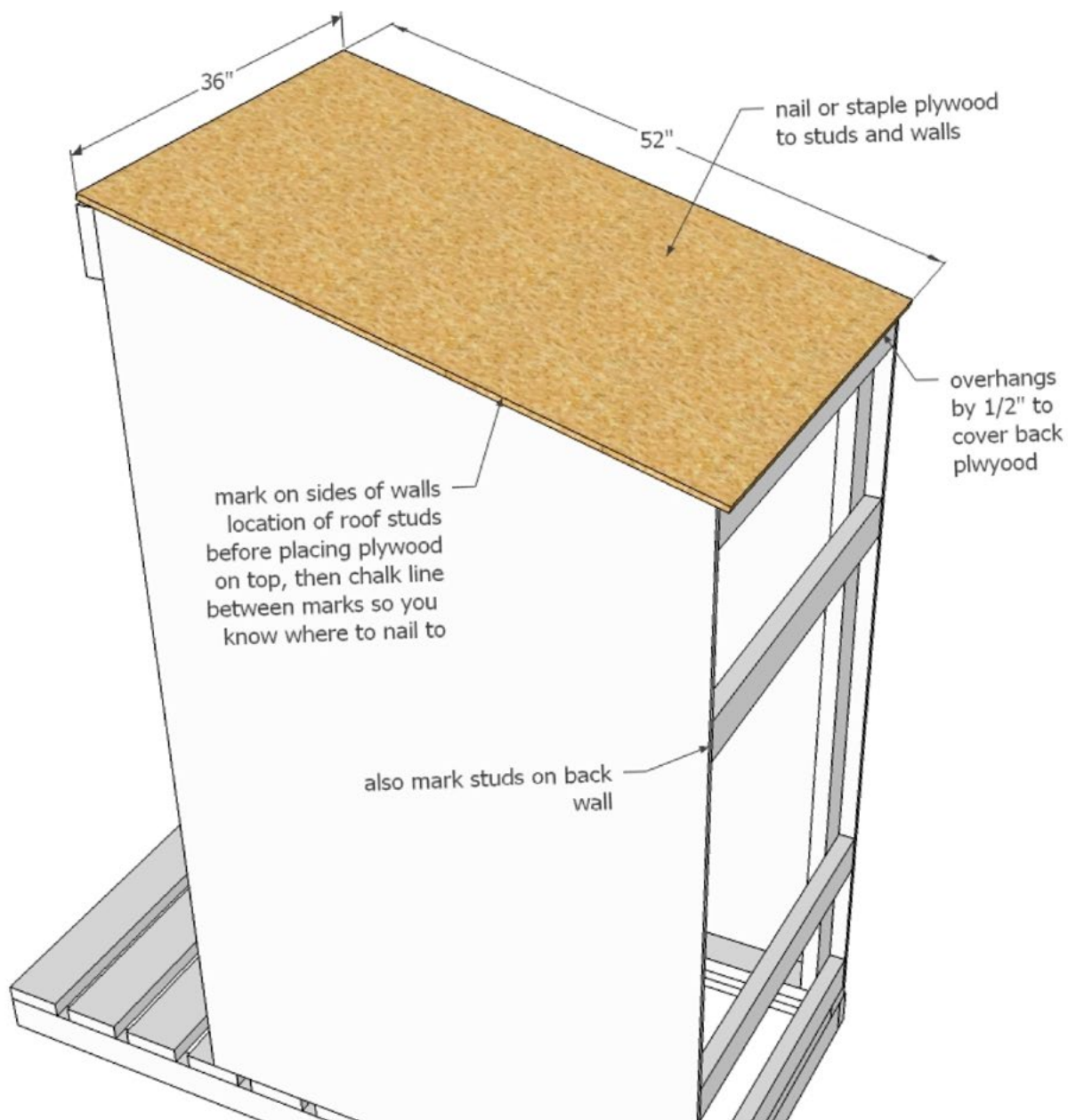
Step 6 - Add Roof Supports

- 3" screws at an angle into the top plates of the walls
- spaced about 14" apart



