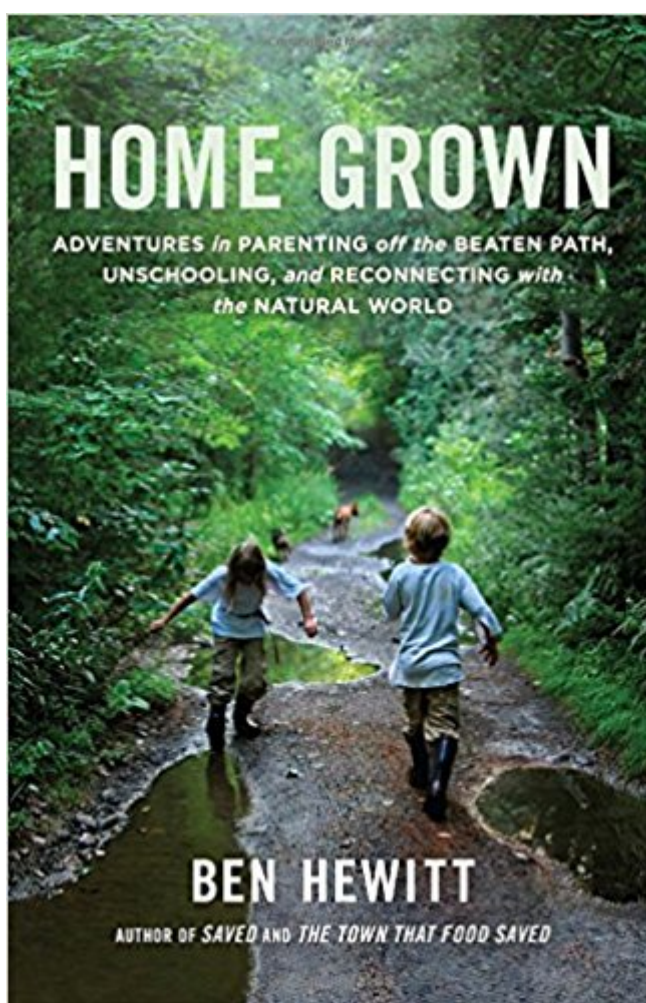


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# Home Grown: Adventures In Parenting Off The Beaten Path, Unschooling, And Reconnecting With The Natural World



## Synopsis

When Ben Hewitt and his wife bought a sprawling acreage of field and forest in northern Vermont, the landscape easily allowed them to envision the self-sustaining family farm they were eager to start. But over the years, the land became so much more than a building site; it became the birthplace of their two sons, the main source of family income and food, and ultimately, both classroom and home for their children. ã Å ã Å ã Å ã Å ã Å Having opted out of formal education, Hewitt's sons learn through self-directed play, exploration, and experimentation on their farm, in the woods, and (reluctantly) indoors. This approach has allowed the boys to develop confidence, resourcefulness, and creativity. They learn, they play, they read, they test boundaries, they challenge themselves, they fail, they recover. And these freedoms allow their innate personalities to flourish, further fueling growth and exploration. ã Å ã Å ã Å ã Å ã Å Living in tune with the natural world teaches us to reclaim our passion, curiosity, and connectivity. Hewitt shows us how small, mindful decisions about day-to-day life can lead to greater awareness of the world in your backyard and beyond. We are inspired to ask: What is the true meaning of "home" when the place a family lives is school, school system, and curriculum? When the parent is also the teacher, how do parenting decisions affect a child's learning? (And exactly how much trouble can a couple of curious boys gallivanting in the wild woods all day get into?) Home Grown reminds us that learning at any age is a lifelong process, and the best "education" is never confined to a classroom. These essays on nature, parenting, and education show us that big change can come from making small changes in how you live on the land, while building a life you love.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"In this fine and eloquent and moving book, Ben Hewitt takes a principled stand for the unconventional childhood, for the intellectual and emotional and soulful nurture of nature." —Richard Louv, author of *Last Child in the Woods* and *The Nature Principle*

"Ben Hewitt walks you along the lanes of his small family farm right into the heart of parenting. He does not judge the new normal of life's fever-pitch pace but fills you with the courage to follow your hopes, which may well transform your family." —Kim John Payne, MEd, author of *Simplicity Parenting*, *Beyond Winning*, and *The Soul of Discipline*

"This fine book may make you wish you'd grown up in a very different way." —Bill McKibben, author of *Wandering Home*

"What kind of parent doesn't send his kids to school? The kind that thinks maybe kids learn best when learning cannot be helped — when kids are so excited about the world that they master the skills they need to explore it, the same way they mastered crawling, walking and speaking."

—Lenore Skenazy, author of the book and blog, *Free-Range Kids*

"Hewitt provides a beautifully written handbook for those of you considering unschooling. And if you're already unschooling, buy ten copies to hand out to friends and family who ask you how it works."

—Penelope Trunk, blogger, entrepreneur, and home-schooling advocate

"This is a beautifully written, honest, introspective, soul-revealing, and soul-stirring account of one family's choice to live close to nature and to allow their children to learn naturally, without school, in a self-directed manner. The book's biggest message, I think, is that we do have choices; we can chart our own lives, we don't have to follow the crowd if we don't want to."

