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March 14, 2006

Los Angeles, Crazy-Adjacent

Last week I decided in no uncertain terms ... it is FINAL. The time has come. I HAVE GOT TO MOVE.

Now ya'll know I love my little house, and I love the Valley, and I love my yard and even my crazy neighbors, and best of all I love that my real address is not actually in Encino, California, but is *Encino-Adjacent*, as if that were a real place. And yet in Los Angeles, it is perfectly acceptable to tell people you live in Encino-Adjacent, because people get it. They, after all, are living in Sherman Oaks Adjacent, Beverly Hills Adjacent or Hollywood Hills Adjacent.

But this was IT. I'd just had enough and I HAD TO MOVE.

Because of traffic.

After spending TWO FULL HOURS commuting the 20 miles to downtown on one rainy day, I was FED UP. Done. Ready to pack up and haul all four cats and a disturbing amount of Patons Up Country to an overpriced loft in downtown.

But then on Saturday evening I came home to the sounds of my neighbors to the left having a backyard boogie with a pinata, while my neighbors directly behind me were playing the soundtrack to "Hair" and loudly discussing their DOG'S agent. No. Really. Their DOG HAS AN AGENT. And I looked around my yard, and I decided, once and for all again, to stay at my house for the rest of the year for three very compelling reasons.

- 1) I am lazy.
- 2) It would be fiscally irresponsible of me to move when I am trying to dig myself out of debt. Moving = first month's, last month's, deposit, pet deposit, moving expenses, new stuff from Ikea, new shoes to match the new handbag I bought while on my way to Ikea, etc.
- 3) And, finally, the primary reason to stay put is that I have become completely and totally OBSESSED WITH GROWING A SQUARE WATERMELON and to achieve this goal, I must have a place to grow said watermelon. Such as my back yard.

That's right, you heard me. I HAVE GONE INSANE. And now, apparently, square!

It all began innocently enough. I was having lunch with three of my coworkers, all of whom are Asian. We were talking about... I have no idea what. Because what sort of conversation naturally segueways into square watermelons? Oh, I remember! One of the guys was telling me about his most recent trip to Japan and about the expensive cantaloupe he'd eaten there.

Me: How expensive is 'expensive' in melon dollars?

Coworker A: It was about \$100 for the cantaloupe.

Me: For *how many* cantaloupes?

Coworker A: One. \$100 for one cantaloupe.

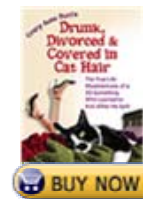
Me: Did you feel really dumb after you bought a \$100 cantaloupe?

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Coworker B: Was it square?

Me: Now that's normally the sort of cracked-out question I ask! Way to go, Coworker B! I've rubbed off on you!

Coworker B: Well, they do have square watermelons in Japan, you know.

Me: They DO NOT. Stop fibbing. This is just like the time you told me that all cellphones have a GPS locator in them!

(All three coworkers at the same time): They do.

Me: I do not believe you and your square watermelon story.

So, of course after lunch we all returned to Corporate Job, Inc., and focused on the important and dedicated task of ... researching the existence of square watermelons. And happily I report to you that I WAS WRONG, because they do exist, and I completely stole this image from the internets to show you:



The Japanese are magic people. They manage to invent the most extraordinary things, and now I have become obsessed, OBSESSED! with growing myself a square watermelon. I have discussed with every engineer at work the possible growing/shaping container options and what the building materials may be, and what will be hinged or removable and I have decided to set out on a path of SCIENCE and also, probably drunkenness, because nothing goes better with gardening and mad science experiments than a nice cold beer! And I am going to make the backyard in a growing wonderland of square fruit.

I feel I may have finally found my life's calling: Drinking beer and writing about failed attempts at gardening. Because already this little adventure of mine is starting out on the crazy foot, and the crazy foot leads to funny stories about stuff I have messed up, usually while drinking.

Exhibit A: My Gardener Laughs At Me

As I have mentioned somewhere else in this website, one of the inneresting quirks about people in L.A. is that none of them do their own yardwork. No one mows their own yard (no one washes their own car, either, but that's a whole nother column) and so my little rented piddlysquat house in Encino-Adjacent comes with a gardener, who is named Francisco.

Francisco and I have talked about my desire to create a garden, and also how I don't want to cut off my foot with a roto-tiller while digging up the back yard. He suggested

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creating raised beds for the garden and offered to bring me some scrap lumber and dirt which he will sell to me for "muy cheap."

Me: Ok, so we're all set on the dirt?

Francisco: Si, el fin de semana... el ocho de abril?

Me: Thanks, sounds great! Oh! Francisco? Um ... is it organic dirt?

Francisco: ...?

[Long pause.]

Francisco: Si ... sure, miss ... es *organic* dirt.

And we looked at each other for one long moment while Francisco studiously tried not to burst out laughing. Then I walked inside and as I closed the door I heard his helper say, "ORGANIC dirt!" and they had a hearty little chuckle courtesy of one crazy white woman.

I can only imagine the conversation that Francisco will have, maybe forever, with other gardeners in the Greater Los Angeles and North Valley region. And the laughter. OH THE LAUGHTER.

Francisco: And then this crazy ass white lady asked me if the DIRT was ORGANIC!!

