

Urban Survival

by Douglas P. Bell

To start with, let's get over the idea that all survivalists are going to get out of "the city" in time to set up a "survival retreat". Not all survivalists are going to have the money, time or inclination to leave the city life and move to the middle of nowhere. First off, leaving your job and having no money will doom you faster than anything you can think of! Also some of us just enjoy the city lifestyle and do not enjoy the bucolic life. So the problem remains, what are the urban survivalists to do?

Let's start with shelter. Most of us live in either single family homes or apartments and if you rent your house or apartment that limits what you can and can not do there. After all, it would do little good if you were to set up a fully equipped nuclear bomb shelter in the basement and got thrown out the following week!

However, this does not mean you are totally at the mercy of the landlord and the elements. First off, try talking to your landlord about survivalism, or just feel them out about their ideas of the future. This might include nuclear war, depression, gov't control over their life, etc. If done carefully, many people who would otherwise think of you as a fool or nut case will come around very nicely. If not, well you aren't out anything.

If you live in one of the impersonal high-rise apartment buildings, and they have nothing to do with you outside of getting your rent check, you might try and find out where the chimney and venting pipes are and if you are near enough you can tap into them for your heat and air without anyone knowing. If the heat supply was cut off for some reason, you could put in a small wood/oil burning stove, vent it right out the chimney, and no one would know it was you.

For a water supply, you could use 2 liter pop bottles or plastic gallon milk

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jugs. If you happen to live in an apartment building with a gravity fed water system, that is the water supply is on the roof, during bad times you could simply go up on the roof, shut the valves off, and tell everyone the water supply ran out. No matter what you do, it would not hurt to have a good supply of water stored just in case.

As to food, a years supply of freeze dried, air dried and canned goods can be stored in a closet; so space, if you really want it, should not be a big problem. Normally there is a lot of "dead" space to be found, under tables, beds, dressers, desks, etc., so that you should be able to store a goodly amount of stuff away where it will be out of sight, or at least out of the way.

For cooking that food a wood stove will work just fine; although camp stoves, such as the Coleman, are also small, reasonably light weight and easy to use. Remember however that burning anything will use up your Oxygen, so have an outside air supply coming in. This is especially true of charcoal stoves or grills. Used in an enclosed area it will simply put you to sleep, for good! Also beware of treated wood or plastics that will give off toxic fumes, so you don't poison yourself.

Now I know you've been waiting for this, so we will now talk about guns. What exactly you need is not easily done from long distance, although there are a few basic things that most people can agree on. In urban fighting, distances are not likely to be long, a few hundred yards at most, so you don't need a full power battle rifle capable of shooting 1000 yards and through several walls. Also depending on where you are, you may not be able to legally own handguns or "assault" style weapons.

All is not lost however. A short barreled lever action rifle, such as the Winchester 94 "Trapper" model, Marlin 336, 1894 or Rossie M92 is not likely to send the neighbors into fits of rage as would a H&K 91 or 94. The SKS in 7.62x39 is in about the same power range as the .30-30 and is extremely cheap right now (in the \$100-\$140 range, although this is always going up), as is

the ammo, so you might consider it as well. The Marlin "Camp" guns in either 9mm Luger or .45 ACP would also make good "house" guns, although the range out of the short barrels or in the pistol calibers would be limited.

That's not all bad however, as a city in break down is likely to have roving bands of gangs or even National Guard units (remember after Hurricane Hugo when the Guard units joined in the looting?) that are better armed and/or more willing to use their weapons than you. So the less shooting you do, the less attention you will attract to yourself.

For close range firepower or "street sweeping" it is hard to beat a shotgun. A discount house here (and many gunshows) often have the Remington 870 Express model with a rifle slug barrel and a vent rib "Rem-Choke" (interchangeable screw in choke) barrel for under \$300.00, which has to be one of the great bargains in the firearms field. The only down side of this gun is it is only available in 12 gauge, and many smaller or less experienced shooters might prefer 20 gauge, although regular 870s are available in just about any gauge you could want.

Other shotguns you might also want to look at are the Winchester 1200/1300 or Ranger models as well as the Mossberg 500, especially the Bullpup model that moves the action back just in front of the recoil pad and gives the gun an overall length of under 30" with an 18" barrel or just over 30" with a 20" barrel. Get the longer 20" barrel as the added few inches will dampen the recoil and especially the noise or blast when compared to an 18" barrel.

