

- Speaker 1: [00:02](#) Welcome to the old fashioned on purpose podcast. There's one thing that strikes fear into the heart of every gardener I know. Hail. It can take a garden from thriving to completely destroyed in mere minutes, but sometimes not all is lost. It is possible to salvage a garden after a hailstorm. And in today's episode I'll be sharing my personal tips and experiences from my recent hail destruction. I'm your host Jill winger. For the last 10 years I've been helping people just like you who feel uninspired by modern life. I'll show you how to leave the rat race and create the life you really want by learning how to grow your own food and master old fashioned skills. So right off the bat, I have to say if you're listening to this episode because your garden recently got hailed out, I am so sorry. I know the feeling and it is so devastating to walk out to a garden or a flower bed that you've put so much time into and seeing it laying there in tatters.
- Speaker 1: [01:29](#) Unfortunately I have a lot of personal experience with this. Very recently. We've had a really weird year here in Wyoming and I think a lot of areas of the country can probably relate. We started off with a very slow spring and even though now at the time of this recording we're well into July, it's still not super hot, it's cooler temps, a lot of rain and the prairie and all of our plants just took a really long time to take off and kind of wake up. So it was a weird start to the year. We were gone for a week, the end of June at a family member's wedding. When we came back, things had started to awaken, but I had a lot of weeds to deal with and so I was a little bit frustrated, a little bit overwhelmed, and I spent a good couple days out in my garden just trying to get caught up.
- Speaker 1: [02:30](#) Raise your hand if you can relate to the feeling of a garden getting the best of you. Sometimes I think I'm there more often than not. Anyway, I spent several days out there toiling away and finally got my garden to a point where I was really happy with it. Most of the seeds were germinating. We had a little bit of an issue with some germination rates with due to the cooler, colder temperatures, but had seeds coming up. My perennials were finally awakening and I had spent a lot of time getting all the weeds pulled and it was looking pretty darn good. So much so that I actually posted this really cool picture on Instagram that afternoon showing off the garden and saying that I was really happy with it. Well, I think I jinxed myself. It was 6:00 PM that night I was wrapping up supper dishes and I kinda got that feeling like, oh, it's bedtime for the kids because it's dark.
- Speaker 1: [03:35](#) And then my brain kicked in and I thought, no, it's really early in the evening and it's not bedtime. And then I looked up and realize the darkness was from this insane storm cloud to the

east. And every window I looked out of on that side of the house, it was pitch black like midnight. So I grabbed Christian's fire radio cause he's on our volunteer fire department and because we live so far from anywhere, that's our best bet to get recent weather information, especially if there's something dangerous like a tornado in the area. My initial concern was a tornado because just two days prior we had a tornado about a mile from our house. Like I told you, it's been an insane weather a year. So I started to worry a little bit about tornadoes. I went to the windows and looked outside and watched in the sky to see if I could see any rotation in the clouds.

Speaker 1: [04:37](#)

And I didn't. It just look like typical storm clouds. But this darkness was very rapidly enveloping us and was planting itself right on top of the house. Only a few minutes into this whole realization on my part, the rain came. Now we get some pretty intense thunderstorms here. I'm no stranger to that and I've seen a lot of rain come down in a very short amount of time. But this one was different. The rain came in completely sideways and the winds I found out later were 60 to 70 miles an hour. I had never seen anything like it. The only thing I could compare it to are the videos I'd seen on TV of hurricanes. Literally it was blowing in sideways in sheets. I started to worry about our trees that it would just snap them right off. And when I walked around to the front of the house, I noticed, or I had to do a double take.

Speaker 1: [05:45](#)

It was like my brain couldn't process what I was seeing because our trampoline, which had been weighted down with concrete blocks and stakes had flown up onto our deck and was hanging from some tall posts we have on our deck and was suspended in midair and wrapped around the posts. So the kids were pretty bummed about that, but it was definitely still too stormy for us to get outside. So all we could do was just stay in and wait. The rain lasted for a good several minutes and it continued to blow in sideways. And then I heard the tell tale pinging of hail on our tin roof and that's when I knew it wasn't going to be good for the garden. And the hail continued to come for several minutes in full force. Now, thankfully it wasn't golf ball sized hail, it was more marble size.

Speaker 1: [06:46](#)

But the problem with marble size hail is it usually comes in large quantities and with force. So I watched it in the beds around my house and I could see it building up and just whacking all the plants and my heart started to sink. The storm passed and thankfully my biggest fear was that there was a tornado in it and ultimately that didn't happen, which I'm very grateful for. The winds were high and hard, but they were straight winds.