Gardeners from across Los Angeles: Hah hah!! You should charge her more for it!! Crazy white lady and her ORGANIC DIRT!!

And to you, Francisco, and to all gardeners who have heard the tale of the Crazy White Woman And Her Organic Dirt, all I have to say is ... WAIT UNTIL YOU SEE THE WAY I GROW A WATERMELON.

Posted by [laurie](#) at March 14, 2006 07:23 AM

Comments

#1--whoopie!!

you can grow a cucumber in a vinegar bottle too...that looks pretty cool..kind of like one of those science experiments!!

Posted by: [Cheryl](#) at March 14, 2006 07:30 AM

Yes, Francisco and crew will definitely be laughing for years to come. Especially if you succeed in growing a square watermelon. Also, you have made the right choice to not move at this time. If you wait until you have successfully grown the watermelon, perhaps it will be financially feasible to move then. Of course you might not want to move and instead stay put so that you can continue to grow square watermelons.

Posted by: [Dagny](#) at March 14, 2006 07:33 AM

Perhaps you could sell the square watermelons for \$100 a piece and thus finance the move, the stuff from IKEA, the new purse, and the new shoes!

Posted by: [jessica](#) at March 14, 2006 07:39 AM

"Organic dirt" makes perfect sense. Yes, there is such a thing.

I submit that organic dirt is dirt mixed with organic materials, such as good mulch.

I further submit that organic dirt is free of harsh pesticides and herbicides.

Maybe your gardener and his helper turn their noses up at the notion of "organic dirt" because they like to use bad-for-you-and-the-world chemicals like Round-Up and pesticides. You might want to check that out, Laurie. Look out for yourself and your dependent cats.

Posted by: [Priscilla](#) at March 14, 2006 07:46 AM

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Well, of course the Japanese would invent bonsai watermelon. I cannot wait to see how you grow it.

I probably should not point this out to your germophobic self: basically organic dirt = poop. When it comes to gardening, Poop Is Good. At least if it has sat around for a while before being applied to the garden.

Posted by: [Lucia](#) at March 14, 2006 07:52 AM

Having ordered many truckloads of dirt (topsoil,, mmmm) for a raised bed garden, I can tell y'all that what it contained was, in very many instances, NOT organic. Bits of concrete block, nails, old shingles, etc., because the topsoil came from the construction down the street. Who knew? We also failed to mention that we wanted it screened, so had to pick chunks of someone else's house out of our garden for several weeks. So, it never ever hurts to ask...

Posted by: [tiff](#) at March 14, 2006 07:54 AM

I wanna grow square watermelons now too. I had no clue of the existence until I read your blog today. Thank you for the education.

Posted by: [Kimberly](#) at March 14, 2006 07:54 AM

I believe you can purchase small forms to make interesting shapes of all kind of melons--google may be of more use than me. But I swear you can get casts that will help you grow funny shapes. (More than just square, though I do love the square watermelons.)

Posted by: [Mintyfresh](#) at March 14, 2006 08:01 AM

I second Pricilla's concern for you and your cats re the pesticides. Granted, cats are pests at times, but still. Chemicals. Evil.

Posted by: Nancy in TX at March 14, 2006 08:02 AM

Now I feel bad at my reaction the other day to your organic dirt question. Apparently I am no better than the skeptic Francisco. I hope you will forgive me in time for me to sample your square watermelon! With some beer, of course.

Posted by: [jen](#) at March 14, 2006 08:03 AM

Oh my... organic dirt indeed. My silly mind sat here thinking "well of course there is organic dirt, isn't all dirt organic".

I can't wait to see your square watermelon. I'm sure it will be simply beautiful.

Posted by: [Kim](#) at March 14, 2006 08:13 AM

Here's a different way of looking at it...as the science teacher at my last teaching employ would point out: organic is a mis-nomer. In science it's organic or inorganic, i.e. either living or non-living. I've asked my dad what he thinks about dirt and well, he took the same tack. Not to generalize, but I'm gonna, viva la raza and all that but, many mexicans see dirt as living. It's what makes other things grow. So asking if it's "alive or not alive" is like asking if you breath air or water.

But yeah, a better question to ask is how many pesticides have been used with this dirt. Too many and NOTHING will grow, esp. if it has been exposed to too much Round-Up.

Posted by: [Mary \(in Tahoe\)](#) at March 14, 2006 08:19 AM

Huge decision not to move. My dh worked in studio city & we lived in Duarte, it was hell!!!! That was 15 years ago. I wonder what square watermelon taste like?? Now I need to google. Oh I am sure you can get your own organic dirt, somewhere. If you feel you really want it. Good Luck!!!

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Posted by: [Cristina](#) at March 14, 2006 08:24 AM

Ok one more question, why are there square melons?? What is the purpose?? Wasn't round good enough??? Ok 3 questions....

Posted by: [Cristina](#) at March 14, 2006 08:27 AM

Well, I guess they're easier to ship and not moving is probably a good thing, too ... saw a cross-stitch sampler once at a military friend's home: "War is hell. Moving is a close second."

Posted by: [Feral Dustbunny](#) at March 14, 2006 08:33 AM

Dude! I have totally been wanting to grow a square watermelon too!! Unfortunately, I'm not sure if watermelons even grow in Minnesota. But hey, there are other shapeable fruit out there!