—Peter Gray, Research Professor at Boston College and author of *Free to Learn*

"This book fills me with both sadness and joy. My sadness is for the millions of children locked in schools, looking out the windows as the precious days of childhood pass them by. My joy comes from knowing this eloquent book will inspire many to choose a different path."

—Charles Eisenstein, author of *Sacred Economics* and *The More Beautiful World Our Hearts Know is Possible*

"Ben Hewitt's thoughtful and elegant prose cuts through the noise of modern life to reveal the incredible public value and personal satisfaction of being rooted in one's environment, nurturing meaningful relationships among family and friends, and learning with and from children. You don't have to live in a cabin in Vermont like the Hewitts to benefit from the book; you can enjoy their story and embrace their spirit to take

control of your life and learning to achieve your own unique ambitions. — Patrick Farenga, publisher of The Legacy of John Holt "An inspiring read that reminds us the world can offer more to our children than classrooms and cubicles; and they, in turn, can contribute more than test scores and paychecks." — Shannon Hayes, author of Radical Homemaking "Everyone with a relationship to children should read this book... for the sake of tomorrow's generation." — Joel Salatin, farmer, Polyface Farm, and author of Folks, This Ain't Normal

BEN HEWITT is the author of *Saved*, *The Town That Food Saved*, *Making Supper Safe*, and articles for magazines such as *Bicycling*, *Discover*, *Gourmet*, *Men's Journal*, *National Geographic Adventure*, *Outside*, the *New York Times Magazine*, *Yankee*, *Taproot*, and many others. He and his family live in a self-built, solar-powered house in Cabot, Vermont, and operate a forty-acre livestock, vegetable, and berry farm.

This is an excellent book sharing lots of experience and learnings as the author and his wife pursue a meaningful life and raising their kids to be fulfilled in what they choose to do. I would strongly recommend this to anyone interested in homeschooling, unschooling, or homesteading.

This book offers lots of insight on unschooling and the reasoning behind it, but the flow of the book could use a bit of improvement. As a homeschooling mother myself, I appreciated that the author didn't bash the reader over the head with facts and figures about public vs private vs home education. This is for people that already have the basic information about homeschooling down, but want a little personal insight into someone else's way of life.

I just had my first son, who is now 2 weeks old. I read this book during my pregnancy and fell in love with the way these folks are raising their children. I live on a farm with my partner in Northern California and could relate so well to the lifestyle. We had been debating what type of schooling style we would be going with for our son, and after reading this book...feeling quite reassured to follow our instincts and pursue the unschooling natural path in raising our child. Viva la rural lifestyle. So great to read a book that hits so close to home. Amen!

I order this book after hearing an interview with Ben on The Permaculture podcast, his writing is concise and easy reading. His musings on child rearing are well written, and thought provoking.

While his book reads like a quiet stroll, soft spoken and moving. I can't help but think that his actions in life mirror many of our aspirations as people and parents. I wish I had read it earlier. Well done Ben Hewitt.

Loved reading this book. I'm about to embark on a change of schooling for our children and reading the stories Ben shared about his family was encouraging. While not a how-to book (thankfully!) the recommendations at the end of the book are wonderful. Some I had already been doing, others I plan to incorporate into our lives. Thanks for sharing a piece of your life with us all!

Inspiring and beautifully written.

Well. I have just written and deleted about 6 opening sentences that fell short of what I want to convey. Simplicity then. This book is so good. I read it in 1 day. I am at the brink of what to do regarding homeschooling/unschooling, veering strongly towards unschooling. This book sealed the deal for me. And yet that's not the point of it. It is one of the most balanced books I have read on the topic. I felt like I spent a few days in the life of, saw this way of life played out, and saw the beauty of it all. This style of education is RICH and FULL with limitless possibilities and numerous experiences. This book gave me full confidence that what I already knew instinctively- is the choice I should follow. It is not just about schooling though. I identified with many of the author's thoughts on living off the land, even if you are not personally living off the land, loving the land around you. His musings on parenthood were excellent and relevant. I appreciated the transparency and truth of how much work and responsibility is involved. The most overwhelming theme to me was contentment and peace in living a life true to yourself and your values. When I first started reading it I was slightly worried as it was very flavored with prose. I love prose, but I thought it might be hard to get through given the topic. Wrong. I was brought to tears numerous times because of the writing, but also because of where I am in this journey. It is brilliant in that you get one chapter of beauty and reflection, and one chapter of info and story, and he alternates between the two every other chapter. The chapters of reflection have beautiful art above the title, are brief, and add value. The layout is beautiful and flows well. My book is filled with circles, underlining, stars, scribbles, and thoughts I want to remember and reference back to. So much is given to you as the reader. I will say that though I do admire their choices and their happiness in them- I personally think it's OK to have a TV (not for cable, for movies and education), and for kids to have monitored by age media exposure. While I do think society and the media has many issues, I want them to be educated on

that, and develop their own self-control and opinions over it. My kids have iPads and handle them beautifully without addictions or arguments, and rarely choose them over going outside or playing Legos, etc. Excellent. Memoirs are my favorite genre and this one does not disappoint. If only all books one picks up could be this satisfying.

Hewitt stands by and explores his beliefs in allowing children to explore the natural world as a significant part of their education. Allow children room to explore, inhabit, and reimagine their world to break out of prescribed societal expectations.

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