

WILD KID ACRES LLC

FARM BUSINESS PROFILE



ARUNDEL AG TALKS WITH GERARDO MARTINEZ, OWNER OF WILD KID ACRES LLC

INTERVIEW BY LISA BARGE AND BRITTANY RAWLINGS

Tell us a little bit about the farm and the history of its establishment.

My wife and I went to Africa on a business trip and we stayed on a farm which was also a community center. We loved the lifestyle and how they exchange what they harvest. We loved the effect it had on people and everyone was happy. So, when we came back we decided we wanted a farm. We wanted a smaller piece of property, 5-10 acres max, because I don't have any history in farming. We bought this property in September 2019.

We weren't planning on coming to Anne Arundel County but I saw the property and fell in love. The property was covered in an immense amount of trash. We had to renovate the house which turned into demolition and construction of a brand new house. While we were building, people started to notice something was

happening here. The property was very overgrown and to help manage that, we bought goats. Because of COVID, people were looking for ways to get out of the house and they started pulling into the driveway just to visit with the animals. At first we were hesitant because of liability purposes but once we realized how much we enjoyed the interaction, we decided to open up to visitors. The revenue from visits enabled us to grow quicker. We were able to purchase more animals and accelerate the farm practices that we have implemented.

As we were letting people visit, we learned the history of the property. The person who we bought it from was a Negro Leagues pitcher for the Hot Sox. This used to be one of their practice fields a long time ago. We like to tell the story of the farm as the land itself, it was originally Piscataway then transferred to servants, then to freed slaves, and eventually ended up in the hands of the Negro Leagues pitcher.

We consider our farm a biodynamic homestead where we try to mimic nature as much as possible. Everything from the birth to the death of something; everywhere along that process has a harvest. It is all a life-cycle type of farming. The sun energy comes in, the plants grow, the bees pollinate the plants and the plants can be harvested or the seeds will fall and regenerate. The cows and goats eat all the grass. The goat's digestive system gets rid of everything so it's a cold fertilizer. The flies that are typically on farms lay larva in the cow manure and the chickens eat the larva. After that's done, we spread wood chips, inoculate, and spread cover crop again. In doing so, we need to till so we can mix the cow manure with carbon. The pigs till into the woodchips and eat whatever the other animals haven't. The pigs are probably the most essential to the farm. The work is all about how we move the animals. Right now, all the animals live together and it works. As long as we can get the woodchips to where the manure is, it all works. We don't have to use synthetic fertilizers and can focus on doing everything naturally. Every animal and plant here needs to have two purposes. Ideally, we would only need to feed the larger livestock while the others can feed off of the grasses.

This was built to be my personal homestead, not necessarily to bring the public in. But now that there's an interest from the public, I'm really enjoying educating them. Everybody says I'm doing a great thing for the community, but really it's great for me too.



What are some of the issues you have faced and how have you overcome those issues?

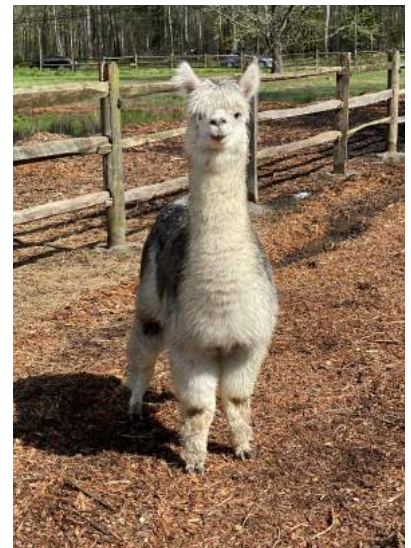
We've learned there is a significant amount of red tape in Anne Arundel County for entrepreneurship as well as agriculture. That was severely unexpected. In other states, they seem to have more opportunities. The lack of understanding of the specific type of farming we are doing here lead to complaints, which lead to violations from the County. The County issued a stop work order for grading, which we were not doing. We spread woodchips for carbon and inoculate them with mushroom spores so we can get a harvest as a compost with the animals waste. That's why our farm doesn't smell like animal waste because we use so much carbon and the mushrooms decompose that carbon rather quickly. It's a biodynamic way of getting a harvest from the death/waste of things. The stop work order could have turned into a very large grading fine. That's when I connected with Arundel Ag. Arundel Ag organized a meeting with the County inspectors and AASCD, they were able to get a better understanding of what we are doing here on the farm. We were able to connect with other partners as well as a result of that meeting. What could have been a very large fine actually turned into a potential grant from the County to save the land and help me with the trash removal. It has been amazing to turn something that negative into such a positive. The immense amount of red tape is super discouraging. Arundel Ag's advocacy was really a game changer. I might have given up a few months ago if it weren't for their assistance with navigating those barriers. Arundel Ag has been our greatest advocate and friend.