We should have a square fruit/vegetable grow-a-long!!

Posted by: [Pea](#) at March 14, 2006 08:35 AM

See, that fascinates the hell out of me. What do they USE to grow them in that does not promote mold or rot, and also allows sun to get them green? I'll bet those aew watermelon CANDLES. Look, there are wicks. Silly white woman, fooled again.

Posted by: [Dave Daniels](#) at March 14, 2006 08:40 AM

I grew a pumpkin into a chainlink fence once. Literally INTO the fence. I didn't plan it that way but it just goes to show you that fruit (and veggies) are quite malleable. Can't wait to see your square melons! Good luck!

Posted by: [Susan](#) at March 14, 2006 08:44 AM

They are growing Mickey shaped pumpkins at EPCOT center. You just put a mold around the fruit and it grows into the shape of the mold. The mold is clear so it gets sunlight.

Posted by: [Wendy](#) at March 14, 2006 08:45 AM

Well, you might be a tad eccentric, but you are also darn funny!! Anyway, Eccentric is Good.
Rock on with the melons!

Posted by: [marcia](#) at March 14, 2006 08:47 AM

susan wants to see your melons.

today is already better than yesterday. thanks!

Posted by: [miss kendra](#) at March 14, 2006 08:49 AM

A quote from an article I found:

"Their best success so far, however, has come from placing the young melons in the openings of plain 8-inch cinder blocks."

This refers to using "sugar baby" type watermelons that don't get all that huge to begin with.

Read up on the Square Foot Gardening. (which has nothing to do with square fruit, but everything to do with raised bed planting and stuff) We're planting our first Square Foot Garden in the yard this year. I might just have to get me some sugar babies and some cinder blocks.

Posted by: [Elabeth](#) at March 14, 2006 08:54 AM

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"Where are we going, Aunt Purl? And why are we in this handbasket?"

Okay... I gotta say - I lived in Japan for three years, and while the weird food like square watermelons can be pricey, normal food IS NOT! This idea irks me. And if things are a bit more expensive than in North America, you have to remember that your pay is higher accordingly.

Mini-rant over.

Jo

PS - I have Sobokawa's ruling the universe picture in my cube at work. She gives me courage to go on...

Posted by: [Jo](#) at March 14, 2006 08:57 AM

FYI. Not all pesticides are bad. There are organic pesticides. The word "pesticide" merely means that it gets rid of pests.

Posted by: [Dagny](#) at March 14, 2006 09:04 AM

I think shapes like Mickey might be a little tough, but I totally think you can do a square watermelon...very cool!
I'm attempting a pinapple, you just cut off the top of a pineapple and then stick it (the top) in dirt, and it grows a new fruit in about 18 months! Well, not here, since the winter is too cold, but there maybe.

Posted by: [Melissa](#) at March 14, 2006 09:06 AM

Wow, that's odd. Maybe the Japanese like their watermelons square because they're easier to slice and store in their (probably tiny) refrigerators?

Good luck with your gardening! Remember to get heirloom vegetable seeds - there are lots of great sites, like www.victoryseeds.com. I'm jealous that you have a patch of dirt on which to grow ANYTHING, much less square stuff.

Posted by: [Samantha](#) at March 14, 2006 09:10 AM

Jo-- just for clarification, it was a special cantaloupe that was expensive, not all food in the country of Japan as far as I know. Although I did not really question him on the food once I learned of square watermelons!! (Which, according to the innernets, sell for \$82 apiece in Japan.) (Do you think I can sell mine for \$82? Assuming they come out somewhat square?)

heh heh... organic dirt. I just meant 'dirt free of pesticides, herbicides and toxic waste' but he thought I had fallen off the (organic) turnip truck, no doubt.

Posted by: [laurie](#) at March 14, 2006 09:11 AM

According to the research done by the entire web development team here at WGIT, Inc., the square melons are the exact size of the door-shelf in the typical Japanese refrigerator. How cool is that!! It's very space-saving. And square. Square!

Posted by: [laurie](#) at March 14, 2006 09:13 AM

My Japanese, crazy and square boss said that they also grow square bamboo in Japan. Uhh, why?
And how does one eat the watermelon flesh out of the corners? This is not right but I am waiting for the square eggs!

Posted by: [Darcy](#) at March 14, 2006 09:17 AM

Now I want a square watermelon.

Posted by: [Kim](#) at March 14, 2006 09:19 AM

heh heh.... you crack me up.

I was looking for an agent for Minou - I wanna be a scary stage mom!!!!!! But they all want money - I want them to pay me money.

My girl is a STAR!

Posted by: [ang](#) at March 14, 2006 09:20 AM

Maybe you should try Northern Cali for organic dirt, people here wouldn't laugh at all. Why would you want to eat pesticide and whatnot which will end up in your produce if it's in your dirt? I can't wait to see if you do it, but the 2 hour commute, God, I couldn't handle that either.

Posted by: [Stella](#) at March 14, 2006 09:25 AM

I think they make square ones so they can charge twice as much for them@!!!

Posted by: [Cheryl](#) at March 14, 2006 09:27 AM

Laurie,

Make sure that your soil has some sand in it also...watermelons like sandy soil.