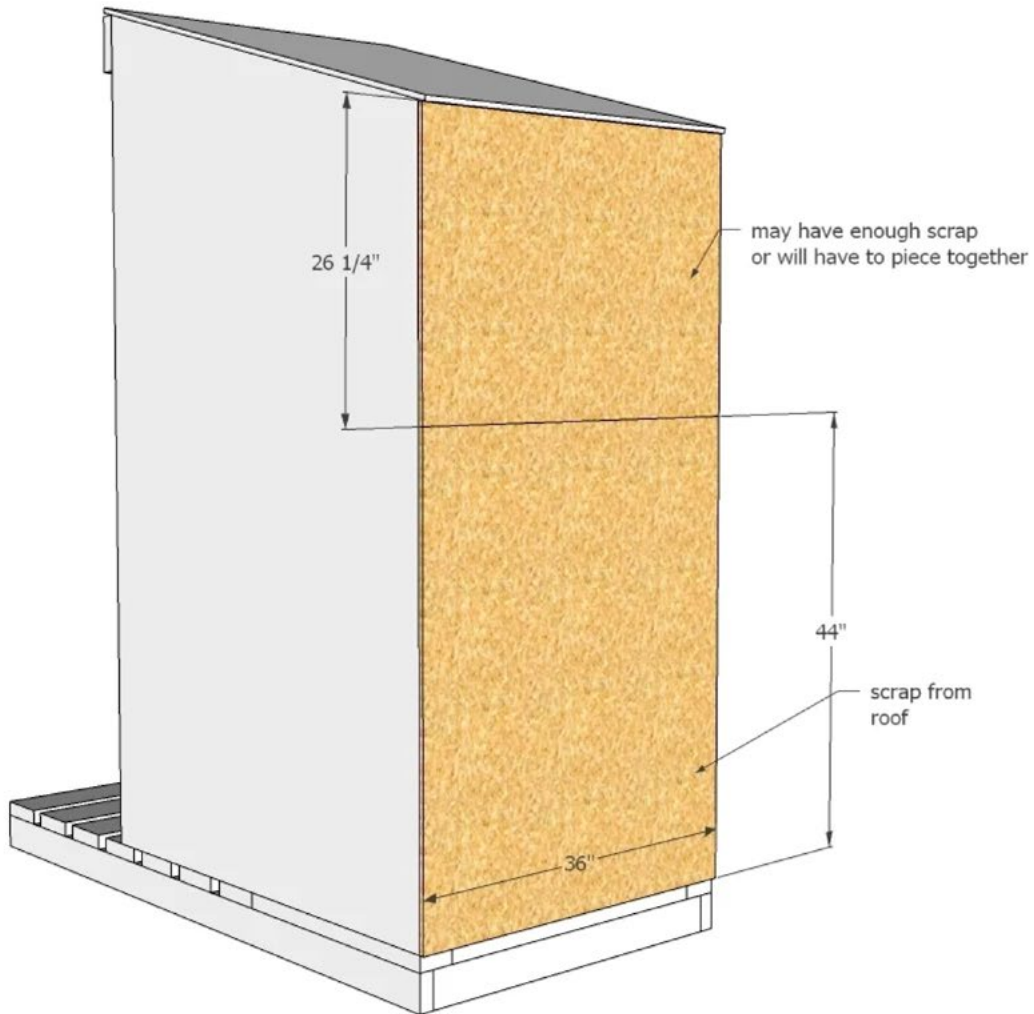
Step 7 - Add Roof

- Attach plywood to the roof, nailing or screwing to all available tie in points.
- Attach tin to plywood with roofing screws to make it weatherproof.



Step 8 - Back Panel

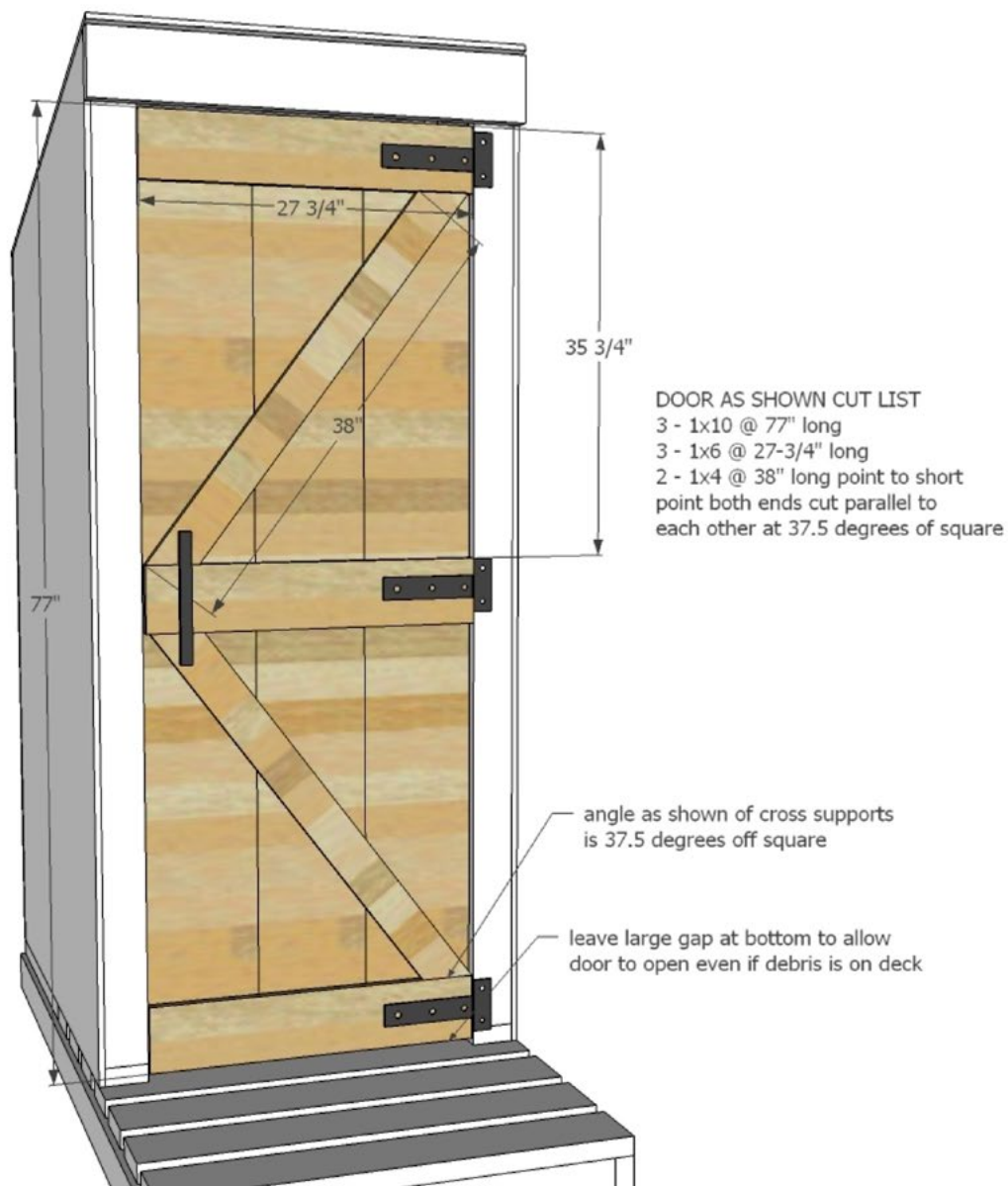
- Use leftover plywood to cover the back.



