

Summary & Resources - Rough Draft Farmstead September 2022 OAK Farmer Field Day



No-Till Organic Market Gardening

“Farmer Jesse” Frost is known for his creative and helpful use of words, demonstrated through his recent book, his many podcasts and YouTube videos, and his numerous freelance articles. He and Hannah Crabtree both provided plenty of words of wisdom and a full tour of their [Rough Draft Farmstead](#) in this September Farmer Field Day.

“Let the soil work it out”

“Idealism is not going to help you grow a lot of food.”

“It’s always an adventure!”

Within their $\frac{3}{4}$ -acre in biointensive market garden production, they take full advantage of the space with multiple plots of 4’x50’ beds yielding 5-10 crops per bed each year, and 18” pathways, often managed as living pathways of clover, chamomile, or grass. The in-between spaces are planted as “hedge wedges” containing herbs, flowers, native perennials, and birdhouses to attract and sustain winged pollinators and avian allies for pest control.

Still learning the land in their second year at this Anderson County farm, Jesse continues to battle drainage and compaction issues resulting from years of grazing by horses and alpacas. (TIP: If you're trying to determine how deep to take your broadfork to break up compaction, Jesse recommends sticking rebar into the ground until it stops - that's where the compaction issue lies.) "Learning these different plots and how to treat them differently - it's always an adventure." While some plots' soils respond well to an initial shallow till and compost, flame weeding and stale seedbed preparation, others require more intensive deep mulching to build their living soils, reminding Jesse to let go of any dogmatic practice and to simply learn the land and keep paying attention.

Intercropping, for example, is helpful in maximizing bed space, but Jesse has learned that it doesn't work in all situations: carrots respond to sub-soil competition by putting out more foliage resulting in an undesirable smaller root size. (TIP: Rough Draft plants green onions weekly, wherever they can fill space!)

Experimenting, being creative, and having fun with their farming has allowed Jesse and Hannah to find systems that work for their crops and their markets, as well as their growing family and their own needs. As they learned how isolating farming can be, their search for this farm led them to explore rural neighborhood land where they're surrounded by residential yards on all sides. The land search considered farm-specific needs like light, irrigation, and slope, essentials like price point and proximity to market, but also a necessary final step: "Go meet the neighbors! If you get a bad vibe from them, consider that seriously." ... and once you've bought that land, keep the conversation with neighbors going. "You always have to make time to keep those relationships happy - no matter how busy you are."

As Hannah became mother to one and then two boys, her relationship with the farming business has changed, as she became less involved in the field and more involved with the marketing, bookkeeping and homeschooling. "It's been a challenge," she shared, and mentioned the importance of having support - family, neighbors, part-time employees who may help with the crops or may provide childcare.

And, of course, one of the wedges in Rough Draft's production space serves everyone's needs: a small soccer field wedged between the high tunnel and the propagation house.

OAK is grateful to Hannah and Jesse (and Further and Ellis) who shared their time, experience and practices with us for OAK's Farmer Field Day of September 2022. Practical, down-to-earth, gracious hosts and farming systems - thanks, Rough Draft!! :) Follow them on Facebook / Instagram @roughdraftfarmstead, or email them at roughdraftfarmstead@gmail.com

Resource Links:

- OAK resources:
 - [Upcoming OAK Farmer Field Days](#) - Only two left in 2022!
 - [Join OAK today!](#)
 - Resources marked with an asterisk provide OAK Member discounts!
 - [OAK newsletters](#) - for farmers and consumers
 - [OAK's Annual Farming Conference](#) - January 26-28, 2023, Frankfort KY
 - [OAK YouTube](#) farmer resources / conference and field day playlists
 - [OAK Transition Trainer program](#) - for assistance with certifying organic
 - USDA's [National Organic Program](#)
- Jesse Frost and Hannah Crabtree's Links:
 - [Rough Draft Farmstead](#)
 - [The Living Soil Handbook](#) by Jesse Frost
 - Or [via Chelsea Green](#) to use an OAK Member discount
 - No-Till Growers [community of podcasts](#) and [videos](#)

- Equipment and Resources:
 - Broadfork and more! - [Earth Tools](#)*
 - [Jang seeder](#) - Johnny's Selected Seeds*
 - [Caterpillar tunnel](#) - Farmer's Friend
 - [COG Pro](#) - certified organic recordkeeping
 - [Real Organic Project](#) - certified organic and then some
 - [Locals Pizza Pub and Food Hub](#) - Frankfort KY local foods market
- Funding opportunities:
 - [NRCS EQIP](#) - high tunnels and more!
 - [Scenic Acres](#) - WKY greenhouse provider
 - [Grow Appalachia](#) - EKY greenhouse provider
 - [KSU Small-scale Farm Grant Program](#)
 - [USDA FSA Beginning Farmer Loan](#)
 - [Ag Credit loans](#)