Posted by: [Lynae](#) at March 14, 2006 09:27 AM

Ang-- your girl is already a STAR!! :)

Posted by: [laurie](#) at March 14, 2006 09:30 AM

Oh Laurie.... you have made my day, Organic dirt!! I love it!

HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA

Heidi

Posted by: [IdahoHeidi](#) at March 14, 2006 09:35 AM

Plant marigolds with your melons to keep pests away and it looks pretty too. Good luck with your garden. What I want to know is how do they grow seedless watermelons if they don't have seeds?

Posted by: [psychomom](#) at March 14, 2006 09:36 AM

I think you should use that cat poop for the organic dirt. With Soba's "fertilizer", your melons will rule the world!!!!

\$100 for a cantalope. How friggin insane is that?!?!?

Posted by: [MonkeyGurrl](#) at March 14, 2006 09:38 AM

Laurie, I'm going to get all philosophical on you if that's ok . . . the moving question. That's a big question. It always takes money to move and you're doing so well with your budget. It would be a shame to throw the budget off. Maybe the fact that you're tossing the idea the idea of moving around means that you're ready to move on or make some changes in your life. i.e. dating?? I know that two hour commute is a very logical reason to move, no doubt! But perhaps your wandering mind is just giving you a clue that you're ready for more challenges in life than surviving. I know when I try to date or make other changes to my personal life, I need my home life and work life relatively stable. But that's me, I can't juggle too many things at once! I'm rambling, just my two cents!

Posted by: [Colleen](#) at March 14, 2006 09:39 AM

Now, I wonder how my ten-year old daughter became obsessed with growing a square watermelon? Hmm....

Posted by: [Trixie](#) at March 14, 2006 09:41 AM

The Japanese are indeed a magical people and perhaps have something to do with gnomes.

Square watermelon! Hilarious! Brilliant! Japanese!

Helen

Posted by: [Helen](#) at March 14, 2006 10:03 AM

I really would love to help with this wine-drinking, beer-drinking, square-watermelon-in-organic-dirt-growing adventure. Too bad I live across the country. And don't know you. And am not a stalker. Sigh.

Posted by: [Lara](#) at March 14, 2006 10:12 AM

Please, oh please promise you will give us a play-by-play of your square watermelon growing. My 8 year old son has already quieted his non-believing classmates that, yes, you CAN grow deer corn. (Who knew?) Imagine the boost to his wilty self-esteem if he walked into 3rd grade this fall with a square watermelon??!!

Posted by: [south texan](#) at March 14, 2006 10:22 AM

Well, in the truest sense of the world, "organic" means anything containing Carbon atoms, (science geek here), but in the gardening sense, it means chemical-fertilizer-and-pesticide-free, and I don't think that's too outrageous to ask.

I'm guessing Francisco and helpers will be getting the dirt in bags from the local Big Box (Lowe's, Home Depot, Walmart) or garden center, and the bagged dirt ("soil", if you're a gardening snob), is typically suitable and safe to grow veggies and fruits in. And it'll have carbon atoms in it, too! ;-)

If he brings in the dirt in one big pile on a truck, I would strongly recommend getting the soil tested before planting edible crops. You can send off a little soil sample to your local county extension office, and for something like \$15, they'll do a chemical analysis and tell you if it contains anything toxic (like lead -- you don't want lead in your veggie soil), and also if you need to amend the soil with anything in order to produce the best square watermelons in the entire state!

One other gardening note -- for a small garden plot, I wouldn't recommend more than two (three at the very most) watermelon plants. They spread big-time and will take over the entire space.

Have fun!!! :-)

Posted by: [Mary from Virginia](#) at March 14, 2006 10:24 AM

Homer Simpson, on the family vacation to Japan, actually bought a square watermelon for \$100. His rationale? "I'm tired of fumbling with round fruit."

Then he dropped it.

And yes, I realize that Homer isn't a real person. But still. If something is in the Simpsons, is it not actual FACT?

Good luck with it!

Posted by: [Kelli](#) at March 14, 2006 10:24 AM

OK, did "Coworker A" pay 100 yen for this melon? Cause that's like 85 cents. If he paid \$100 for the melon, he is just nuts. I could never justify a \$100 melon on my new CAP budget spreadsheet.

Posted by: [Jenny](#) at March 14, 2006 10:29 AM

Hmmm, no one else saw that Simpson's episode where they went to Japan and Homer spent all his money on the square watermelon which after a few seconds broke the

confines of it's squareness and turned back to round/oval? No? Just me then, okay. Is it wrong to get all your knowledge of the world from a cartoon? :)

Posted by: [Natalie](#) at March 14, 2006 10:30 AM

mmmmmmmm . . . watermelon martinis :)

Posted by: [melissa](#) at March 14, 2006 10:41 AM

I'm so far down on the list, someone has no doubt pointed this out but ..

1) advantages of a square watermelon: easy to slice, sits nicely on the fridge shelf without rolling off.

2) growing a square melon is easy: When you see the first inkling of the melon budding, drape it over the hollow part of a concrete block. Grow it entirely in the block as it matures (it will grow up snug against the sides)... when it's done, crack open the block, carefully, with a concrete chisel.

It works. Not much to it.