Step 9 - Build & Install Door

- Build the door and attach it with gate hinges.

*** If using a gate clasp, make sure there is a way for the door to be opened from the inside. We did this by drilling a hole and attaching a string to the clasp so it can be opened from the inside.**

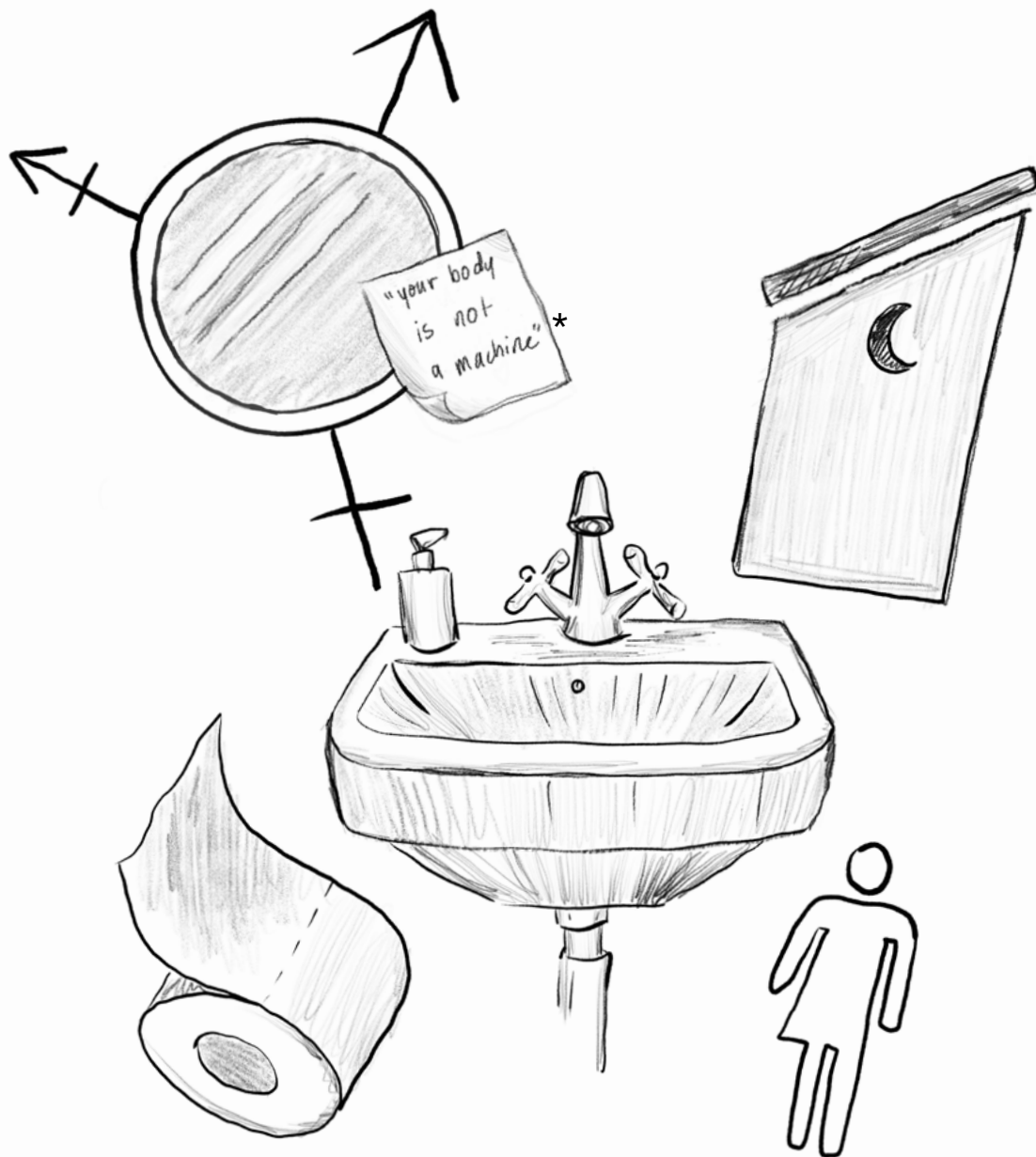


Step 10 - Customize!

From this point, you can choose the composting system that best suits your needs:

- **Bucket System:** Build a base with a toilet seat positioned over a 5-gallon bucket. The bucket collects waste and can be easily removed and emptied when full.
- **Vault System:** Dig a hole beneath the structure to create a stationary collection space for waste. This option is more permanent and may require additional planning for long-term use.





