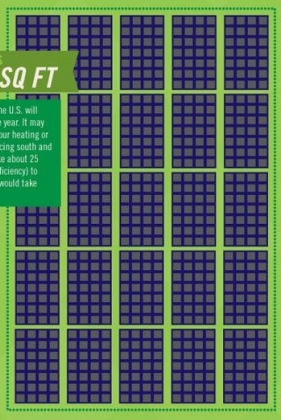
HOW BIG A BACKYARD DO YOU NEED TO LIVE OFF OF THE LAND?

More and more people are turning away from grocery stores and utility companies in favor of their own back yard. The idea of becoming self-sufficient is an alluring one, but exactly how much land would you need? Assuming a family of four, here are the land requirements to sustain yourself for one year.

AVERAGE U.S. ROOF SIZE: 2,000 SQ FT

1 YEAR OF ELECTRICITY — REQUIRES 375 SQ FT

According the EIA the average home in the U.S. will consume 11,040 kWh of electricity in one year. It may fluctuate higher or lower depending on your heating or cooling needs. Assuming the house is facing south and there is 7 hours of sun light, it would take about 25 solar panels (using panels of average efficiency) to fulfill those energy requirements, which would take about 375 square feet of roof space.



9,200 CALORIES FOR A FAMILY OF FOUR, PER DAY — REQUIRES 76,666 SQ FT

Maintaining a vegetarian diet of 2300 calories per person, per day requires .44 acres per person. This included fruits, grains and of course, vegetables. In an ideal setting, suitable farm land can also grow fruit trees to provide a well rounded diet. Some vegetables require much more land than others, including potatoes and cucumbers.

IF YOU EAT MEAT, EGGS AND/OR DAIRY

1 YEAR OF MEAT — REQUIRES 207 SQ FT

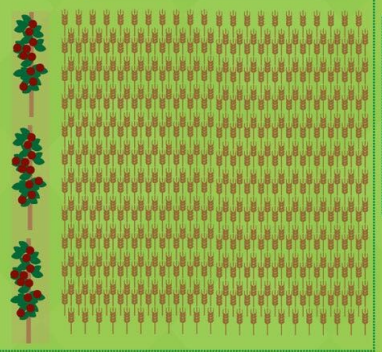
If you wish to add a little bacon to your self-sustained diet then starting off with 3 pigs can feed a family of four twice per week, for a year. If you wish to add some piglets to the mix allow 9 square feet per pig or piglet.

1 YEAR OF DAIRY — REQUIRES 100 SQ FT

If you wish to add dairy to your diet forget about getting a cow for they are not land-efficient. Think about a nubian goat instead. A nubian goat can produce 1,844 lbs of milk a year. Keep in mind that goats, like cows, do require some grazing land and companionship.

1 YEAR OF WHEAT — REQUIRES 12,012 SQ FT

The average person 1.5 pounds of wheat a week. In order to maintain that diet of wheat you must allow for at least 3,003 square feet of wheat per person. If some of this wheat is going to livestock, adjust for the extra.

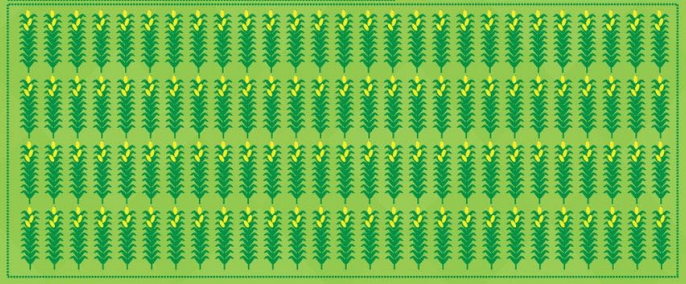


1 YEAR OF EGGS — REQUIRES 65 SQ FT

A hen can lay anywhere from 80 to 300 eggs in one year. The average American eats about five eggs a week. For a family of four eating 1,000 eggs in a year it would require 13 birds to put scrambled eggs on the table in the morning.

1 YEAR OF CORN — REQUIRES 2,640 SQ FT

Corn is a multifunctional produce that is necessary when growing animals in your backyard farm. However, corn is not land-efficient. You would need at least 2,640 sqft of corn to produce enough for your family and animals. We did not include corn in our final calculations, assuming instead that you'd prefer to buy bushels of corn feed (a bushel of corn is 56 pounds) for less than $5 each.



YOU WILL NEED A BACKYARD THAT IS AT LEAST 89,050 SQ FT — THIS IS ABOUT 2 ACRES

IF OUR FAMILY OF FOUR WAS WILLING TO BUY FLOUR INSTEAD OF GROWING THEIR OWN WHEAT, THEY'D ONLY NEED ABOUT 1.5 ACRES TO HAVE A MIXED DIET OF VEGGIES, EGGS, MEAT, AND MILK.

SOURCES: EIA, US CENSUS, SEEDS NYC, "LAND AND DIET: WHAT'S THE MOST LAND EFFICIENT DIET FOR NEW YORK STATE": CORNELL UNIVERISTY, SOLARPOWERISTHEFUTURE.COM, AFFORDABLE-SOLAR.COM, ADGA, BBC.COM, PORKMAG.COM, AGRI VIEW, SHEEP AND GOAT.COM, THE POULTRYSITE.COM

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