If I knew you crazy Angelenos would pay \$100 a pop, I'd have moved to LA, brought my own damn dirt, and be living in Beverly Hills (adjacent)

Posted by: [Hurricane Chase](#) at March 14, 2006 10:47 AM

other gardeners will sneer at you if you refer to *soil* as *dirt*. (at least here in the midwest.) and if you can grow a square melon, what about a pumpkin? i MUST have a square pumpkin for halloween!

Posted by: [k.](#) at March 14, 2006 11:10 AM

hmmm....i'm with Melissa....

Posted by: [Trixie](#) at March 14, 2006 11:22 AM

boggle

Posted by: [Chris](#) at March 14, 2006 11:26 AM

And once you have your square watermelon, cut a chunk out of the rind and pour a bottle of vodka into the watermelon. Let sit for a day (in the fridge) and then eat the watermelon. Mmm...alcoholic fruit.

Posted by: [Imbrium](#) at March 14, 2006 11:35 AM

I think you should knit a cozy for your square watermelon.

Posted by: [Lauren in Austin](#) at March 14, 2006 11:41 AM

heheheh... watermelon cozies!!!

Posted by: [laurie](#) at March 14, 2006 11:42 AM

I so have to have a square watermelon! While my apartment may not be the appropriate place to grow said fruit, I will not hesitate to pay \$82 (plus shipping!!) should you, CAP, actually succeed in growing SQUARE WATERMELONS! Who needs to pay bills when you can have fun-shaped fruits? Seriously?!

Posted by: [Susannah](#) at March 14, 2006 11:45 AM

Laurie,

It definitely sucks having to shell out so much money just to move. I'm in the middle of it now.

Good luck on the square watermelon. I've seen that on TV before. What's next? Hexagonal honeydew? Octoganal oranges? Personally, I'm looking forward to asparagus spheres.

Of course, I grew up and still live in the city, so I don't have much of a green thumb. Hell, I didn't see grass till i was 20.

Oh, and by the way, I'm not a stalker. I live in Philly. I am flirting though...

wink wink!

Posted by: [Steve D.](#) at March 14, 2006 11:54 AM

a word of advice, purely hypothetical:

if you DO succeed in growing a square watermelon, and you are having trouble deciding what to do with it, and so you decide to infuse it with vodka (not a bad idea on its own) and then you serve it at a brunch where there is also champagne, and then you decide that adding a few drops of the watermelon-infused vodka to the champagne is a good idea, and you taste it and it IS SO good that you decide to have three or four glasses of watermelon-infused-vodka-plus-champagne before you have managed to eat anything at said brunch -- i'm saying IF you think that's a good idea, i'm here to tell you it isn't.

hypothetically.

Posted by: [k](#) at March 14, 2006 11:56 AM

All this talk about organic dirt reminds me of my favorite Trading Spaces moment:

Laurie: It's supposed to look organic!

Paige: Is poop organic? Because this is so crappy.

Moving is hard. I did it last summer, and seriously, that's a lot of work. And mentally exhausting - when I unpacked the boxes in my new house, EVERY SINGLE BOX contained at least one thing that I picked up and said, "Why the hell did I move with this?" about. (That was very grammatically incorrect. But I'm clearly on no sleep. My apologies to all.) Good luck with your square watermelon! Keep us posted! Grow some green beans, too, they're fun.

Posted by: [Julie](#) at March 14, 2006 11:58 AM

LAURIE,

Yes, they're paying around a hundred freaking dollars for a silly square melon. Insanity. But lucrative possibilities! And they say the best way to grow your perfectly square melon is to use square, tempered-glass containers. Where could one find the said tempered-glass, you ask? Beats the hell out of me. But for heavens sake. Do. Not. Use. A. Freaking. Concrete. Block. Unless you WANT the melon to be completely ALBINO (white) and unedible. Just sayin'.

Posted by: [Jules](#) at March 14, 2006 11:58 AM

I'm with Mary in Virginia, you want your soil lead-free, but I wouldn't worry too much about Roundup or other herbicides as others mention, because Roundup is effective for about 3 hours.

There's a new book out called Layer Gardening or something like that, and the idea is to make your own raised soil by layering things like newspaper and letting the elements break them down. Bonus is that the natural mulching action is an effective weed barrier, so you don't need the Roundup. Check it out.

And then there's gardenweb. Which, for an internets type like you, could be somewhat addictive.

And people, there's one "l" in "melon."

Posted by: [rb](#) at March 14, 2006 12:00 PM

OHMYGOD! the square watermelon...maybe the coolest thing I've ever seen and now I miss a yard more than ever and want so badly to grow one.

You'll totally have to let us know how it pans out.

Just awesome.

And I'm sure you could probably sell off a couple for \$82 which would at least finance your "organic" dirt. ;)

Posted by: [Christine](#) at March 14, 2006 12:01 PM

i grew a cantalope in an plastic gallon milk jug, and it turned out SQUARE!! It was so cool....

good luck on the square watermelon. Visit Burpee.com-they have a variety of cool melon seeds available, and some are good for growing in pots instead of in the ground.