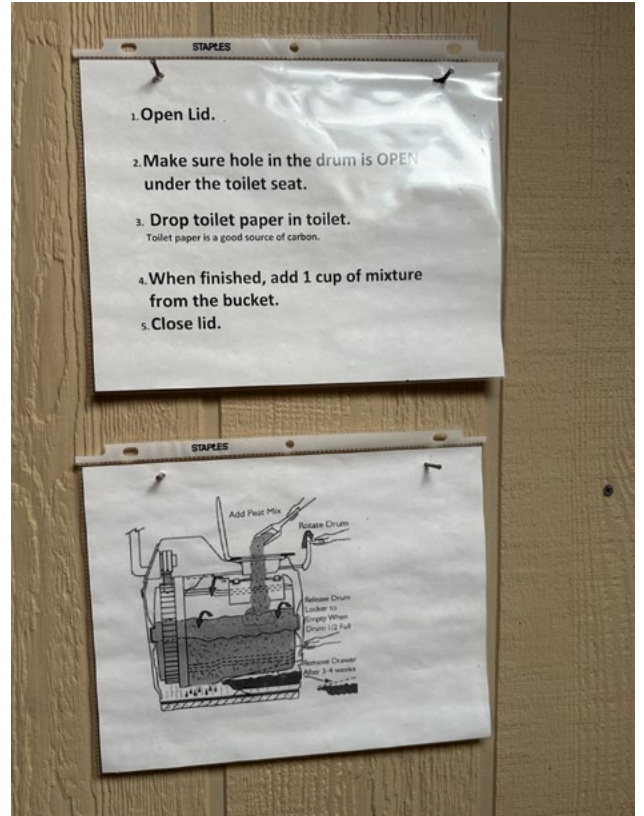
COMPOST TOILET INSPO

Here are some photos of our favorite composting toilets

* “Mi cuerpo no es una máquina” / “My body is not a machine” is a quote from Vania Galicia’s video art project as part of Not Our Farm’s All the Farm’s A Stage Fellowship, and can be viewed at: <https://www.notourfarm.org/the-fellowship/#VANIA>

Big Sur, California





Good Find Farm, Pennsylvania









La Granjita, New Mexico



Ashokra Farm
Albuquerque, New Mexico



A collage of photographs showing the interior of a wooden structure under construction. The walls are made of plywood and oriented strand board (OSB). Three hanging flower leis are visible. A door has a metal latch and handwritten text: "Lock to avoid a surprise!". Another door has a handle and handwritten text: "Pull Cork to open!". A toilet is visible in the lower part of the structure. A small poster of a person in a hat is on the right wall.

DIGNITY
WUZ
HERE!

CALL
1-800-ASH-OKRA
4 A QUD TIME!



Instructions
after using
toilet,
place layer of
peat moss
on top in
bucket!

please
replace
when full
Take full
bucket to
compost
pile
clean buckets



Chispas Farm
Albuquerque, New Mexico

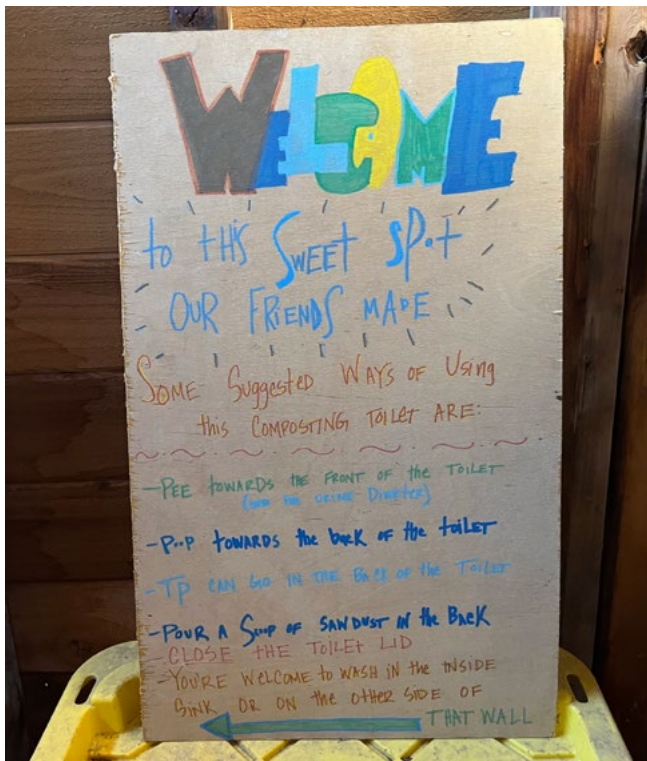






Chispas Farm
Albuquerque, New Mexico









BATHROOM DIGNITY: A COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS

Kathryn Kavanagh, National Farmers Union

An economic cost-benefit analysis is a framework that can compare the cost of preventing

a hazard event to the benefit of avoiding that hazard. If the benefit's expected value, the probability of the hazard event, multiplied by the cost of dealing with it, is equal to or greater than the cost of the preventative steps, then the project in consideration is worth it.

A preliminary analysis of the cost of dignified care, channeled through basic health infrastructure investment in the workplace, versus the cost of negligence in favor of short-term savings reveals that there are many benefits to the upfront costs of bathroom installation and maintenance in contrast to the high costs of dealing with the hazards of no-to-low bathroom access.