For left handed shooters or others who don't want the shells ejected from the side for some reason, the Ithaca 37 (or Model 87 as it is currently called) and Browning BPS ejects the shells out the bottom, so the shells land at your feet instead of flinging past the left handers' face. Remington also makes a left handed 870 if you would want one.

As to handguns, the police departments of many cities are turning in their revolvers for 9mm automatics. This has placed a goodly number of revolvers in

either .38 Special or .357 Magnum on the market at very reasonable prices. Many of these guns will have holster wear, that is the bluing of the gun will be worn, but this will in no way affect how the gun shoots.

If possible, get the .357 Magnum over the same model in .38 Special (such as the S&W Model 10 in .38 Special and the same thing in .357 called the Model 13) and adjustable sights if offered. The .357 Magnum can shoot .38 Specials just fine, and this gives you the choice of two different cartridges (.38 Special and .357 Magnum) rather than just one (.38 Special), as well as being able to sight in for the different loads.

Now that you have decided where you are going to weather out the coming bad times, in your house or apartment, what you are going to eat, the years' worth (or more!) of food you have stored, and what you are going to defend yourself with, your urban weapons cache, now what? What else is there?

Well how about sanitation and hygiene! What are you going to do when you can't flush your toilet? Do you have any soap or toilet paper stored away? Dish washing soap, laundry detergent, shampoo, hand soap, anything? What about toothbrushes and toothpaste? How about flyswatters, bug repellent or screens and netting?

The epidemics that ran over much of Europe in the Middle Ages, and most war zones even today, are because of the improper disposal of human waste and/or the improper handling of food, but how many times do you hear about it? Not often. After all no one wants to read about toilets and guns in the same article. It brings the idea home a little closer than most of us want to admit to.

For the urban survivalist this is more pressing than for their rural counterparts, simply because the urban survivalist will (generally) not have the room to build an outhouse or some way to easily dispose of the waste. Sure you can get a chemical toilet, but what happens when you run out of plastic bags and chemicals? You should think about getting a composting toilet

or some other form of an alternate disposal unit.

Another useful idea is the use of camouflage. No I don't mean you should be running around in a set of "cammies", I mean the art of hiding yourself or home so that they would be overlooked by someone looking for someone or something to attack.

After "the day", there probably will not be many homes with a fresh coat of paint or that are all neatly kept, so yours shouldn't be either. Also a beaten path to your door just might lead the world to it. The less inviting or lived in a place looks the less likely someone will want to check it out.

Also your garden need not be in neat rows or even in normal garden plants, as there are many plants that most people would not even recognize as food plants, that are easily grown. Look into getting an indoor green house or have pots of food plants inside.

A source of energy (light or heat) was touched on briefly in the first article, with a wood burning stove or camping stove, but sooner or later you will want or need more than that. But what could you use?

How about setting up your own still? No you aren't going to drink the stuff, you are going to use it to run the camp stove, or with slight modification, to run the gas engine on your generator or other power tools. Alcohol can be made from almost any plant matter from grass to pine needles, so as long as vegetation grows you should be able to get some sort of alcohol. Wind power or solar panels would also be possibilities, as would water power; although a full scale water power plant that would provide enough power to be of any great use by itself would be more than most would be able to manage, at least at first. However, this still leaves solar and wind, two items that can be used with a minimum of resources or material.

Another item that is often overlooked or not fully explained are medical items and medicines. Some books or articles simply tell you to talk to your doctor

and explain what you want and get prescriptions for the needed items. I don't know what kind of doctors these people have been dealing with, but none that I have talked to were willing to consider it, or even talk about the subject or need.

This leaves you with the supermarket and drug store items or buying veterinarian supplies, neither of which is ideal. However if you are able to get to Mexico, you can buy prescription drugs across the counter, and many non-narcotic drugs are readily available. For narcotic drugs, simply see your local drug dealer.

The medical "tools of the trade" normally recommended here are either so basic you would be hard pressed to do general first aid, or more than you will ever need or could use, and often are more than most survivalists would know how to use. This is not to say you shouldn't have anything your little heart desires, but don't waste money on an item you have no idea of how to use, at least until you have the other needed survival supplies like food and ammunition stored. For a basic first aid/medical kit it might be wise to get one of the better commercial first aid kits and then one of the more advanced "field medical kits" that includes scissors, hemostats, etc.