There was no rotation stuff happening. It blew over and I got texts from friends and neighbors. Are you okay? Oh my gosh, that was crazy. And so we were kind of starting to assess the damage. We went outside to see how bad the trampoline was and realized it was a goner. And I knew I needed to go check the garden, but I didn't want to cause I could see there were piles of leaves off our trees laying in the yard and on our deck and my potted plants on the front porch that I had forgotten to bring in.

Speaker 1: [07:54](#)

And I always bring them in before a storm, but I didn't this time they were shredded. So I knew the garden was probably not in good shape. I finally worked up the nerve to walk down to our garden and what I saw was pretty heartbreaking. The corn that I had spent several hours priming and mulching that day was broken and crushed. The onions who are usually really resilient to hail had stalks that were just shredded. My cabbage was up to that point, my favorite bed in the whole garden because it was full and vibrant and the leaves on the cabbage plants were gorgeous and now they were full of holes. But I think the worst one was the tomatoes. And I had babied these tomatoes since February when I started them in our basement under grow lights. They are San Marzano's there. My favorite heirloom sauce tomato. I had watered them every day and taken care of them.

Speaker 1: [08:59](#)

So we had been together for a good couple months and when I finally transplanted them, you know, I had watched them and they were growing and really becoming healthy and vibrant in the garden and they were just crushed beyond recognition. So I cried and I yelled and I told Christian I was never gardening here again as long as I lived. And basically I went back in the house and I couldn't even look at the garden all of that night and all the next day. It was just heartbreaking to see all that work and all that time and money invested just shattered and it feels senseless and it just feels like a violation. If you've ever had hail hit a garden, you know, and maybe if you haven't, it sounds like I'm being a little dramatic, but it's just rough to see all your work destroyed. I woke up the next day with a little bit of an attitude shift.

Speaker 1: [09:58](#)

And what I realized is though, even though I'm still pretty bummed about my garden and it's still pretty sad to go walk through it, all the time I had spent up to that point wasn't wasted because I got a lot of enjoyment out of it and it was exercise and I was out in nature and it was calming my brain and it felt good. So part of my anger after it happened was I felt like it was a waste, but I now realize that it wasn't, it was all for a purpose and even though I might not get as many vegetables

out of it, I got a lot of other benefits. So that was my attitude shift. It didn't change the fact that I still have shredded tomatoes. The good news is I think that a lot of the plants will come back. My potatoes and my beets and my carrots will be fine.

Speaker 1: [10:50](#)

The cabbages still are forming heads, even though the outer leaves look pretty sad. And even the tomatoes, there are some plants I think that are going to bounce back just fine. And thankfully I canned a ton of tomato sauce last year so we have plenty to tide us over. All that being said, I want to share a few of the ways I plan to nurture my garden going forward from this hail damage. I've been doing some reading and some research. And as far as helping a garden recover from hail, it depends on a couple different factors. You know obviously how big the hail was, how extensive the damage was. And probably the biggest factor is what time in the year or in the growing season the damage occurred. Now like I said, we're in the early to mid part of our growing season.

Speaker 1: [11:46](#)

So I had a little bit of time for recovery. If this had happened in August or late August, it probably would have been far too gone to even mess with. But thankfully I have a little bit of time. Here are a few of the things I'm doing. And you can do too if you have this experience of a hailed out garden. Number one, if it's happened at a point in the season where you have vegetables or fruit on your plants, you want to pick that right away because as soon as they get bruised or broken from hail, they're going to start spoiling pretty rapidly. So if you can get out there, immediately, pull them off the vine and then either eat them or freeze them or process them, then you're going to have a higher chance of saving that fruit or vegetable versus leaving out there.

Speaker 1: [12:36](#)

So that would be number one. Thankfully at this point, I have nothing growing out there. No tomatoes, no nothing. So I didn't have anything to harvest. Now the other thing that I'm doing is hard as it is, um, is to wait. Your initial gut feeling, I know this was what I felt on Saturday evening when this happened. I just wanted to get out there and rip it out because it was depressing to look at. It made me sad. I didn't want a reminder and I didn't want to look at the destruction. So my inclination was to go out there and just pull out the damaged plants and call it good. And so I wouldn't have to look at it. But you actually want to hold off on that urge and wait cause you might be surprised at how many plants rebound. And I know from one other time we had hail and it caused a lot of damage in our vegetable garden.

Speaker 1: [13:29](#) A lot of things came back and all the supportive, wonderful messages I've gotten from our homestead tribe have further underscored that that gardens are pretty resilient. So fight the urge to rip it out, leave it for a while and see what happens. Now I honestly just decided to take a couple days away from the garden cause I just needed a mental space from the destruction. But I went out there this morning and it's not as bad. Like there's definitely damaged. It's definitely really sad. But I think a lot of it's going to come back more than I thought originally. So give it some time. After you have given it that space, then you can go in and start trimming. But I would advise you to be a little bit conservative in what you trim. Obviously if you have leaves that are completely broken and are withering and turning black, you want to trim those away from the plants.

