



MEMBERS UPDATE

February, 2018

5 Unbelievable Modern Day Survival Sagas

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How to Install and Zero a Tactical Laser

Top 8 Firearms for Seniors and Disabled Shooters

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8 Best Guns for Seniors and Disabled Shooters

We'll come right out and say it; recoil is decidedly not part of what we enjoy about shooting sports. Likewise, any weapon that has a clumsy action, slide that's difficult to rack, or a trigger pull that seems out of whack is one that we'd just as soon steer clear of.

There are so many excellent firearms out on the market today, there's absolutely no reason to settle for something you're not thrilled with. In fact, that's why we believe this topic is so important.

We think it's high time that someone draws some much-needed attention to a very underserved segment of the shooting public: Those who want to shoot, but have concerns about operating those hand-cannons you see in most shooting videos.

Come to think of it, credit is due to manufacturers, many of which have long been working to reduce recoil and make guns easier to operate, despite whether or not their efforts are noticed. Because guns are typically linked with Teddy Roosevelt-styled manliness, military and law enforcement use, we often forget that those who would potentially benefit the most from arming themselves, i.e. the

most vulnerable among us, need a weapon that minimizes recoil.

So, we've done the research to find the guns with the best reputation among elderly shooters, disabled shooters, etc. Whether you're suffering from a chronic condition, you're shopping for an elderly shooter, or you simply need a weapon that's on the lighter end of the recoil spectrum, there are plenty of great firearms that can meet your specific requirements.

If there's just one message we hope to get across, it's that you don't have to be in the best shape of your life to engage in shooting sports. There are dozens of suitable firearms out there for you, even if your arm or hand strength isn't 100%.

What Exactly is a Low Impact Firearm?

Chuckle if you want; we admit that "low-impact shooting" sounds a bit like an ill-fated workout program (yet one we might be interested in). But you wouldn't believe how many requests we've received over the years for a guide that caters to shooters with special needs of one type or another. For the most part, these inquiries filter down to either senior citizens, shooters with disabilities, or those who would like to start shooting but have major concerns about the recoil.

As far we are aware, there aren't any guns on the market that are marketed as "low-impact," or AARP-



certified. From our experience, however, the market for such a weapon may be surprisingly large and definitely underserved.

We know what you might be thinking: it seems a bit insulting to suggest that seniors or shooters with disabilities would need different firearms than other able-bodied shooters. We thought the same thing.

Then we received this request from one of our readers:

"I see a good bit of information on weapons but little that helps me decide what weapons are best for those with less strength. I am only 60, but I have a genetic defect in connective tissue that does



not offer much protection to my joints. Specifically, I am concerned about recoil of handguns or too much kick-back on rifles.”

Suddenly, this topic started to seem more and more practical. Then, over the Thanksgiving holiday, we got to be part of helping an 86-year-old woman shoot a rifle for the first time. It was extremely gratifying, but also eye-opening. She was very interested in learning

to shoot, but was intimidated by the firearms left behind by her late husband.

As it turned out, a .22 LR carbine, lightweight and light in the recoil department, was the perfect starting point for this octogenarian. In fact, many shooters “progress” to larger calibers only to eventually realize that less is more. By no means does this apply only to senior citizens or shooters with disabilities.

With that said, if this information helps this one reader find a firearm that puts a smile on their face at the range, we’re satisfied. However, we know from receiving many similar requests, not all of them as specific, that there are many others with similar concerns.

Men, in particular, have a reputation for not being so forthcoming with their own specific needs. Still, we get regular requests for senior-friendly and/or low-impact firearms from men. That speaks volumes.

Each of the guns on this list exhibits at least one feature that makes it more user-friendly to someone with limited hand or arm strength than other weapons in the same category.

These criteria include:

- **Ease to operate controls**
- **Ease of loading/chambering**
- **Ease of trigger pull**
- **Light recoil**
- **Light overall weight**

With those criteria in mind, let’s take a look at the weapons that excel in this “low-impact” category. But first, let’s begin with two of the biggest misconceptions we run across when it comes to this segment.

The first is that a smaller or weaker person is better off with the smallest gun possible. As you know, smaller and lighter guns tend to produce more recoil than a larger weapon firing the same round. This problem is compounded further when you consider that a smaller gun may also have a smaller grip and be harder to hold onto.

If you have weak grip strength combined with a tiny, hard to grip firearm, well... let’s just say conditions are not ideal for your follow-up shot. You basically have a recipe for a handgun that jumps out of the shooter’s hand like a cat seeing a cucumber. That said, smaller guns aren’t necessarily better for smaller shooters.

The other common misconception we see is that

semi-automatics are ideal for ease of use. While they are quite handy in general, they do present challenges for some shooters.

First off, if racking the slide under normal conditions is a problem because of hand strength, then racking it due to a malfunction is going to be next to impossible. In addition, there’s the difficulty of loading the magazines. Then, of course, there’s the ease of use as far as the controls, including safety, magazine release, takedown lever, etc.

You may think someone else can rack the slide for the shooter, but we strongly advise against this. If the shooter can’t fully operate the firearm, soup to nuts, we say rule it out. If you can’t load it, chamber a round, and fire the weapon with relative ease, then keep shopping. Keep believing there’s a better option out there, because there almost certainly is.





Charter Arms Undercover .38 Special

When it comes to self-defense weapons that are safe, straightforward, and easy to shoot, it's hard to beat the good old-fashioned revolver. This is especially true when it comes to those with lower hand strength who can't rack a slide.

A mid-sized revolver offers a nice weight to counter the recoil, a big ol' grip for maximum control, and controls that are beefy enough to get a good handle on. Generally speaking, cocking a hammer takes less strength and coordination than racking a slide for those with grip strength issues.

Obviously, this snub nosed special isn't great for long distance target shooting, or even mid-range. They can be a lot of fun to shoot, however, and surprisingly light on recoil. The .38 Special has a reputation for low recoil, but you can lighten that even further with a 90-grain ammo.