Posted by: [kim](#) at March 14, 2006 12:06 PM

Well, here's what I'm thinking... because I love to experiment with stuff and I have a giant back yard (by LA standards, anyway) I plan to have several types of melons and several types of "molds" going. I'm making one out of a glass vase from Ikea that I already own (if it breaks, ah well. \$5 baby!) and one from the concrete block and one possibly out of lucite, because there's a lucite place in the Valley who may soon be meeting one crazy woman with a square fetish, and I may build one out of wood and lucite panels. OR! I may just drink some beer and talk about my ideas. Could go either way LOL.

Posted by: [laurie](#) at March 14, 2006 12:11 PM

Everyone has forgotten that cats don't like melon! Move onto cat nip for Pete's sake!

Posted by: [Amy](#) at March 14, 2006 12:18 PM

Use an empty wine bottle.. then break the glass after to get it out. :) Could be a dinner party theme.

Posted by: [Michelle](#) at March 14, 2006 12:21 PM

now we all are going to have 'frickin' square watermelons!!!
And you can grow potatoes in a garbage can...

Posted by: [Cheryl](#) at March 14, 2006 12:35 PM

You'll need drainage holes in that container or it'll rot so I don't think the glass vase from Ikea will do. The plexiglass form is probably your best bet - especially if you have several small holes drilled in the bottom. The you'll just have to lay some muslin in the bottom so the plant doesn't grow out the draining holes.

Posted by: [Leslie](#) at March 14, 2006 12:35 PM

Leslie, with advice like that don't you think you should come over one weekend in April and help make molds for square watermelons?? I'm just saying is all :)

Posted by: [laurie](#) at March 14, 2006 12:40 PM

Laurie....you are a crazy girl....you make me laugh and laugh and laugh. I am a beginner knitter and came upon your site a few months ago looking for a hat pattern but now I tune in everyday because you just entertain me. Keep me laughing girl!

Posted by: [Linda from MD](#) at March 14, 2006 12:54 PM

Just remember: poop. Lots of poop. Where you live they probably call it designer manure.

Posted by: [Lucia](#) at March 14, 2006 01:01 PM

Ah, Amy, some cats really love cantaloupe. It's sweet and meaty! Give it a try with a cat friend some day.

Posted by: Lo at March 14, 2006 01:16 PM

Okay. I have to admit. I totally researched into doing this about 3 years ago. Here's how you do it. You have to have plexiglass cut into a cube with a hole in the bottom for the vine to go into. The melon will take the shape of the plexiglass container and you will have your square melon.

Here's the problem....plexiglass is expensive. So, I never grew the melon. It must be plexiglass and not regular glass because at maturity, regular glass would get pressured and break.

I would assume that the plexiglass box would either (a) have to have an outside hinge (for formation purposes) or (b) be broken to get the melon.

The people in Japan grew them so that they fit better into the refrigerator.

Now here's my question...what are they just too lazy to carve it up and put it in a bowl in the fridge?

And, being a southerner...do you salt your watermelon??

Posted by: [Melissa](#) at March 14, 2006 01:24 PM

i thought poop wasnt a good idea anymore? ive read that e-coli can transfer from poop to soil to food, and good compost(- the poo) was a better bet. no?

Posted by: [k.](#) at March 14, 2006 01:29 PM

OK, here's a link to a BBC article that I found because I'm now obsessed:
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/1390088.stm>.

Enjoy! :)

Posted by: [Samantha](#) at March 14, 2006 01:42 PM

See, I told you Steve D was flirting!

Posted by: [Lauren in Austin](#) at March 14, 2006 01:51 PM

Also, gardening could be the answer to your old problem about the four poop machines who reside with you and add nothing to the household economy. Mulch the cat-poop.

Posted by: [Lauren in Austin](#) at March 14, 2006 01:57 PM

Hey, the milk jug idea was on the tip of my brain! Flexible, clear, and free! Do it, Laurie! I would, but my back yard is shady, and growing veggies in my unfenced front yard just seems. . . I dunno, a step up from parking cars on the lawn, I guess.

Happy square watermelon growing! Did you know that my town of Portland, Oregon hosts an annual watermelon seed-spitting contest? The things you learn when you go in search of square watermelon info on the internet. . .

Helen

Posted by: [Helen](#) at March 14, 2006 02:08 PM

Ok, so how can a milk jug make the melon square? Aren't milk jugs round-ish? Or is it that I haven't bought a big jug of milk in a hundred years?

And I already grow catnip for the junkies... I'm their pusher.

Posted by: [laurie](#) at March 14, 2006 02:52 PM

OK 2 things!!! FIRST.... there is such a thing as sterilized poop to use as a fertilizer...its the stuff they grow mushrooms in and when they are done with it you can buy it at a greenhouse here in the Midwest. (probably other places too..) It's called mushroom mulch and it is some POWERFUL stuff...use sparingly..AND my mom had a cat who was nutso for cantalope... he would lick the rind dry...I'm just sayin. I can't even imagine the panic a square watermelon would create in my red-neck of the woods...

Posted by: [schnoobie](#) at March 14, 2006 02:58 PM

OMG - square watermelon! That is the most fuked out thing I have ever seen!

Posted by: Anonymous at March 14, 2006 03:20 PM

My dog loves round watermelon.

Posted by: [psychomom](#) at March 14, 2006 03:36 PM

Milk jugs are squared off, rounded a bit, but mostly quite square. You must have curbside recycling--go look for milk jugs!

