

Spotlight on Steve Spence of Green-trust.org

by David Neeley

The nature of discussion groups is that we are often left to wonder about the other people participating. What are their interests and experiences? Where are they “coming from” with their posts?

We decided to start a series of member Spotlight articles, including a brief email interview with the member involved, and to post this interview both on the list and to retain a copy in the Files section of the group.

Personally, I was relatively aware of Steve Spence of Green-trust.org already—I am a member of several of his Yahoo groups, I have downloaded several of the ebooks he has on his primary website, and I subscribed some time ago to his email newsletter. Thus, it was a natural choice to begin with Steve. In the process, though, I have learned a little more about Steve and the work he does. I hope after you read this that you will more fully appreciate what he contributes to the community.

The Green-trust.org website.

The online hub of Steve's activities in homesteading and offgrid living and teaching is [Green-trust.org](http://www.green-trust.org).

If you are reading this in the full article version, you will see from a screenshot that the site has a wealth of information that is well worth exploring. You can subscribe to it via RSS feed as a convenient method of getting updates, and you can also subscribe to the email newsletter Steve publishes if you wish.

There are many links to explore as well as a large number of downloadable resources.

While Green-trust.org is a nonprofit, for the convenience of folks who don't have a good source and to help support the mission of Green-trust, there are some products available through the site as well.



The Interview

1. Could you give us a little bit about your background, and what led you to starting Green-trust.org?

I have been an electronics tech and network engineer for 20+ years. My parents were organic gardening, goat chicken and rabbit raising, Mother Earth reading right wing Republicans (Baptist minister). No wonder I'm twisted, lol!

2. What activities is Green-trust.org involved in? Are there any other people associated with it as well?

We are involved in teaching seminars and workshops at local colleges, energy fairs, and private groups. It's usually me, with various other volunteers at various times.

3. Please tell us a little about your homestead--who lives there, how close are you to self-sufficiency, in general terms where it's located.

It was my wife and I, three kids, and three of their teenage friends who moved in. We garden and raise small animals, and are off grid. We generate electricity with solar and wind. We are in upstate NY, about 2 hours south west of Montreal Canada. Temperatures here hit -40 in winter, and nearly 100 in summer, although both extremes are brief.

4. Do you still do any IT work as well, or are all your current (non-family) activities revolving around Green-trust?

IT telecommuting consulting still pays most of the bills. Website design and e-commerce is the main focus.

5. For those not yet offgrid, kindly share with us the path to your current situation--did you go originally for a complete off-grid system or did it evolve over time? Also, please describe your current system.

Six years ago, we bought a place cheap, because there was no power (original owner had a generator). We started small, and built up over time. We now have 1700 watts of solar, 400 watt wind turbine, 840ah @24v battery bank, and a 3500 watt inverter/charger.

6. What about systems other than electric? Water, wastewater, water heating, graywater reuse, etc.

Water comes from our hand dug well and cistern (rain water). The pump is a 12v piston pump that is connected to the battery bank. We have a septic (a code requirement), but use composting toilets. We heat with two woodstoves (one is a cookstove). Laundry water goes to the berry bushes (blue berry, black berry, and raspberry) in Summer. We use propane for cooking, water heating (tankless with solar preheat in Summer, wood preheat in Winter), and clothes drying (when weather doesn't permit outdoor clothes lines). In Winter, clothes are dried on racks near wood stove. We use an eight cubic foot Energy Star electric fridge and an eight cubic foot propane fridge.



7. I was fascinated with your work (and that of others) with the home-built axial flux wind generators, so much so that I subscribed to your axialflux Yahoo group. How did this come about---and how do these generators compare to commercial ones? Have you used axial flux units on any motor generators as well?

A number of years ago I read a book by Hugh Piggott about his work with axial flux. I could not afford a commercial wind turbine, and love to tinker. I hooked up with Jim Juczak (a middle school shop teacher) of [woodhenge.org](http://www.woodhenge.org) who is a kindred spirit, so we started making wind turbines and teaching classes. We have used these with Lister diesel engines as well (650 rpm).

8. Are there any new projects you are working on now that may not be reflected on the website?

We are working on a PV/Golf cart as an emergency power source project.

9. Please list the websites, discussion groups, and any other publicly-accessible resources you might be involved in that our readers may find worthwhile.

<http://www.green-trust.org>

<http://makingthewebwork.blogspot.com/>

<http://www.rebelwolf.com> (ESSN Magazine)

<http://www.woodhenge.org>

<http://www.cordwoodmasonry.com/>

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/rainwater/>

http://groups.yahoo.com/group/12VDC_Power/

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/simplyoffgrid/>

10. Is there anything else we haven't covered that you would like to have others know about?

Conservation is the key. Reduce your consumption to a minimal but comfortable level, and alternative systems become much more affordable. The tankless water heater, front loader washer, and 100% compact fluorescent lighting, along with laptop computers and lcd tv's, really cut consumption.

Thanks for your participation. I think many people will be interested to see what you're up to.

Thank you for letting us participate.

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NOTE: If you, or someone you know among the list membership, would be a good subject for a future Spotlight article, please let me know via email to [<mailto://dbneeley@gmail.com>](mailto://dbneeley@gmail.com) If the group seems to enjoy this feature, we'll try to do about two of them a month.