There are many great options out there produced by some of the most reputable names like Smith & Wesson, Ruger, and Colt. For some reason,

lots of older shooters tend to prefer the Charter Arms version. It's got a big comfy rubber grip, minimal recoil, and can fire in single or double-action mode, all for around \$300.

If a lightweight revolver is on your list, test drive Charter's Undercover Lite, which weighs in at

Ruger LCR

Ruger became a leader in the concealed carry innovation with its extremely popular LCP series. The LCP, with its lightweight frame and convenient size, was a solid contender for this list. Alas, it does require shooters to rack a slide.

Thus, Ruger's follow-up design, the LCR beat out its older brother for a slot on our list. The LCR stands for "Lightweight Compact Revolver" which would lead you to believe it fits at least a few of our criteria right off the bat; and it does.

The LCR is a double action only revolver with the hammer and firing mechanism concealed within the frame's handle. As you can imagine this is very beneficial if you for some reason have trouble cocking a hammer, since this is completely unnecessary with the LCR. This feature also makes carrying and drawing an LCR easier, with no hammer to get hung up on.

As for recoil, this revolver gives you plenty of options to choose your own recoil threshold. The LCR is available in a number of calibers ranging from .22lr, .22WMR, .38 special, to heavier loads like .357 Magnum, 9mm Luger, and .327 Federal. Again, we would emphasize the .38 Special with 90 grain ammo.



At a weight of just under 1LB for most models, this gun is light enough for most users to hold on target with ease. It does, however, pack a recoil punch a bit above its weight class (for the larger centerfire calibers), so grip it firmly and be prepared.

Still, combine these features with the Ruger name and reputation and you have a very strong candidate for many senior or disabled shooters who want a carry gun.

Beretta Bobcat 21 A (.25 ACP)

The Beretta Bobcat is another interesting entry for seniors who may have difficulty racking a slide or holding a heavy handgun steady on target.



Designed to serve as a lightweight pocket gun, the Bobcat naturally solves many of the issues facing disabled shooters.

The unique tip-up barrel design allows

for easy loading, allowing those who may have difficulty working a slide to chamber a round in a regular semi-auto pistol.

Despite what you might be thinking, the Bobcat is in fact a semi-auto, not a single shot pistol. Both versions of this pistol include a traditional 7-round magazine which feeds into the chamber after you fire the first round.

Though the 11.5oz Bobcat may look a little like a toy, and the action a little unusual, this handgun is every bit a Beretta. The barrel is forged and milled from steel bar stock and the frame is solid aluminum. Being a Beretta, the sights, construction, and ergonomics are top-notch, as is the reliability.

Obviously, the weapon is extremely small and lightweight. The Bobcat is very popular in the rimfire version, yet it's also available in a .25ACP version. Given the inconsistent quality among .22 LR ammo, we'd opt for the centerfire version to avoid jams, misfires, stovepipes, etc.

If you plan to carry this gun for self-defense, you need absolute reliability. The .25 ACP is certainly on the low end of the recoil spectrum anyway, so firing the gun is still low-impact enough for most shooters struggling with arthritis and other conditions.

Bonus: The Bobcat's younger brother, the Tomcat, is another excellent option for senior shooters who want a high-quality carry weapon with an excellent accessibility score.

As with the Bobcat, the Tomcat comes with all the perks associated with the Beretta brand. Also like its sibling, the Tomcat features a tip-up barrel design, except it also has a functioning slide action.



In addition, the Tomcat fires the .32 ACP, which for many caliber-minded individuals is a larger, harder hitting round. If your goal is self-defense, neither the .25 nor 32 ACP rounds are ideal, but both are adequate, especially when fired from these fine Beretta handguns.

Marlin Model 60



For those looking for a highly accurate and user-friendly target rifle, we'd be remiss if we didn't mention this classic plinkster. In fact, we believe any shooter would be doing themselves a huge favor if they purchase a .22 semiautomatic rifle; it's possibly the most bang for your buck on the market.

When it comes to accuracy, ease of use, and trigger-pull, the Marlin Model 60 is spot on, even above the vaunted Ruger 10/22. The reason is simple. The Ruger and Marlin are very similar in most respects, except the Marlin is tube-fed.

For shooters with possible dexterity issues, shoving those tiny bullets into a magazine can be a chore. It's considerably easier to simply drop them down the Marlin's tube. And while the 10/22 faithful swear by its dependability, our testing has uncovered virtually no difference in the reliability department.

In addition, very little strength is needed to work the bolt to chamber a round. From there, the shooter can enjoy plinking through a magazine tube's worth of smooth, light recoil shooting. This can conserve effort and strength when compared to a bolt-action rifle.

We recommend the Ruger 10/22 also, as it comes standard with a 10-round magazine that's easy to remove and replace. If you'd like even more shots between reloads, there are plenty of high capacity options available.

Like most .22lr long guns, the Ruger is lightweight in comparison to most high-powered rifles. The sights are straightforward, clean and classic.

Smith and Wesson M&P 2.0 - 9mm

The M&P series is well-known for delivering a high

bang-for-the-buck factor. Recently, Smith & Wesson revamped the series and really took the value up a notch.



Among several other upgrades, the M&P 2.0 includes a truly excellent grip surface, with reworked stippling

that creates lots of friction for the shooter's hand. For those with arthritis or other issues that may affect their grip strength, the upgraded grip will help with recoil control, particularly on follow-up shots and during tactical shooting drills.

The M&P also offers 3 interchangeable back straps to ensure a customized fit for most hand sizes. In addition, the trigger pull for the M&P 2.0 series turned the trigger from a weakness to a strength. The refreshed trigger is crisp and smooth, coming in at a pull weight of 5LBS, light enough to suit shooters with strength or joint issues.

Racking the slide on the M&P is also relatively effortless for a full-sized semiautomatic handgun. Most shooters very much appreciate the wavy grip serrations on the rear of the slide.