The benefits of good bathrooms and handwashing infrastructure include a clean, safe and healthy work environment, a lower risk of food-borne disease outbreak, good food safety practices, cleaner soil and water, workplace integrity and dignity, happier employees, better worker retention, etc. The numerous benefits likely outweigh the costs of installation and maintenance, which may be the only 'cons' to consider. The cons of inadequate bathroom access are vast: high pathogen presence, higher risk of contamination, no safe or sanitary waste disposal, a physical and metaphorical toxic work environment, the

list goes on... What would your customers think if they knew the truth? Do you think the value of risky produce is worth the cost of cutting corners to them?

Repeatedly roll the dice, and eventually the real costs of a hazard event will be realized. The longer a farm goes without adequate, safe bathroom and handwashing access, the higher the probability of a hazard occurring goes up. While farms may not wish to pay the costs of installation and maintenance due to a perceived low probability of risk, the reality is food-borne disease outbreaks are highly likely without adequate bathroom facilities and the potentially bankrupting cost of an outbreak only increases the longer measures are not taken.

According to FDA data, the average market value of products recalled for a business in 2014 was \$1,563,551, with a median of \$33,598. Small businesses experienced the vast majority of these recalls.¹ This potential loss in revenue from an outbreak is an average floor and doesn't even account for future lost revenue and reputational damage. Juxtapose this with the cost and maintenance of a porta potty, which can range from \$1,200 - \$3,000 annually with regular cleaning.² Even a composting toilet can be built for a few hundred dollars—and a staff work party can build up both infrastructure and morale on the farm.

It takes money to make money. It takes money to build basic infrastructure. An investment

1 <https://www.qualityassurancemag.com/article/how-much-does-a-food-recall-really-cost/>

2 [https://www.bigrentz.com/blog/porta-potty-rental-cost#:~:text=Standard:%20\\$25%E2%80%93\\$475,%2D-Stall%20trailer:%20\\$325%E2%80%93\\$5%2C350](https://www.bigrentz.com/blog/porta-potty-rental-cost#:~:text=Standard:%20$25%E2%80%93$475,%2D-Stall%20trailer:%20$325%E2%80%93$5%2C350)

is an outlay of money for profit or material result. Upholding basic biological needs is *not* a waste of money. If securing labor is one of the top issues facing farms today, who would voluntarily seek out a job where basic human needs and dignities were not respected or honored? Farm owners and managers have the opportunity to rise above regulatory exemptions to create healthy and dignified workplaces, which of course increases morale and overall farm health. Treating people with dignity should not be radical, it should be the baseline. If city office workers have bathroom access at

work, why shouldn't farm workers? Exceptions shouldn't be made when the workplace is out of public sight, out of mind. If farmers care for their land, their communities, and their customers – it is a simple extension of that care to ensure that our farm teams have the dignity and respect they deserve. Time and time again, the cost of care and respect comes at a true bargain against the cost of negligence, apathy, and valuing money-over morality. ☞



COMPOST TOILET RESOURCE:

<https://midwestpermaculture.com/super-clean-composting-toilet-design/>

FUNDING RESOURCES THAT COULD COVER BATHROOMS/HANDWASHING

contributed by the National Farmers Union

FUNDING RESOURCES FOR SANITATION:

Funding for sanitation is one of the bigger challenges when addressing available funding to support farmer hygiene and accessibility on farms. Although imperfect, there are a few avenues you can search to get assistance building, maintaining, or updating a bathroom facility. The goal is for this resource to be as evergreen as possible, however, some grants and funding may be unavailable or rolling depending on the state and time of year you're looking to apply. You may notice that not all of these programs are "no strings attached" or solely grants, they are a starting point to help offset the cost of accessing better bathroom infrastructure in your growing space.

MICROGRANTS

Microgrants are small funding amounts, typically a few hundred to a few thousand dollars, awarded to individuals or small businesses for specific projects. They are easier to apply for than larger grants, with simpler processes for application and reporting. Offered through programs like the USDA, state/local initiatives, and private foundations, they help fund small-scale projects and address challenges without significant financial strain.

- American Farmland Trust Brighter Future Fund

PRIVATE NONPROFIT OR FOUNDATION GRANTS

Some private organizations, especially those fo-

cusing on rural development, agriculture, or public health, may offer targeted funding for sanitation and water infrastructure. Look for regional nonprofits focused on farm sustainability or rural community health.

- The Awesome Foundation
- Venmo Small Business Grants

USDA GRANTS AND LOANS

It's important to note that USDA grants can be a tedious process to apply for, however, there are several offices you can reach out to depending on the type of funding available and this includes the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), a Farm Service Agency (FSA) officer, and your local County Extension Office. Here are a few examples of grants and loans that focus specifically on infrastructure and equipment projects:

- Water & Waste Disposal Loan & Grant Program - supports rural water and waste infrastructure projects
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) - provides assistance for water quality and waste management improvements
- Farm Service Agency (FSA) Loans - includes Direct Operating Loan and Microloan programs for infrastructure projects

WATER & WASTE DISPOSAL LOAN & GRANT PROGRAM

Open application rolling depending on state residence. This USDA Rural Development program provides funding to improve water and waste

infrastructure in rural areas with populations of 10,000 or fewer, tribal lands, and underserved border communities. Eligible applicants include state and local governments, nonprofits, and federally-recognized tribes that cannot obtain commercial credit on reasonable terms. Funding, offered as long-term, low-interest loans and potential grants, can be used for projects such as drinking water systems, sewer systems, stormwater management, and solid waste disposal, along with related costs like legal fees and land acquisition

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVES PROGRAM (EQIP) (best for existing plumbing or bathroom structures)

Administered by the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), EQIP provides financial and technical assistance to farmers for improving water quality and waste management. Some aspects of sanitary infrastructure, like waste disposal systems, may be eligible for funding.

