

9 Survival Tips To Make The Most Of Winter

Though cold, snow and mud are miserable, winter isn't all bad. As a matter of fact, there are several benefits that are available in winter that you just don't have in warmer weather. One of them is having enough time for everything, so this is one big thing you can use to make the most of winter.

Get Things Done

When it's cold outside, that's the best time to get "inside" work done. Clothing needs darned, the walls need painted and stairs need repaired. Take advantage of poor weather to accomplish those tasks that have lingered around until you had nothing better to do. That time is now!

Make Gifts

Christmas is coming and, for that matter, people have birthdays and anniversaries all year round. Take advantage of your time inside to get crafty. Whether you like to crochet or are super handy at wood-working, get ahead on your gift list. Then when a holiday rolls around, you're all set. Make a few extras for those forgotten birthdays or unexpected occasions. This is a great opportunity for family time, too.

Learn New Skills

What else do you have to do? Learn a skill. Learn 5. We can't express how much a Jack (or Jill) of all trades will be appreciated if SHTF. If there is something that you don't know how to do around the house, pick up some books or take some classes.

One of the first courses that pop in mind is the CPR/First Aid course. Often these are free or extremely inexpensive so learn skills now that may save your life later. Soap making and candle making skills pop to mind here, too.

Tend the Garden

Though there's not much that you can do in the dead of winter, there are plenty of gardening tasks that you can take care of in the beginning and at the end of winter when the ground isn't frozen solid. Clean your greenhouse, prune your bushes back, compost your soil, divide your perennials and plant new trees in the early winter. In late winter, start your plants inside so that you can get them in the ground as soon as it gets warm enough.

Make Syrup

Though this is technically a sign of spring, [collecting maple sap](#) from trees is a late-winter activity because the sap starts to run when it gets above freezing during the day but dips below freezing at night. Often this is February-March-ish. Called sugaring, gathering maple sap is a fairly simple task that doesn't require much in the way of equipment. All you do to make syrup is cook it down, so why not give it a shot if you have some maple (or birch) trees?



Store Meat

Winter is a wonderful time to store meat because the meat can (and should) hang for a day or two before you butcher it. You do this so that the blood drains from the meat and natural enzymes start to break down the meat a bit, which makes it tender.

Also, rigor mortis doesn't go away til about 24 hours after the kill. If you butcher the meat prior to this, you may experience "shortening" or shrinkage of the muscles, aka meat. When it's cold outside, you basically have your own outdoor refrigerator so you don't have to worry about your meat going bad before you can get to it.

Ideally, you want the temperatures to be between 35-45 degrees F. If it gets any warmer than that, you're risking rot but if it's colder, your meat will freeze.

Whether you decide to smoke your meat, can it or dehydrate it, winter is a great time to do it. It's also when most gaming seasons are so it works out perfectly. In the fall is rough because that's when you're preserving your fruits and vegetables, so for several reasons, winter is the ideal time to [preserve your meat](#).

Get Physically Fit

Jogging in the summer is a hot, miserable task and often one that people will give up on after a few sessions just because of the misery. Get in the habit of exercising in the winter and the task won't seem so horrible. Also, you're stuck inside anyway, so you may as well get your workout in! We all know that survival when SHTF is going to be largely dependent on how fit you are when it happens. Get that way and stay that way.

Clean Out Your Closets

If one of the hobbies that you've chosen to do above requires fabric, you may have everything that you need right in your closets. Go through everything – clothes, towels, curtains, sheets – and get rid of anything that you don't need, don't use, or is worn out. Donate it to charity, do a clothing or linen swap with friends, or use them to make something else. Quilts, scrapbooks, flags and doll clothing are all great ways to repurpose old material.

Plan Your Homestead



Homesteads are never complete. Either you're dreaming of starting one or are living on one that needs another chicken coop, barn, bedroom or [compost pile](#). Take the winter to see what happens to your property when it snows or is wet and windy to plan that building. Also, you have plenty of time, so not only do you get to see what affect winter has, you also have time to think about what you want and debate the pros and cons of your plans.

Winter exposes another good point that you should consider when making plans for your property. It shows you what is visible when there are no leaves on the trees. If you plan to build a building such as a food storage facility that you don't want visible to just anyone, winter is a great time to walk your property and get an idea of the places that are hidden even when there are no leaves to provide coverage.

Winter time only seems like a time of solitude and rest. In reality, there are a ton of things that you can do both inside and out in order to keep your homestead going. It's a great time to grow as a family, too.

If it's just you, take some time to do something for an elderly or disabled neighbor. If you have kids, show them the value of doing something that doesn't involve a computer. If you're a couple, take time to enjoy each other. You're only bored and irritated in the winter if you choose to be!

If you have some good ideas to share about winter, please feel free to share them in the comments section below!

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