



# Garden

Bloom Where You're Planted

# Gate



According to MaryJane, the seven aspects for living the farmgirl life are:  
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## Creative Detours: Four Ways to Cultivate Your Inner Farm Artist

by guest writer Lisa Kivirist, [www.innserendipity.com](http://www.innserendipity.com)

**“Farmers and artists have creation in common,”** shares my friend Donna Neuwirth, a seasoned organic farmer and cofounder of the Wormfarm Institute in Reedsburg, Wisconsin. At this time of seasonal fall abundance, when my kitchen counter is covered in tomatoes and root crops from our growing fields, I need that boost from Donna to remind me to both see and appreciate the artistic side all us farmgirls share.

A national pioneer in championing that connection between arts and agriculture, Donna started the Wormfarm Institute ([www.wormfarminstitute.org](http://www.wormfarminstitute.org)) with her partner, Jay Salinas, to help folks sense that integral and intimate connection between farming and the arts. “The Latin root of the world ‘culture’ actually means ‘to till the soil,’” Donna explains.

**“As farmers, gardeners, and all of us connected to the land, we need to cultivate a deeper connection and express it in creative ways that help others see all the possibilities in our rural landscape.”**

That creative surge manifests itself every October here in Wisconsin with the Wormfarm Institute’s Fermentation Fest ([www.fermentationfest.com](http://www.fermentationfest.com)), a food and farming celebration of all types of “live cultures,” from learning how to craft your own fermented foods from kombucha to kefir to connecting with the creative side of the rural farm scene. The Farm/Art DTour ([www.fermentationfest.com/farmart-dtour-the-land-is-alive](http://www.fermentationfest.com/farmart-dtour-the-land-is-alive)), part of the Fermentation Fest that runs October 12–21 this year, rocks the rural back roads with a self-guided 50-mile loop through central Wisconsin to discover various large-scale, on-farm art installations. Some installations came from professional artists like the “Boots” installation on p. 1, but some of the most popular came from farmers themselves. My favorite: A 350-foot long silage cover that a farmer-and-son duo transformed into a colorful caterpillar.

“We farmers are well-seasoned in taking the skills and tools we already have and adapting them to new situations,” observes Donna. For example, a farmer created a large sculpture of a sheep and collie dog, innovatively using their existing machinery to stack the bales and then fastening the bales together with regular farm twine. I’m excited to see this year’s new creations, including a sculpture involving a tractor integrated into a stack of wood: Komíny-Tractor (“Komíny” means “stacks” in Czech).

## Ready to channel your inner farmgirl artist?

Here’s some creative fuel from Donna to get us started:

## • Use what you have

“Look around your farm and seek out new ways to use what you have lying around,” offers Donna. When we were converting our old granary on our farm into a strawbale greenhouse ([www.innserendipity.com/inn/strawbale.html](http://www.innserendipity.com/inn/strawbale.html)) a few years ago, one of our farm interns saw an opportunity to use old barn board to create a beautiful and symbolic sun over the front building door.



## • Beautify the everyday

“Just because something is functional doesn’t mean it can’t be innovative and engaging,” Donna adds. Wormfarm Institute’s Roadside Culture Stands (<http://fermentationfest.com/artist>) exemplify this idea and will be on display during the Farm/Art DTour, transforming the expected simple roadside stand to sell farm produce into a unique, beautiful structure.



## • Think seasonal and simple

Sometimes art doesn’t need to do more than enhance and showcase the beauty of the landscape. The “Farmed Frame” Farm/Art DTour installation welded rusted, defunct farm parts to fashion an ornate formal frame that then captures the beauty of the landscape. Who needs a painting when you have the real thing, in this case, in full-throttle autumn colors?

## • Stir the local culture pot

“Artists help us see our familiar farmland in new ways engaging neighbors and others in the community in a multisensory celebration of farming,” suggests Donna. “Especially as women connected to the land, we are natural multitaskers and can see and communicate the layers of meaning and value within our working lands. Be sure to bring your best creative selves to the work.”

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We did this on our farm and B&B, Inn Serendipity ([www.innserendipity.com](http://www.innserendipity.com)) when we participated in a local initiative called "Green County Barn Quilts ([www.greencountybarnquilts.com](http://www.greencountybarnquilts.com))," where quilt block patterns would hang on various outbuildings throughout our county. Over the fourth of July holiday, we gathered friends to paint a pinwheel-patterned quilt block that now hangs on our dairy barn, the shape inspired by the wind turbine ([www.innserendipity.com/inn/wind.html](http://www.innserendipity.com/inn/wind.html)) that completely powers our farm.

"Above all, remember to give yourself permission to play and look at your farm as a big green canvas on which you can create," sums up Donna. "Do something different and unexpected and reconnect in your own way with our farm-based, creative roots. Come visit us at Fermentation Fest and the Farm Art DTour this October for some Wisconsin inspiration!"

barn quilt photos, courtesy John D. Ivanko/farmsteadchef.com

**More about Wormfarm Institute:**

The Wormfarm Institute is an award-winning non-profit organization working to build a sustainable future for agriculture and the arts by fostering vital links between people and the land. Generating, supporting, and promoting these links among our creative selves, our work, and our place on earth are essential for a thriving community.

[www.wormfarmstitute.org](http://www.wormfarmstitute.org)



"Corn Field Notes"  
frame by Homer Daehn.  
Photo by Donna Neuwirth.



"Come What May" by Katie Schofield,  
made from recycled hay bale wrap.  
Photo by Ann Foley.



"Field Weave" by Randy Walker. Photo by Katrin Talbot.