FARM SERVICE AGENCY (FSA) LOANS

The Farm Service Agency offers loan programs like the Direct Operating Loan Program and Microloan Program to fund infrastructure improvements. These can potentially cover the costs of building or upgrading farm facilities, including sanitation.

SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (SBA) 7(A) OR CDC/504 LOAN PROGRAMS

If the farm is structured as a small business, the SBA's loan programs can help secure funding for facilities improvements, including sanitation infrastructure. These loans are often flexible in terms of how the funds can be used.

COMMUNITY FUNDRAISING OPTIONS

Sometimes, there aren't programs that are applicable for what you need on your farm, or you simply may not have the time to apply and seek out funding. In any case, gathering your community

to help raise money can be a short-term and unifying method to help actualize a building project. If you already have a specific budget or a rolling timeline, it might be best to go directly to crowd funding platforms like GoFundMe or Farm Raise with a specific project goal in mind. Make sure you understand how taxes are deducted from crowd funding donations and, if needed, ask a friend to help set it up for you on your behalf.

Alternatively, you could organize an event to help fundraise directly for your bathroom - this could be a farm dinner, a night of dancing, a music "farm aid" style show with local bands, clothing swap, bake sale, local artisan or vendor market, or a farm field day. Anything to tether a crowd to your bathroom project and story can make a compelling face-to-space impact.

- Platforms: GoFundMe, Farm Raise
- Community fundraising events: community led farm dinners, artisan markets, bake sales, or music shows to raise money for a specific project.

SEARCH TERMS, TOOLS AND RESOURCES

"Infrastructure and Equipment Grants" specifically paired with "agriculture" or "farms" "sanitation" and "wastewater" funding

Ambrook hosts an Farm Funding Library and has a specific ongoing list of updated funding opportunities for infrastructure and equipment grants. <https://ambrook.com/funding/project/infrastructure>

Check-in with local agricultural organizations, non-profits, community based organizations, or other grassroots groups around your state and city who keep their eyes on funding opportunities - they may post them on their social media or weekly/monthly newsletters. 🌱

HOW TO BUILD A PORTABLE HANDWASHING STATION FOR THE FARM

Making your own handwashing station is straightforward and cost-effective. You can purchase lumber, or use materials you already have and adjust these plans as needed.

This stand is about 36 inches tall, and accommodates a 5 - 10 gallon closed plastic container with a continuous flow valve and a bucket to catch the wash water. Hand soap is placed on the stand, and single-use paper towels are located in a plastic dishpan drawer that is built into the stand.

Many dimensions of this stand are based on the size of the dishpan drawer, so measure yours first and adjust as needed.

STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS

STEP 1: LAY OUT THE SIDES

You'll start with:

- 4 - 2 x 6 legs
- 4 - 2 x 4 leg connectors

Lay two of the 2 x 6 legs down parallel to each other.

Lay two of the 2 x 4 leg connectors on top of the legs.

Place the top leg connector far enough below the top of the legs to create a lip for the dishpan drawer to slide on. You need to account for the height of the dishpan's handle, so it fits under the plywood top you'll attach later.

Similarly, place the bottom leg connector about 1 inch above the bottom of the legs to allow for uneven ground.

STEP 2: SCREW THE LEG CONNECTORS TO THE LEGS

Use two screws in each end to secure the 2 x 4 leg connectors to the legs.

Pre-drill the holes to keep the wood from splitting.

Here, you can see how we placed the top leg connector down from the top of the legs to act as the dishpan drawer slide.

Repeat **STEPS 1 AND 2** for the second side.



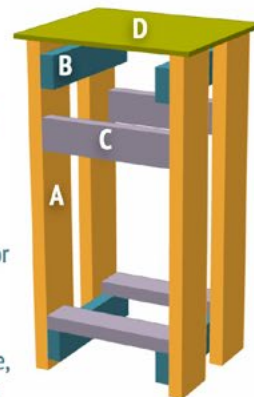
TOOLS AND MATERIALS

SAFETY EQUIPMENT AND TOOLS

Safety glasses, gloves, hearing protection, saw, drill, drill bits, tape measure, square, pencil.

LUMBER

- A. Legs
4 - 2 x 6 cut to 36" long.
- B. Leg connectors
4 - 2 x 4 cut to 15" long, or to fit the length of the dishpan.
- C. Cross pieces
4 - 2 x 4 cut to 14¹/₄" long, or to fit the width of the dishpan.
- D. Plywood - 1/2" thick or more, cut to 16" x 18", or to fit top of stand with a small overhang.



SCREWS

36 - 2¹/₂" deck screws

PLASTIC DISHPAN

This design uses a standard 12-quart dishpan that is 15" L x 12³/₄" W x 6¹/₂" H. It serves as the drawer under the water container to hold single-use paper towels. Costs \$4 to \$8.