In addition, with a relatively high grip-to-bore axis, the M&P handles recoil as well as any other gun in its class. All this, and the M2.0 only weighs 26.9 ounces. If arm strength is a concern, you can reduce fatigue by simply not maxing out the 17-round magazine capacity.

Rossi Circuit Judge



For those who feel most comfortable with a revolver in their hands, on account of strength/dexterity issues, yet who also prefer a rifle or carbine for target shooting, the Rossi Circuit judge is the best of both worlds.

Double action revolvers are a great choice for a wide range of shooters for the combination of simplicity and safety that's baked into the design, i.e. the long double action trigger pull.

And for those just getting acquainted (or re-acquainted) with shooting sports, the revolver is a

fairly forgiving and straightforward choice. Loading is easy and safety checks are as simple as swinging open the cylinder. Often times, however, the downside to revolvers is the relatively strong recoil, as compared to a semiautomatic.

The Circuit Judge, given its carbine characteristics, manages to counteract much of that recoil. As a bonus, the Circuit Judge functions a bit as a 2-in-1 combo firearm, since the larger version fires both .45 LC and .410 gauge shells.

In fact, the Rossi can even be used for sporting clays and/or even some bird hunting applications, though perhaps not as well as a dedicated shotgun. The Circuit Judge is perhaps the only revolver style shotgun with a long barrel on the market.

The Circuit Judge is available with .22LR/22WMR interchangeable cylinders -- ideal for those who want to minimize recoil -- we recommend the .45LC/.410GA version for its variability.

As we noted earlier, the recoil produced by the .45 LC through this carbine is pretty negligible. Notice that the Circuit Judge is equipped with a fairly thick recoil pad on the stock.

Bonus: The Circuit Judge also comes with a factory installed rail on its top strap for easy optics mounting.

Bersa Thunder 380

The Bersa Thunder is a very popular gun for a laundry list of reasons. This gun is small, high-quality, easy to operate, and last but not least, relatively inexpensive.



For under \$300, this gun seems to find its way into the hands of shooters who would really like to be holding a Wather PPK, but don't want to pay for the privilege. Many of those who've shot these guns side by side say the same thing: The Bersa Thunder is significantly lighter in weight, yet somehow produces a lighter recoil.

So, if you don't care at all whatsoever if your pistol has the name of a classic German arms maker on the side, you can save a lot of money with this Brazilian made weapon.

The typical downside with lightweight guns, often chambered in .380 ACP, is that the recoil is a bit much, especially compared to the amount of grip surface available. By all counts, the Bersa Thunder does a good job balancing that issue.

However, as a single stack semiauto pistol, the Thunder does require that you rack a slide. If that raises any concerns, the best way to make a decision is to simply head to the gun store or gun range and try to work the action.

If you're in the market for an easy-to-use, easy-to-shoot carry gun, the Bersa is an excellent value. Its lighter weight, easy-to-rack slide, and light recoil make it a strong contender.

Ruger GP100

Want to avoid as many small moving parts as possible? How about a weapon with a nice big rubber grip and a weight that eats recoil for breakfast?



Ruger's GP100 series is arguably the perfect lineup for those who want to do plenty of highly enjoyable recreational revolver shooting. We

mention this because if you go to any gun range, you'll notice that revolver popularity has declined steadily.

This isn't only because of the amazing new polymer guns that are popping up every month. It's because of the perception that big ol' revolvers kick like a mule and are a struggle to shoot.

With the GP100, that couldn't be further from the truth. Given the variety of barrel lengths and calibers available, the GP100 is a very accurate gun that's known for being a pleasure to shoot.

If you really can't stand recoil, Ruger offers a 10-round GP100 in 22LR. At 42-ounces, you may not even feel the round firing from the Model 1757. Other chambering options include the 327 Federal Mag, and the .357 Mag, significant because weapons chambered in .357 Mag also accommodate the soft-shooting .38 Special round.

There are several things to love about this weapon, but let's start with the one downside. The GP100 is on the heavy side. If you have arm strength issues, this may not be your best choice.

Apart from that one small but significant downside, this weapon should be on every senior shooter's short list. For starters, most models are equipped with a big, juicy Hogue Monogrips, great for both enhancing grip and cushioning the recoil. In addition, the sights on the GP100 are extremely high quality, with a rear adjustable sight standard. Many models have a fiber optic on the front sight.

Overall, there's just an awful lot to like here for both seniors and disabled shooters, provided they can handle the GP100's weight. This gun is smooth, highly accurate, easy to use, and, of course, it eats up recoil like few other revolvers on the market.

Conclusion

No matter your budget or limitations, the world of shooting sports is not closed to you, not by a long shot. As you can see from this list, there's a wide range of firearms out there that really cater to many concerns you may be having, whether it's a dexterity or strength issue.

The other key thing to remember is that this list is by no means comprehensive. Each of the firearms on this list have features which helped it stand out from the pack, in terms of our criteria.

However, the most important takeaway from our list is, perhaps, the criteria itself. Each gun has unique characteristics in terms of recoil, grip, weight, etc.

If you or someone you know has a particular need or concern when it comes to shooting, it's important to do both the research and the legwork to find the right gun. One last piece of advice: once you do settle on an option you think will work for you, go give it a test drive.

Many shooting ranges offer gun rentals on a surprising variety of shooting flavors, if you will. Take advantage of programs like these to find out what you like and what really works for you.

your guide to starting a container garden in february: what to plant, why to plant it and how to keep everything alive



Photo by Max Pixel

Most people don't think about gardening in the dreary winter months, especially if they live in a cold climate area. However, container gardening enables anyone to continue the practice of gardening all year long.

Whether you're planning to transplant the fruits of your labor into your outside garden or keep the containers indoors, there are several plants that are perfect for container gardening in late winter!

Even if you've never done any form of gardening in the past, an indoor container garden is a great way to increase your self-sufficiency. For many people, it's also a much simpler way to gain confidence in their gardening skills.