Speaker 1: [14:34](#) But just leaves that have holes in them or that are tattered, it's best if you can leave those on. And I know with a few of my plants that were stripped of a lot of the leaves, I want to make sure I can leave as much leaf on there as possible, even if it is tattered so the plant can potentially grow back. And it is going to take a lot of work for the plant to grow back. So if you can, you want to baby your garden along at this point. This is gonna look like giving an extra water if if needed and just making sure it's sufficiently damp and you can also apply some compost tea or some sort of fertilizer. And I would do this a little bit down the road like maybe a couple of weeks after the hail hits. I know I'm going to make some simple compost tea.

Speaker 1: [15:24](#) I have a recipe on the blog and I'll drop it in the show notes and I'm gonna just going to spray that on the plants, on the leaves and around this soil, just to give it a little extra boost. It's going to take extra energy and resources from these plants to regenerate. I want to give them every chance they possibly can have. And then lastly, don't forget about replanting. And again, this is completely dependent on what point of the season you are in when the hail hits. But I know, well kind of a good thing for me is some of my plants didn't germinate, so I had already put some seeds in the ground last week and those seeds haven't come up quite yet. So that was protected from the hail. And if it's early enough in the season, you might be able to pull out some of the dead plants and put some new seeds or seedlings in place.

Speaker 1: [16:24](#) A little note about hail coverings or hail protection. This is the topic I have looked at a lot over the years because our area of Wyoming has a lot of hail. I'm honestly surprised we haven't gotten hailed out more frequently just because we live in an area with very high occurrence. Hail covering is something I

absolutely want to either build or invest in in the future for us is just figuring out what type of covering is best. One idea we've had is to build hoops or some sort of structure over our beds and then use hell cloth or hardware cloth on top just to shield it a little bit and then still letting the sun get in. Other options are using things like buckets or tubs turned over and put on plants. Unfortunately for me, my garden is big enough that I would need a ridiculous number of buckets and tubs to cover the garden so that's not really feasible.

Speaker 1: [17:29](#)

However, if you have a smaller garden, I mean collect some milk jugs and cut the bottoms off and get really creative with your protective stash and you can run out there hopefully if your home, when hail comes and cover everything before you're hit. In the past I've also gone out and tried covering things with sheets or light blankets. Honestly, I don't know how well that works. You have to be really careful that the blankets don't crush the plants and honestly, with the way the wind came in with our storm on Saturday, those blankets would have been in Nebraska and would have done absolutely no good, so you could try it. I mean it's probably better than nothing, but I wouldn't bank on the fact that a sheet or a blanket's going to do a whole lot for your plants. Here's an idea though that Christian and I are brainstorming and we don't know if it'll work, but I just have to throw this out there and if you've ever seen anything like this, please drop me a note on Facebook or Instagram.

Speaker 1: [18:34](#)

We had this crazy idea since our garden is so large to build some sort of removable hail netting and our idea is to get some sort of steel cable and string it between two posts and somehow we'd have to do something on the sides. Haven't quite figured that part out. And then getting some of that orchard hail netting or hail cloth. I've seen it online, I think it exists. They use it to cover trees and orchards and protect them from hail and then having it on rings so we can pull it over the garden and secure it when we know a storm is coming and then when the storm goes away we can pull it back and leave the garden exposed to the open air. There's a little bit of engineering that has to happen before we start building such a thing. But that's my best option for covering or my best idea at this point for covering a larger garden without literally just like building a hoop house over the top of it.

Speaker 1: [19:34](#)

If you have hail experiences or hail covering ideas, I am so interested in what you have to say. Please shoot me a message or an email or a comment on social media and I would love to chat. In a nutshell to wrap it up, if you have or when you have rather cause it's bound to happen at some point, those

disappointments on your homestead journey, whether it's an animal dying or your garden being shredded by hail or a recipe, you completely messed up in the kitchen, don't let it define you. You have to remember that failure is just a part of this journey and sometimes failures are things that we can prevent and sometimes they're not. Sometimes they're completely out of our control. The only thing we can control is our perspective and the choice of whether or not we keep going. And I hope you always choose to keep going. And that is it for today, my friends, I would be so honored for you to pop over iTunes and leave a quick review if you enjoyed this show and give it a share so more people can find this podcast and bring homesteading into their lives. Thank you so much for listening and I can't wait to catch up with you on the next episode of the old fashioned on purpose podcast.