SUPPLIES TO STOCK YOUR STATION

WATER DISPENSER

This blue "Aqua-Tainer" holds 7 gallons of water and has an open/close continuous flow valve. Available online, and at some home stores and outdoor stores. Costs \$15 to \$20.



TRASH CAN WITH A LID

A 5 gallon bucket with a lid works well.

WATER CATCHING BUCKET

Standard 5 gallon bucket

SOAP - LIQUID OR BAR

PAPER TOWELS

STEP 3: DETERMINE LENGTH OF THE CROSS PIECES

Stand the legs up and set the dishpan between them, resting the rim on the top leg connectors.

1. Measure between the legs to determine the length to cut the 2 x 4 cross pieces. The dishpan should fit snugly, but still easily slide on the leg connectors.

2. Cut these four 2 x 4s to the length you measured, and hold them in place to be sure of a good fit before screwing into place.

**STEP 4: ATTACH THE LOWER CROSS PIECES**

Take two of the 2 x 4 cross pieces and lay them across the lower leg connectors.

It works best if you lay these two pieces flat and screw down into the leg connectors.

1. Pre-drill two holes near the ends of each cross piece.

2. Screw the cross pieces in place with two screws on each end.

With these pieces installed flat, this can be used as a shelf to hold the catch bucket when the station is not in use.

**STEP 5: ATTACH THE TOP CROSS PIECES**

Take the last two 2 x 4 cross pieces and secure them below the top leg connectors.

1. Place them low enough so the dishpan drawer fits in the space above. The rim of the dishpan needs to slide on the top leg connectors.

2. Pre-drill and screw the cross pieces in place using two screws on each end.



STEP 6: CUT PLYWOOD TO FIT THE TOP OF THE STAND

1. Measure the top of your stand to determine the size of the plywood top. We recommend at least a 1/2 inch overhang on all four sides.

2. Cut the plywood to fit the top of your stand, and screw it in place.

Yours might be a slightly different size than the one here, depending on your materials.

**STEP 7: INSTALL DISHPAN DRAWER, WATER CONTAINER, AND SUPPLIES**

1. Store the single-use paper towels in the dishpan drawer.

Fill water container with clean water, and set on top of the stand. Set soap next to the water container.

2. Put a bucket underneath the spigot of the water container to catch the water. Do not empty the bucket of water in the produce field or where it could be tracked into the produce field.

Keep a lidded trash can handy for the used towels to keep them from blowing away.

**FINAL NOTES**

This is just one idea for a handwashing station. You can make this any size and with any materials. You could use scrap lumber or an existing table or cart. Instead of using the dishpan drawer, you could install a paper towel dispenser under the top. However, the towels might get wet in the rain.

If you take a pickup truck out to the field, you could simply set the water container and supplies on the truck bed and place the catch bucket and trash can on the ground.

Any of these handwashing station ideas can be used in the field, and also at your farmers' market booth or roadside stand - anywhere you need to provide a place for people to wash their hands.

This handwashing station is based on an original design by Michele Schermann, U of MN Department of Horticultural Science; Annalisa Hultberg, U of MN Extension; and Jill Randerson, Kidzibits, Inc., Minneapolis, MN.

Layout and editing by Emily Tepe, University of Minnesota Department of Horticultural Science.
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MORE INFO AND RESOURCES**University of Minnesota Extension**

On-Farm Food Safety Program

www.extension.umn.edu/safety/growing-safe-food

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and The Good Acre
for their collaboration
on this project.
thegoodacre.org



DIY Handwashing stations - Photos: UMN Extension
<https://extension.umn.edu/growing-safe-food/handwashing-station>



RECLAIMING URINE AS FERTILIZER

from the Rich Earth Institute

Human urine is rich in plant-available nutrients, including nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium, as well as secondary and micronutrients. The NPK fertilizer value of urine is roughly 0.6 - 0.1 - 0.2.

Farmers around the world have harnessed the fertilizing power of human urine for millennia. In recent years, interest in urine nutrient reclamation has been surging, driven by spiking synthetic fertilizer prices, global supply disruptions, and increasing regulations on aquatic nutrient pollution.

The Rich Earth Institute has been researching the technological and cultural components needed to apply fertilizer derived from human urine since 2012. As the operator of the first urine nutrient reclamation program in the United States, Rich Earth provides over 12,000 gallons of urine-derived fertilizer to local farmers annually. The Institute is now supporting other communities to establish their own urine reclamation programs.

Rich Earth recently published a *Farmer Guide to Fertilizing with Urine*. This resource provides farmers with practical insights into reclaiming human urine as a nutrient-rich fertilizer. It joins Rich Earth's guides to community and home garden urine recycling, offering resources to practitioners at different scales.

The guide is rooted in Rich Earth's extensive research with farmer-partners in Southern Vermont and enriched by insights from the international research community. Studies from around the world confirm that urine fertilization can achieve yields comparable to synthetic fertilizers across various crops. Rich Earth has conducted the only known field studies of human urine fertilizer in the U.S. Northeast, with trials on hay, hemp, sweet corn, figs, cut flowers, and nursery trees. All participating farmers reported positive outcomes, noting comparable or improved yields and enhanced plant robustness with urine-treated crops.