Remember: when the SHTF, you're going to need to know how to provide for your family's food needs. You can't rely on your stockpile of canned goods to last forever, nor can you rely on anyone else making freshly grown vegetables, fruits and herbs available to you.

Learning how to tend to plants in a container garden is a great first step, and it will also give you the necessary skills to produce food indoors. After all, if society crumbles, it may not be safe to have your garden outside. Therefore, we're going to examine several container garden options that are perfectly suited to this time of the year.

Get Your Herbs Started



Photo by Leonora (Ellie) Enking

If you want to start your container garden with something simple, herbs are the hands-down winner. They fit well into small containers, and

many of them can successfully be grown from your windowsills. If circumstances and space permit, they can also be moved outside during the spring or summer. Depending on the size of your existing container, you may wish to move them into a larger container as they grow.

There are several herbs that can be planted inside a container at any time of the year, especially if you're not planning to transplant them outside. Here's a quick look at some herbs you should definitely add to your container garden during the month of February.

1. **Basil** – This tasty herb grows relatively easily and produces a large amount of leaves. Many people use basil when making sauces such as pesto and marinara. It also works well with olive oil and can be chopped up and added to numerous dishes. Studies have shown this herb may contain anti-inflammatory properties, and it has antibacterial properties as well.

2. **Oregano** – Whether you want to add a new flavorful element to pasta sauce or make an herb-infused bread roll, oregano is always a good choice - as long as you're not allergic to herbs in the mint family, that is. Oregano has long been used for medicinal purposes, including as an anti-inflammatory and antibacterial agent. There's also some evidence that oregano can benefit people with cancer and type 2 diabetes.

3. **Parsley** – Getting your nutritional needs met during a long-term crisis situation may prove very difficult. With parsley in your container garden, though, you'll be better off than most. This vibrantly flavored herb comes with a large amount of vitamins K, C and A, along with iron, folate, potassium, fiber and calcium. It also provides a minimal percentage of vitamins B3 and B1.

4. **Dill** – Often used to season vegetables or potatoes, dill can also be mixed with plain yogurt or serve as a replacement for basil in pesto sauce. From a nutritional standpoint, dill offers measurable amounts of vitamins A and C. The four flavonoids within dill combat inflammation and may help reduce the risk of certain cancers.

Starting Vegetables in a Container Garden



Photo by Vmenkov

Many vegetables can, at the very least, begin their life in your container garden. With a large enough container, you can even coax a vegetable through its entire growing season, providing yourself with a nice influx of fresh food.

No matter how cold it is where you live, February is a prime time to get some vegetables started. And your container garden is the ideal way to do so. Which vegetables should you plant right now? Read on!

1. **Tomatoes**– We could get into a philosophical argument about whether or not tomatoes count as a vegetable. But because this is their most common classification, we've placed them into this category. As you can see from the nearby image, these delicious, nutrient-rich veggies are well-suited to an indoor garden.

2. **Lettuce** – Many believe that lettuce is nothing but empty calories, but this isn't true as long as you plant the right type. For example, green leaf lettuce has a much better nutrient profile than iceberg lettuce. Either way, though, lettuce is typically a good resource for vitamins A, B6, C, E and K. Other benefits include fiber, calcium and potassium.

3. **Broccoli** – Want a vegetable full of fiber, omega-3, calcium and vitamins A, B1, B6 and E? Not only is broccoli often referred to as a 'superfood,' but it's also especially well-suited to container gardening. The most important thing you need to know is that each broccoli plant requires a five-gallon container. As long as you have room for

that and can keep your broccoli from exceeding a temperature of 80 degrees, you'll be all set!

4. **Peppers** – Grab a container that's at least 15-inches wide and deep for each pepper plant you want to grow (the same goes for tomatoes too). You can keep the temperature down by sticking with glazed pottery terra-cotta pots. Every variety of pepper offers a rich nutrient profile that includes fiber, folic acid, potassium and vitamins A and C. Overall, red bell peppers provide the best nutrition of the pepper family.

Yes, You Can Grow Fruit in a Container Garden



Photo by Richard Masoner

Take a close look at the container garden in the photo above. Do you see what makes it stand out? There are strawberries and a melon in the image, along with tomatoes. This isn't a container garden that's going to be transplanted into the ground, either, yet it's still very successful. Want your own fruit from a container? Here's what you should be planting this month.

1. **Strawberries** – These seeds actually do best with six weeks of exposure to cold temperatures before they're given a home. From there, they can be planted into a suitably sized container. This delicious, natural dessert is another 'superfood' because of its large quantity of vitamin C, fiber and cancer fighting antioxidants.

2. **Pumpkins** – Even if the SHTF, you're still going to want pumpkin pie, right? Fortunately, this gourd/fruit can grow until it's ripe inside the comfy confines of an 18-inch wide container or growbag.

Pumpkins are considered to be a heart-healthy food, and they contain lots of fiber, vitamin C and potassium. Of course, they also offer pumpkin seeds, which many people like to eat as a snack. Be sure to save some for future planting, though.

3. **Cantaloupes** – Here's another fruit that most people don't think of when envisioning a container garden. However, you can bring them to life by following a few simple steps. Use a 10-gallon container, and plant four seeds at an equal distance from each other and the rim.

Cover the container with a white trash bag until germination is complete. Water the cantaloupes regularly and fertilize them once every two weeks. This will produce melons containing potassium, fiber, magnesium and vitamins B1, B3, B6 and K.

4. **Watermelons** – This one may be even more surprising than cantaloupes! To pull off watermelons in a container garden, you must choose one of the smaller varieties such as jubilee, sugar baby, golden midget or moon and stars. The container you select needs to be at least five-gallons, and it's also critical for it to offer proper drainage.

Watermelons are great for keeping you hydrated. They also have numerous other nutritional benefits, including vitamins A, B6 and C, amino acids, antioxidants and lycopene.



Photo by Brian Johnson and Dane Kantner

Tips for Best Results

Now that you know what to plant in February, it's time to look more closely at how to ensure that your container garden thrives.

