



# Getting Back to Basics



For over 29 years Lori Mather worked for a large corporation in Saginaw. Then came the layoff. She and her husband saw this as an opportunity to get back to basics.

Getting back to basics wasn't a new concept to Lori who grew up farming and raising chickens. Still, it was a long way from the life she had lead for many years in the city. "You'd work to eat and to play. I took regular vacations, traveled the world. I had the opportunity to do a lot of things." But these days Lori is more interested in healthy living. "Our big focus is to eat healthier," said Lori. "When I was working it was usually easier to stop for fast food, but not anymore. We no longer eat out of cans and boxes."

Living sustainably and becoming self-sufficient has become the biggest thrust in her life. So they moved north to National City (where her husband has a small business) and bought a "fixer-upper". Then came a flyer from the local extension office advertising WISEWOMAN and the Entrepreneurial Gardening Program. In no time at all she had a garden in her backyard. "We were excited about being able to have our own sources of food."

"I made a few rookie mistakes," said Lori, describing how she burnt a lot of plants by overfertilizing. The area where she lives is very sandy, so she spent much of this first year adding to and amending the soil. Still she was able to grow some zucchini, peppers, cauliflower, broccoli and cabbage. This year included lots of canning. "But we now have enough to last us all winter."

Lori loves experimenting with new recipes and is always on the lookout for something new to try. But that wasn't always the case. "I never was the cook at home. Mom was always the cook. When I got out on my own, well, I didn't do very good." Today, all that has changed. One of her favorites is Garden Goulash. "That's making a meal from whatever is in the garden."

Lori credits her garden and healthy eating with a 30 point drop in her blood pressure and an 80 point drop in her cholesterol.

Self-sufficiency also means backyard chickens. "Building a shed for them was one of the first things we did when we moved here." In addition to what she uses at home and gives to friends, Lori sells eggs to the local gas station/convenience store.

She and her husband also rely on hunting and fishing. We buy very little meat at the store - maybe turkey and ham on sale for Christmas, some hamburger for hamburgers, but it's venison for most everything else. "It's really low in fat. A healthy meat."

And what about next year's gardening plans? "I will definitely grow more of everything." Lori also plans to get several low tunnels and start selling her extra veggies at her business in town.

"You can have money or you can have time. Now I want time - time to relax, to be in nature. You find there are a lot of things you don't need when you take it back to basics."