While certain permits are required for using urine fertilizer at the farm-scale, anyone can collect urine to reclaim safely as a fertilizer in their own home gardens. Rich Earth's "Urine My Garden" resources include free public webinars, a how-to-guide, and a community science survey.

The Rich Earth Institute is curious how peecycling tools may be implemented on farms not only to strengthen local nutrient sovereignty, but to improve sanitation access for farmworkers. In Vermont, there is limited data describing the need for



bathrooms among farmworkers. What is the scale of the sanitation access gap, and what are the underlying causes? In what contexts could urine-collecting composting toilets be implemented to address inadequate sanitation access? Let us know your thoughts! ☺

Contact the Rich Earth team at:

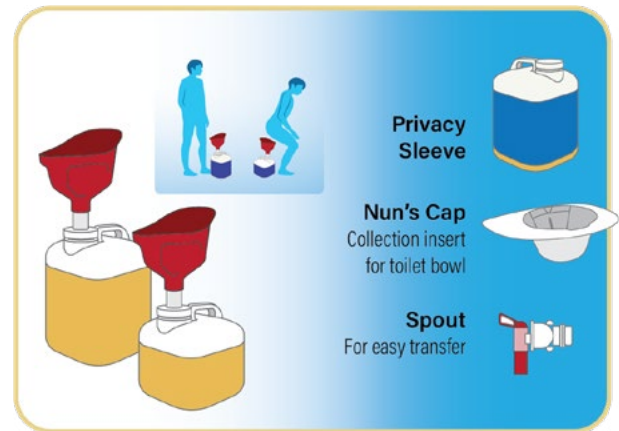
info@richearthinstitute.org

@peecyclers

or visit our website at:

RichEarthInstitute.org

Rich Earth has designed a device called the peecycler that can be used to collect urine for reuse:



Linear Nutrient Flows: Extraction & Pollution



Completed Food Nutrient Cycle: Circular Abundance



A close-up photograph of a dense, lush green field. The plants have various leaf shapes, including some with deeply lobed or fern-like leaves and others with more rounded, trifoliate leaves. Small, delicate pink flowers are scattered throughout the foliage. The overall scene is vibrant and textured, with many green leaves and stems visible.

EXCRETORY

A close-up photograph of a lush, green field of plants. The plants have finely divided, fern-like leaves and several small, pink, daisy-like flowers. Some of the leaves are covered in small, clear dew drops. The word "JUSTICE" is overlaid in the center in a white, serif font.

JUSTICE

to ponder –

EXCRETORY JUSTICE AND THE CONNECTION TO BATHROOMS & DIGNITY FOR FARMWORKERS

The following is a framework offered up by Sarah Nahar, M.Div. Sarah is from Elkhart, Indiana Potawatomi traditional land and is a fifth year PhD student at Syracuse University. Her research focus is on the toilet, both the ritual and receptacle. Below are excerpts from her keynote in November 2024 at the Rich Earth Institute entitled, *To Have Excretory Justice, We Have To Deal With Our Crap*.

Global connections to bathroom access and dignity and safety

“The number of people living in urban areas without access to improved sanitation is increasing because of rapid growth in the last 30 years. This means there remain 3.5 billion people with no toilet, no bucket, no pit latrine, no port-a-potty, no box. Left untreated and segregated from the soil, excreta nearly always breeds diseases. In many parts of the world, diarrhea—something people in the overdeveloped world usually consider a minor nuisance—is deadly.

Over 2,000 children die of diarrhea each day (Liu et al., 2012). Diarrhea and subsequent dehydration are the second biggest killer of children under five years old worldwide, the source of more deaths than HIV, malaria, and measles combined” (ibid.). “The 1.8 million child deaths each year related to clean water and sanitation dwarf the casualties associated with violent conflict. By naming this crisis as more deadly than war, advocates for change paint a picture of devastation caused by the lack of dignified sanitation.”

Defecatory Justice examines the power dynamics of all the socio-technical systems that influence human elimination and the subsequent journey of that expelled matter.

Excretory Justice works alongside other visions of justice in the service of collective liberation, planetary regeneration, and the adoption of pro-environmental behaviors. As a practical concern, it seeks to ensure that what comes out of our bodies remains within the natural cycle of decomposition.

Poop is considered disposable

People are considered disposable

Worldview = the earth is a supply house and a landfill, not a living entity in which we live, move, and have our being.

Why do we treat people like shit? Because we treat shit like shit.

Our excreta is not only a resource for other beings, it, like everything else, as Winona LaDuke writes, is our relative. This line of thinking can approach a discussion of how to revitalize relationships to one's own excreta, and frameworks of relative and kin versus resource. Shit is dead stuff but also teeming with life—it's you, but the old you.

"The

'FLUSH and FORGET' society

is one of

DISPOSABILITY

and

DISPENSABILITY."

SHIFTING TOWARD POLITICS OF
INDISPENSABILITY =

- The reclamation of connection to the weirdest, grossest, most culturally despised part of us can help us reconnect to the whole of life, increase our tolerance for conflict, tension, and willingness to be with the stuff we don't like.
- In a politics of indispensability, we do not have the option to simply push people away or be violent to them, dumping them into locations that are out of sight and out of mind.
- Rather, we develop systems of dealing with difficulty like we'd deal with pathogens ~ safe decomposition that can then be reintegrated into the soil and grow. 🌱