1. **Increased Fertilizer** – If you're using fertilizer for your plants, it's vital to be aware that potted plants require more than those in an outside garden. Adding more every 10 days is a good guideline for dealing with this issue, but be sure to check your plants of choice for any specific instructions.

2. **Ideal Temperature Control** – Most of the previously mentioned plants aren't a big fan of starting life when it's warm. That's the primary reason you're planting them now, but this can get forgotten during the hustle and bustle of setting up an indoors garden. It's best to keep the temperature between 75 and 80 degrees. However, this doesn't mean you can set your thermostat to 75 and forget about it.

You must steer clear of black and plastic containers that soak in the sunlight because they can bake your plants. Also, whenever possible, the container itself should be shaded. Check the instructions to learn which plants need to get sunlight exposure for proper growth and place them accordingly.

3. **Correct Drainage** – In a traditional garden, water typically drains away naturally. This isn't the case in a container, so you have to get the right type of container for each plant. That's because they all have different moisture needs; some will need a lot of drain holes, while others will require minimal drainage. As always, check the growing directions for your preferred plants.

4. **Properly Sized Containers** – Your plants will never reach their full potential if you don't give them the right home. Getting the water, fertilizer and temperature right won't make much of a difference if you choke the life out of your plants with a prohibitively small container. Research the best size for your chosen plants and act accordingly.

Remember: if the SHTF, you have to know how to get your plants to produce as much food as possible. There won't be room for mistakes that ruin an entire crop.

5. **Appropriate Potting Soil** – Your plants need the best start in life, and the only way to give that to them is with high quality potting soil. Look for soil that includes compost, moss, perlite, rotted manure and/or vermiculite.

Of course, every plant has its own specific soil needs, so be sure to take that under consideration when selecting bags of soil. Never take soil directly from your outside garden as it will dry out and harden.

6. **Save Your Plant Tags** – This may not be an exciting tip, but it's one that new container gardeners need to follow. Saving your plant tags will prevent issues down the line when you have questions about the plant's specific needs. Be sure to actually read each plant tag too and put the advice they provide into practice.

7. **Give Your Plants Time to Acclimate** – No one likes a massive, abrupt change. For us, that could mean suddenly finding ourselves smack dab in the middle of the apocalypse. For a plant, something as simple as being moved a couple of feet away can turn their entire world upside down. If you must make changes, give them time to slowly adjust.

For example, expose them to light and temperature changes through gradually increasing increments if they're eventually going to be replanted outside.

8. **Learn to Assess Each Plant's Water Needs** – If you've kept your plant tags, you'll find valuable information about the amount of water each plant prefers. As a general rule of thumb, though, the soil should be damp – but not wet – at all times.

NOTE: If you're pressing your finger against the surface of the soil to find out whether or not your plant needs water, you're not getting the real answer. Instead, you need to press your finger into the soil, all the way down to the second knuckle. If this leaves your finger moist, it's best to wait a while before putting more water into the soil.



Photo by PXHere

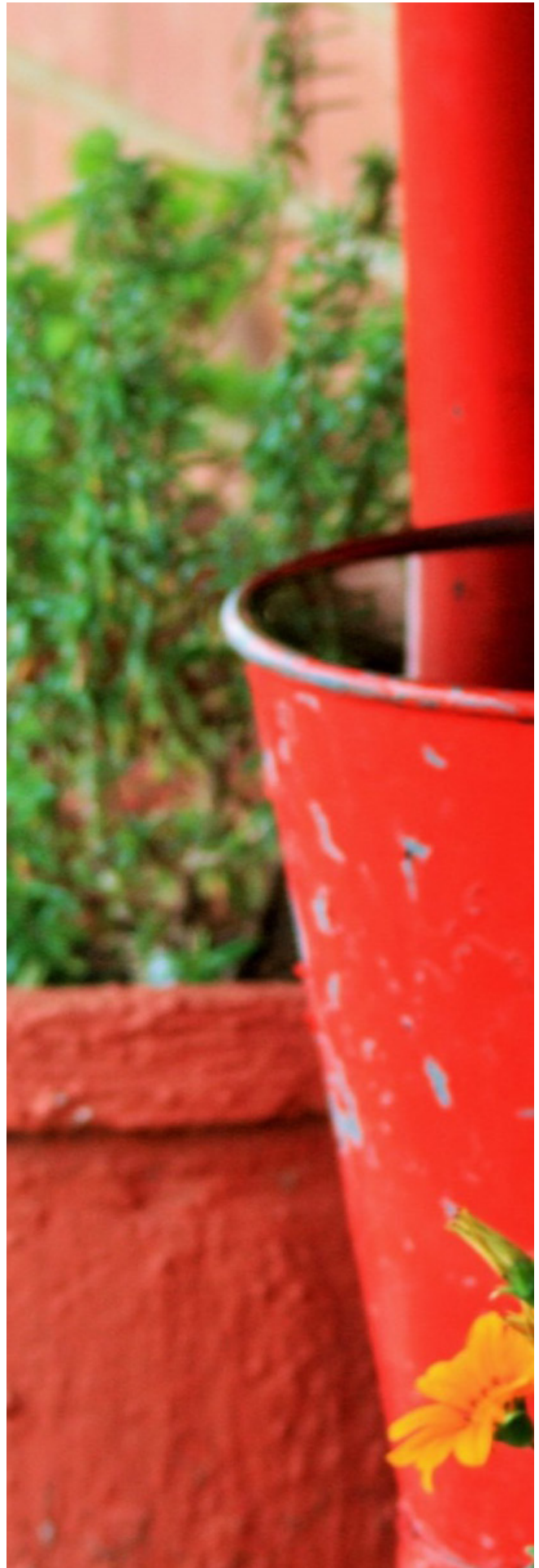
General Container Gardening Advice: Which Plants Fare the Best Indoors?

Aside from the plants we've already mentioned, there are numerous other options you can grow in your container garden. Not all of these are suitable for planting in February, but it's always wise to have a long-term plan in place. Consider the following when designing your annual container gardening plans.