Talk about your future plans for the farm.

We are in the process of becoming a non-profit with a focus on research and education. We will offer workshops on how we specifically farm but also how to get the most out of it. Not just in terms of harvesting, but also carbon sequestration, soil and water testing, and soil health. We are working with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, the Riverkeepers, and the Oyster Partnership of AA County to utilize as much waste and research to use that data to prove that our practices are the best they can be or need to be improved.

Walk us through a day on the farm?

Since we are in the beginning stages of infrastructure build, a lot of the daily tasks are focused around that. We received a huge donation of fencing and are working on a barn build. Once that's all complete, our daily workload will switch to rotating the pastures and feeding the animals. We also partner with Annapolis Compost and receive food scraps from them. We are able to work the food scraps into the compost to create carbon or use for the animals to feed on. Later in the day, when the weather has cooled down, the wood chips are spread and we inoculate with the mushroom spores.



What advice would you give someone who is considering a career in farming?

1. Don't buy goats first.
2. It is a very large commitment, but it's doable. Especially if you already have infrastructure established. If we had a barn and fencing already up, I would be drinking margaritas every day.
3. Get as educated as you can and go for it. You have to be ok with failing. That type of stress is so much better than the stress from an office. Just enjoy the failure and learn from it.

What are the current trends in this industry?

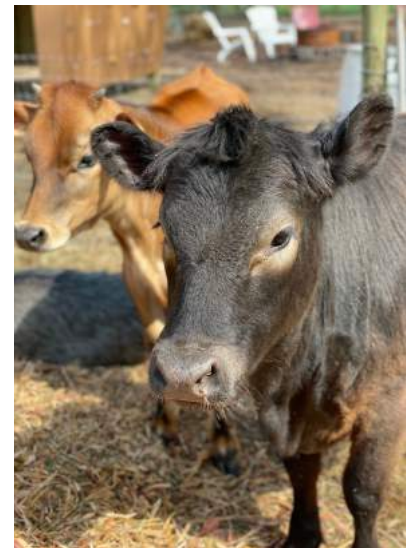
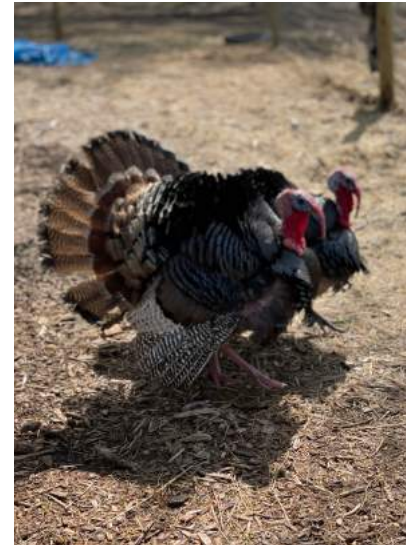
Monetarily, carbon sequestration credits are probably the future of farming. If you have the land, you will get the most out of your land by selling credits to corporations. As far as homesteading, there is a huge push to be outdoors. I think there will be a trend as we continue to go virtual and digital, where people will be trying to get out of the house and visit places like ours. The trend would be to diversify your farm to offer more the public. Even the income on our farm, we try to diversify. So, if one thing fails, another takes off.

If you could go back and do one thing over, what would it be?

If I could do one thing over, I wish I would have focused on the community from the beginning. I experienced a lot of racism in the beginning which pushed me away. It's very easy to fall into the trap of being angry about that. When you hit a roadblock, you get angry. But, the world is bad already so by me getting angry, it just makes that worse. If I had focused on the community first, we would've been able to educate and have fun sooner. Once we started involving the community, and the non-profit, we've been able to get more done sooner. It's been amazing here.

For More Information:

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