Helen (the same one who keeps pestering you about the post office. . .)

Posted by: [Helen](#) at March 14, 2006 03:57 PM

Seriously, you are a purler!!! (don't ever change you are so amazing)

Just don't put your kitties anywhere near a large bottle OK?

Cheers

Moi

Posted by: Moi at March 14, 2006 04:08 PM

I'm not Helen..honest!!!

Moi

Posted by: Moi at March 14, 2006 04:09 PM

Helen, I'm going, I promise :) Also! Yes of course I put salt on watermelon!! I'm southern, we salt everything LOL. Or deep fry it. Oh! Now there's an idea! Deep fried watermelon!!

Posted by: [laurie](#) at March 14, 2006 04:14 PM

I don't think ALL cell phones have GPS devices in them, just some of them. The square watermelons are a riot, but I don't think a plastic milk jug would be strong enough to form it. Hinge together panels of plexiglass? The photos look like the melon grows completely enclosed. Maybe there's a Japanese website where you can order a form!

Posted by: [Sue F.](#) at March 14, 2006 04:30 PM

Hey Laurie. I must admit the square melons do sound intriguing. Back in my high school days, when I was in the FFA, we grew watermelons for the town's fourth of July celebration, and for a fee some of the students would sneak a couple off the vines and spike them for people throwing parties. Our teacher never seemed to catch on, and they were very popular. I think spiked watermelon is probably one of the tastiest ways to get drunk lol

Posted by: [Enjay](#) at March 14, 2006 04:34 PM

Oh my God! How brilliant those Japanese are. It would fit perfectly in my 'frig.

As for traffic, I live in Atlanta. There is always traffic and the headlines in today's paper is they are thinking about expanding I-75 to 23 friggin lanes making it the biggest interstate in the nation. and still there will be traffic snarls.

Posted by: [Debbie](#) at March 14, 2006 04:42 PM

Imagine driving down the road and seeing a sign that says this:

"Clean fill Dirt wanted"

Can there be such a thing as CLEAN Dirt?

This is an actual sign. I couldn't make this up if I tried.

:)

Posted by: [Micky](#) at March 14, 2006 05:09 PM

Baby girl I don't know noth'n about growing no square watermelons or commuting 2+hours everyday (god help you I couldn't do it). I do however, know how refreshing it can be to live in a house you love, sit on your back porch, and eavesdrop on your neighbors!

Posted by: [Betsy](#) at March 14, 2006 05:45 PM

and do you know what you do with those square watermelons, once they're grown? you pull an emeril, and cut a hole in the top, and souse that thing with vodka, and make rocking watermelon slushies/margaritas/blended drink of your choice. i can't do watermelon, unfortunately. i'm allergic. (now, if i could pour vodka into a mango, i'd be all over that!)

Posted by: [minnie](#) at March 14, 2006 06:16 PM

You can buy the thing to grow them in.

Posted by: [Ginnie](#) at March 14, 2006 07:21 PM

Ha ha ha haaaa! THIS is why I read your blog every day! :)

Susanna

Posted by: [susanna](#) at March 14, 2006 07:39 PM

I fully support you're wanting to grow square watermellons! I think it's a great idea! If you're not sure how to do it, why not ask the local greenhouse there for some suggestions. There's gotta be someone there with a sense of humor who might be able to help.

I mean, who wouldn't want to see a square watermelon?

Posted by: [Ace](#) at March 14, 2006 07:55 PM

Oh Laurie, I have had such a shit day today and you gave me such a good laugh, you crazy ass white lady!

Now, could you please tell me how to stop or at least hinder my ten year olds life of crime? (newest stunt was \$30 out of hubby's wallet). Could I maybe grow him in a jar? If he came out square, he could just perform in like "SpongeBob on Ice" or something....

Posted by: [Kim](#) at March 14, 2006 08:01 PM

I am a displaced Notherner-turned-Southerner (born in NY, raised in NC) who lives in this crazy country where a canteloupe will cost you \$100, and watermelons are square (because that way they fit in your fridge, which is also miniature). But usually the watermelons you can find at the store (and pay about \$20 for one) are the size of a

small baby's head. And they are NOTHING like those southern watermelons. You know, I LIVED off those, on a part-time job salary. And peaches. And now I'm stuck in a land where, as a full-time employee, I can't afford a friggin bit of watermelon and the peaches are all white! GET ME OFF THIS ISLAND!

Just kidding-- if I didn't love it here, I wouldn't be here. But damn if I wouldn't like some watermelons and peaches from the South. \$3 for a gigantic, sweet, watermelon... or a pound of fresh peaches...

Good luck growing your square watermelons. ^_^

Posted by: [Meranie](#) at March 14, 2006 08:28 PM

Who needs beer? There are many lovely things you can do with a watermelon (of any shape, I'm guessing) and vodka.

I'll have to get my dad's recipe for you of the "marinade" he was cooking up last summer.

Posted by: [Sunny](#) at March 14, 2006 09:34 PM

Laurie, you know, if there're square watermelons out there, there sure'll be ORGANIC dirt!