- Avocados (from a dwarf avocado plant)
- Garlic greens
- Carrots
- Mandarin oranges (from a dwarf mandarin orange tree)
- Lemons (again, from a dwarf tree)
- Microgreens (a seed mixture containing basil, beets, dill, kale, radishes and Swiss chard)
- Salad greens (spinach, arugula, romaine, iceberg and red leaf lettuce)
- Mushrooms
- Scallions
- Chives
- Ginger
- Cilantro
- Rosemary
- Mint

As you can see, it's possible to have a diverse indoor container garden that contains diverse fruits, vegetables and herbs. For newcomers, there's no time like the present to get started. With some patience, you'll soon have freshly grown strawberries, tomatoes and even melons!

And don't get discouraged if a few plants don't make it; even the most accomplished gardeners lose a few plants every season. By honing your skills now, though, you'll have the best chance for success when it really matters.



5

PEOPLE WHO SURVIVED AGAINST GREAT ODDS DURING MODERN WILDERNESS MISADVENTURES



In a previous issue, we looked closely at some of the most inspiring and badass survival stories from the American Frontier. These tales contained many nuggets of wisdom and inspiration, but some may find them difficult to relate to. After all, no one has to walk hundreds of miles to find a settlement anymore, right?

If you think that the developed nature of the US and majority of the rest of the world will keep you safe, think again. There are countless stories of modern people who have inadvertently strayed off the beaten path, only to be lost for days, weeks or even months.

Many of these unfortunate individuals never make it home again. Those who do survive fully embody the spirit of the American Frontier; they're bold risk takers who never give up and aren't afraid to think outside the box. What can we learn from them? How to improve our odds of survival even when our back is against the wall and there appears to be no hope.

Remember: the only person you can rely on 100% is yourself. The following stories highlight the spirit and ingenuity necessary to wander into the heart of darkness and come out the other side.

ARON RALSTON: A PRIME EXAMPLE OF WHY YOU SHOULD NEVER HIKE ALONE



Photo by Aron Ralston

In 2003, Aron Ralston made the poor decision to go hiking alone without carrying a communication device or telling anyone about his plans.

If you learn only one thing from this article, let it be this: never, ever go out into the wilderness without having some form of contingency plan in place. Ideally, this will mean hiking with a buddy, carrying a satellite phone and letting a loved one know where you're headed. If you can't have all three, though, shoot for at least two of them.

Sadly, Ralston learned this lesson only after he was pinned in a slot canyon. An 800-pound chockstone firmly held his right arm in place, and no amount of maneuvering enabled him to get free. Ralston

remained in this precarious position for five days with nothing more than two burritos and 12 fluid ounces of water.

At the three-day mark, Ralston came to the realization that he wouldn't survive unless he amputated part of his arm. It took two more days for him to figure out how to accomplish this undesirable feat with his minimal hiking supplies.

Ultimately, Ralston used the stone and the power of torque to break the ulna and radius bones in his trapped arm. After which, he used a dull, two-inch blade from his multi-tool to cut his forearm off.

Starving, dehydrated and losing blood fast, Ralston next had to rappel down a 65-foot wall and begin the eight-mile hike back to his vehicle. Because he'd gone hiking without a phone, there was no way for him to make an emergency call.

Fortunately, a family found him and contacted the closest authorities. If he'd been forced to walk the full eight miles, it's doubtful he would have made it. By the time help arrived, he'd lost 25 percent of his blood volume, along with 40 pounds of body weight. Imagine losing 40 pounds in only five days.

Ralston's tenacity and ability to problem solve during what was almost certainly the most stressful event of his life is very noteworthy. If he'd taken some precautions beforehand, though, he could have avoided five days of hell and kept his arm intact.

This is the prime difference between survivalists and everyone else: we know that it's always necessary to be prepared for anything.

JULIANE KOEPCKE FELL TWO MILES, THEN SURVIVED THE AMAZON



We stress the importance of being prepared before heading into the wilderness. But what happens if you have no idea you're going to end up there and have zero ability to carry a bug out bag? Juliane Koepcke had to answer these questions when, at the age of 17, she was thrown through the sky after a bolt of lightning disintegrated LANSA Flight 508.

Koepcke had the good fortune of remaining strapped to her seat, and it traveled 10,000 feet with her to the ground. Against all odds, the teenager's most serious injury was a broken collarbone. Other immediate issues she had to contend with included her right eye being swollen shut and sustaining a gash to her right arm.

Having somehow survived a midair plane explosion, Koepcke now had a new problem: she was lost in the Amazon rainforest. The next chapter of her story began with a desperate hunt for her mother and any other surviving passengers. She didn't find any, but she did manage to locate a few sweets, which became her sole source of food.

Remembering her father's wilderness survival tips, Koepcke followed a knee-high water source downstream, knowing she'd eventually find other people. She spent nine days traveling, many of which centered around letting the water float her downstream, before her first stroke of good luck.

Along the route, she'd been bitten numerous times by insects, which had caused infections and a maggot infestation on her arm. Day nine brought her to a small boat with a motor, and she poured some of the gasoline on her arm to kill the maggots.

Once this was successfully completed, she laid down inside the boat. Even after everything she'd been through, Koepcke was still conscientious enough to be unwilling to steal the boat, so she waited for help to arrive.

It took a few more hours, but someone did find her. By the next evening, she'd traveled seven hours by canoe, followed by being airlifted to the closest hospital. Koepcke was the sole survivor of the LANSA Flight 508 crash.

MARCUS MAZZAFERRI PUSHED HIMSELF TOO FAR AND ALMOST PAID THE ULTIMATE PRICE



Photo by Pschere

No matter how well you know an area or what type of time frame you're trying to stick to, it's always vital to pay close attention to your surroundings.

Marcus Mazzaferri hiked 1,000 miles across the Pacific Crest Trail by himself. During his adventure, Mazzaferri had already crossed mountains that reached as high as 13,000 feet into the air. He'd also successfully made his way across several bodies of water.

Although it was early June, a late season snowfall had made conditions more treacherous than usual, not to mention extremely cold. Despite this, he'd continuously persevered and felt confident in his skills.

Earlier in the day, he'd lost some time due to weather related issues. Therefore, he made the fateful decision to cross one more river, Return Creek, before settling down for the night. Mazzaferri had been taught to never snap the chest or belt buckles for his pack when crossing water. This may have saved his life, but it also put him in a precarious position when the water overwhelmed him.

Mazzaferri was freezing, disoriented and had no supplies after the water pulled him under. On the plus side, he hadn't gone over the waterfall, which was the fate of his backpack. Reality quickly set in: it was cold enough to snow, and he had no phone, fire starting materials, shelter or dry clothes. Without getting help soon, he would die of hypothermia.

After walking for eight miles, he could go no further for the night. He spent 20 minutes resting, alternating with 20 minutes of jumping jacks, to keep himself alive until morning. He tried to follow his tracks back to an area where he believed he could get help. The melting snow and disorientation pulled him off track several times, though, which threatened to bring his story to a terrible ending.

The sound of a bulldozer gave him hope, but he couldn't easily access it without going way off track. To avoid losing his one chance at being rescued, he opted to jump into a river instead and swam with all his might to reach the work crew. Luck was on his side this time, and he made it to them before they left work for the day.

His story contains many lessons: don't hike alone, don't keep all your supplies in your backpack and never push yourself when the tide is high and nighttime is coming. Camping for the night would have enabled Mazzaferri to avoid all these complications, especially because most of the water in that region has a low, calm tide early in the day.

BECK WEATHERS: SEPARATED FROM HIS GROUP AND LOST IN A BLIZZARD



The 1996 Mount Everest Disaster claimed the lives of eight people. Beck Weathers was fortunate enough to survive, but his experience during a 72-hour time period changed his life forever.

Weathers joined a group of climbers hoping to make it to the peak of Mount Everest in May. As the group prepared to continue their ascent on May 10, they discovered that Weathers was suffering from a rare, previously undocumented medically-induced blindness. The group leader urged Weathers to descend to Camp IV, but Weathers chose to remain where he was instead, with the plan that the leader would help him down upon his return.

The leader never made it back. Giving up on him, Weathers had another guide help him descend the mountain. At this point, he and 10 others began the journey back to Camp IV. A blizzard came upon them, though, and they got lost on the mountain.

During that first night, Weathers wandered off alone. He spent the night with no protection, and things didn't improve the next day. Members of the group did look for him, but they eventually gave him up as dead and left the immediate area.



Weathers spent the second night with his hands and face exposed as the blizzard raged on. In the morning, he somehow managed to find his way to Camp IV, where other group members attempted to make him comfortable. His exposed skin looked like porcelain from frostbite, and no one believed he'd live through another night.

Surprising everyone, Weathers not only survived but managed to get his literally frozen feet to carry him to a lower camp the next day. He was airlifted to a hospital from this point, in one of the highest and most daring medical evacuations in history.

Weathers survived, but he lost part of his right arm, all the fingers on his left hand, his nose and part of both feet. His story points out two things: first, people with a strong desire to live can survive seemingly insurmountable obstacles.

Secondly, when you're not physically capable of being in the wilderness, it's important to evacuate the area as quickly and safely as possible. After all, he might have survived completely unscathed if he'd descended to Camp IV when the group leader first advised this course of action.

YOSSI GHINSBERG'S SURVIVAL STORY HIGHLIGHTS THE IMPORTANCE OF VETTING GROUP MEMBERS AND LISTENING TO LOCALS



Yossi Ghinsberg was 21 when he made the life-altering choice to explore the Amazon rainforest. Ghinsberg's obsession with finding uncharted territory and tribes almost led to an untimely death. Even worse, he led others down a dark and deadly path by putting his trust in a shady Austrian man, Karl Rupprechter, who claimed to be geologist in search of gold in a forgotten city.

This story spoke to Ghinsberg, who convinced two other travelers he'd just met to form a group of four. The leader of the group, the so-called geologist, told them he knew what he was doing, but they later discovered this had been a lie.

As their trek began, they encountered indigenous people who warned them it was too dangerous to follow Rupprechter's map and plan. Undaunted, the four men ignored these warnings and launched their expedition deep into the rainforest.

At first, all seemed well, but they soon started to run out of supplies. Eventually, they started killing and eating monkeys in order to survive.



Despite this, they kept moving forward. Before they reached their destination, they discovered the truth about Ruprecht: he wasn't a geologist but rather a criminal who was intent on finding gold and keeping all of it for himself.

After the truth came out, the group of four split into two groups of two. Ghinsberg and American photographer Kevin Gale built a raft and attempted to float to safety. A waterfall destroyed their plans and their raft, and the two became separated.

Ghinsberg spent four days searching for Gale before deciding he was stranded in the jungle. Meanwhile, Gale was rescued by locals on the fifth day. The other two group members, including Ruprecht, disappeared forever.

Ghinsberg spent the next three weeks wandering alone without any food or other supplies. The elements repeatedly tried to kill him; giant red ants gnawed on his flesh, large beasts of prey hunted him and a huge flood almost drowned him twice. During the second week, he came close to losing his foot due to rot and had to survive five days with no food.

Another week was spent deliriously looking for help. He managed to forage some berries and found one monkey to eat. He also began having hallucinations about a woman who he believed he was having a sexual relationship with. He later credited this with giving him the strength to keep going as he was doing it for her, not himself.

Miraculously, three weeks after getting lost, Gale and a group of rescuers found Ghinsberg and helped him get out of the jungle. It took three months of hospitalization for Ghinsberg to recover. Now, decades later, he's a tech entrepreneur and motivational speaker.

Ghinsberg's story points out the strength of the human spirit. It also shows many of our weaknesses too. If he'd taken the time to do some research instead of blindly following someone he'd just met, he could have avoided the entire ordeal.