Posted by: [Elemmaciturr](#) at March 14, 2006 10:34 PM

DON'T use a concrete block. Why waste it?
DON'T use a milk jug...its not rigid (i.e. stiff enough)
Go to World Market or Peir 1 and get a large glass thing-a-ma-jig.
That should do it.
Square melons are fridge and shipping friendly.
I prefer my melons soft and round.
I'm just sayin is all.....

Posted by: [hajiomatic](#) at March 15, 2006 03:29 AM

I think you are overlooking the highly practical aspect of a square watermelon. The only time I ever serve watermelon is at backyard barbeques. Now, I'm not much of a cook so my barbeques include mass quantities of adult beverages. Cutting a traditional watermelon usually involves me, a big knife, after having consumed aforementioned adult beverages. For me this means, keep a cooler handy, I could cut a finger off easy! With a square watermelon, it won't roll all over the place while you chase it, a little tipsy, around with a knife! You are a total safety gal! Kudos!

Posted by: [Kate](#) at March 15, 2006 03:47 AM

Finally someone mentioned the fact that melons should be soft & round.... (I was waiting for the inuendo all night long!)

Posted by: [Amy](#) at March 15, 2006 04:30 AM

Ummm, please don't use the cat poop. Cats are carnivores, carnivore poop in the garden is bad. Now if you decide you need an angora bunny you can use the poop and learn to spin. The book rb is talking about is called Lasagna Gardening.
If you're bored with your WEATHER I'd be happy to send you some of mine. Well just the chilly rain, not the tornadoes.

Posted by: [Michelene](#) at March 15, 2006 06:54 AM

okay girl...i believe, you can grow all kinds of things within a shaped container, and removing said container, have a odd shaped veggie/fruit...they actually do this in AMERICA too! but the true obsession with trends does belong to the japanese, who will make money from ANYTHING trendy and different! i will attempt to create odd shaped garden items as well this summer WITH a shorter growing season...just to encourage your new passion...
as for that soil...better buy the bagged soil girl...who KNOWS where that gardener will

find cheap dirt ... probably give ya benzene tainted fill from some old gas station, or mercury laden creekbed... i do not trust these things to strangers!
so start saving all your compostibles for a compost pile....start NOW! and when you're ready buy lots of peat moss (by the bag), composted cow manure(by the bag), and get some SIFTED TOP SOIL delivered(by the truck), and dumped in front of your house...THEN let francisco the magnificent do the grunt work wheelbarrowing it to the backyard!

they even sell the corner connectors to make joining the wooden raised bed frames even easier to put together.

you southern gals have gardening in your blood...as well as a penchant for alcohol! i usually sip coronas w/lime on summer eves, after a day of toil.

hey, google: the square foot gardener (for raised bed ideas)

i myself am getting a baby chick delivery in a couple days, my first endeavor into any kind of farm animal...i am so psyched! if u have any interest at all, my Live Journal id is dentednj

heh,heh,heh...

Posted by: [denise t](#) at March 15, 2006 07:34 AM

I just love your blog!!! After a hiatus, it's a good light read.

Posted by: [Kenny](#) at March 15, 2006 09:02 AM

Those watermelons are the cutest. They look like little candies or something in that picture. I want them all to come live in my house and look cute on a shelf somewhere. I can't grow anything other than frustrated at my attempts to grow something. Yeah.

Don't feel bad about the organic dirt thing. The first time I ever saw an alligator in the wild, I asked, " But where do alligators go when it rains?" and was laughed out of the room.

That was last year.

Posted by: [Sarah](#) at March 15, 2006 10:37 AM

Ok.. I had a cat that Loved cantalope...
don't use cat poop... only the sanitized stuff from the garden shop...
this will be fun!!!!

Posted by: [Cheryl](#) at March 15, 2006 11:10 AM

I just wanted to tell a dirt story even though it has nothing to do with knitting, gardening or square watermelons.

My friend in graduate school spent one whole summer living in a tent in Greenland, collecting ice cores and soil samples. When he went through customs to come home, the customs agent asked him what that brown stuff in the glass vials was. My friend told him it was dirt.

[He was smart; he read the back of the customs form which said that you must declare if you visited a foreign farm and had contact with soil.]

The agent asked my friend if there was any soil in that dirt. Of course the smart aleck said no. Amazingly, the customs agent let him and his soil samples through.

Posted by: [Grace](#) at March 15, 2006 09:46 PM

Yes, I know those exist. They somehow pack the melons into square boxes into which they grow and fit and fill in to the cube.

And they are costly because they are purportedly easier to store in the fridge as they take up less space and do not roll around.

There are more wicked things they do like having ala bonsai kittens which is really cruel (and it's too gruesome to even share it here.!)

Posted by: [Emy](#) at March 16, 2006 12:14 AM

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Posted by: [Grace](#) at March 16, 2006 12:56 AM

FYI: bonsai kittens are a HOAX. See here:
<http://www.museumofhoaxes.com/pranks/bonsai.html>

So don't get your knickers in a twist!

Posted by: [Helen](#) at March 16, 2006 11:00 AM

1. those watermelons are rad
2. He shouldn't have laughed at you! Organic dirt totally exists. I have some in my garden, although I'm from Eugene, OR, (aka hippie central) so it's probably a bit easier to find it here
3. *waves* hi! i'm new here.

Posted by: [katie](#) at June 21, 2006 05:03 PM