It was also egotistical of the group to ignore several warnings from local residents. Combine these things with not carrying enough supplies, and it was a

recipe for disaster. Perhaps the most surprising part of the story is that two of the four men actually made it out of the jungle alive.

LEARNING FROM THE MISTAKES OF OTHERS



Each of these wilderness survival stories is inspiring because they show how strong people can be when facing horrendous circumstances. But with one notable exception, Juliane Koepcke, they also make it clear that people are often their own worst enemy. In truth, four of these five stories could have ended very differently and without such a massive amount of suffering.

Keep this in mind the next time you're tempted to rush off into the woods unprepared. A bit of planning and prep work can mean the difference between losing a limb or walking out more or less unscathed. Don't let the horrors these people suffered be in vain; ensure that you're never in a situation where you have zero methods for getting help (at least not before the SHTF, anyway).





HOW TO INSTALL YOUR NEW TACTICAL LASER SIGHT

One of the most common questions we field here at the NSRA is “will this or that tactical optic fit my gun?” The answer is, inevitably: Yes, but...

It's very important to inspect the weapon on which you intend to install a laser sight and do a little research before purchasing. While it's true that the vast majority of new semi-automatic handguns and tactical carbines are equipped with tactical rail systems, you can imagine that some shoppers, in their excitement, will sometimes put the cart before the horse.

That said, if you're considering a tactical sight, we highly recommend you check the firearm you intend to install it on for compatibility. If you own

a Glock (Gen 3 or after), Springfield XD, Smith & Wesson M&P, and many others, you will notice a rail under the barrel. If you own a AR clone or tactical rifle, you'll typically find accessory rails along the for-end.

If your weapon doesn't have an integrated rail system, you are by no means out of luck. You will, however, need to do some research to find a rail mount that works with your weapon. You can simply search on Google or Amazon with the name of your gun and “rail mount adapter.” Often, these Picatinny and Weaver style rails can be installed in minutes by a complete novice. Otherwise, you may need to visit the local gunsmith.

A quick search online yielded several “universal” style rail mount adapters that could be just the thing your older pistol needs in order to mount some cutting-edge shooting technology. For example, a company named Recover offers replacement grips with integrated tactical rail systems (see nearby image) for several popular handguns, such as Glock and 1911 models.



Similar designs are available for popular Gen 1 and 2 Glock models, to bring these dated designs up to code, so to speak. The nice part with Recover’s Glock adapters is that they don’t require you to make changes to your grips.

Plenty of sleek rail mount adapters are available, but you may have to dig a bit. Because there are several other much more obtrusive options out there too. Some will completely change the shape and feel of your firearm (see nearby image). You can just forget ever finding a holster with some of these attachments.



For demonstration, we’re going to describe the process for installing the MCG Tactical Laser Sight onto a Springfield XDM.



STEP ONE: First things first, make sure your firearm is in completely safe and unloaded condition before you begin. Next, identify the placement of your gun’s rail system.

STEP TWO: Remove the MCG Tactical Laser Sight from the packaging and locate the 3 batteries (included), along with the 3 hex keys (also included).

STEP THREE: Using the largest hex wrench, open the compartment labeled “Battery” and install all three batteries, positive side facing up. You may want to use your hex wrench to gently push the first battery to the bottom of the compartment.



STEP FOUR: Re-install the battery cap and engage the sight’s power switch to confirm that the red laser is indeed shining. If not, you’ll want to double check that you’ve installed all 3 batteries correctly.

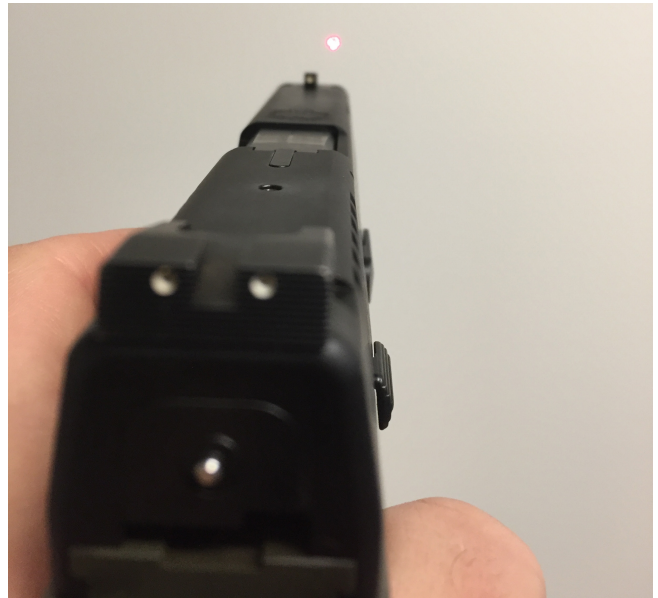


STEP FIVE: Use the large hex key to loosen the sight's mounting cross-bolt. Hold it up to your weapon's rail to eyeball the width until the sight's mounting brackets will easily slide over both sides of your gun's accessory rail. The bracket is hinged to allow for fitment.

STEP SIX: Seat your tactical laser onto the rail system and use the large hex wrench to tighten the mounting bracket. Double check to ensure that there is no movement or wobble, as this sight will need to withstand your firearm's recoil.



STEP SEVEN: Pick a wall in your garage or home and stand 10 feet away. Turn your laser sight on and hold your firearm (in this case, a handgun) in your normal shooting stance. Note where the laser dot appears on the wall in reference to your open sights.



STEP EIGHT: Make adjustments to the elevation and windage screws using your smallest hex wrench. Your goal is to adjust the laser until the dot appears directly at your gun's point of aim.

A fairly close zero can be achieved without a trip to the range, however fine tuning may be necessary when you actually begin shooting with your new laser sight. Dry fire practice with your new sight is an ideal way to adjust to your weapons new "furniture." Now get out to the range and punishing some bullseyes!





   
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