Do you have a good set of tools needed to rebuild your home? If not you might consider getting a basic set of hand tools, as any power produced may be needed for other than running your power shop tools. The "Craftsman" line of tools from Sears is warranted for life and many people feel they are among the best, especially in their price range.

While I didn't mention it in the first article, you will need a set of gun cleaning kits. First off you should get a set of one piece stainless steel cleaning rods in .22 and .30 caliber about 30" long and a shotgun cleaning kit as well, such as the "universal" cleaning kits offered by many firms such as Outers, Hoppe's, or Klean-Bore.

After that get a good supply of bore cleaning solvent, either commercial or

military, as well as lubricating oil. One advantage of military bore solvents is that they are designed to be used with corrosive ammunition, and are generally much cheaper than commercial solvents. No matter what type of bore solvent and lubricating oil you get, get plenty! Any you don't use would be snapped up by other survivalists who either didn't get any or get enough.

Now that we have housing, guns, hygiene, and other good stuff out of the way, what next? Well how about food production/procuring! OK so we talked about a garden that didn't look like a garden, and wasn't in "normal" garden plants, but just what plants are these? What would be a good book on the subject?

One of the best books for this is "The Edible Ornamental Garden" by John E. Bryan and Coralie Castle (101 Productions, 1974, 192 pages, 8 1/2" x 8 1/4"). The nice thing about this book is it covers the usual garden plants as well as the less usual ones.

The chapters in the book include general culture of plants, cooking with flowers, leaves and herbs, plants, their culture, history and recipes, and mail order nurseries.

This book is a must have for the urban home owner who has a small plot of land and wants a garden that most people wouldn't bother because they wouldn't even know it was there. The book will also provide you with food ideas that you may have been missing out on right under your own nose, right in your own yard or flower garden.

Well, so much for your outdoor garden, what about an indoor garden? That's right, set up a small "flower box" garden in a window sill or even a terrarium garden. For the terrarium, you might try to find "Gardening With Terrariums", although this booklet has almost nothing on food growing indoors as it is actually a book about ornamental plants.

if a window box of terrarium garden isn't big enough for you, there are other ways of doing this, such as setting up a greenhouse. Books on greenhouses run

from how to build your own "window box" greenhouse to commercial production set-ups. Go down to your library or used book store and look over the books they have. There should be something that will be of interest if you are serious about plant production and propagation.

Well, if gardening isn't your cup of tea, and you can't put in a greenhouse or "indoor garden", but still want plant food in your diet, what is left? Sprouting!

Sprouting is very easy to learn and requires almost no room or equipment to do, and so is perfect for the urban survivor. Sprouting not only increases the amount of food over just eating the grains or seeds you might have stored (such as mung, pinto, or wheat), but provides much more nutrition as well. A booklet on the subject you might like to find is "Seeds and Sprouts For Life" by B. Jensen.

Now that you have all that garden produce, what are you going to do with it all? Yet another booklet for the continually short of space urban survivor is "Rodale's Gardening Harvest Book" which covers freezing, canning, jams, jellies and drying. well so much for plants, what else is there? What about meat? Well how about traps!

In one "survival" magazine there are ads for leg hold traps, "you may not want the fur, but you will want to eat" or something like that is how the ad runs. Well OK, leg hold traps are a good way to get food and furs, but I don't recommend them for the urban survivor.

The reason is simple, if my best rat catcher or favorite hunting hound comes back with a messed-up leg or worse yet, doesn't come home at all, I'll know there is someone else out there and start looking for them and their traps!

Another reason I don't like leg hold traps for the urban survivor, especially now with the current anti-gun/anti-trapping scum about, is if you don't check your traps every day (any decent trapper checks his traps AT LEAST once a

day!)), someone else might find your traps with an animal caught in it and turn you in to the local power structure which will be more than happy to harass an honest survivalist rather than fight crimes such as murder, rape, etc.! After all they might get hurt doing that!

Now I'm not against trapping mind you, it's just that you have to be a little tricky about it. If you live in an area with a lot of raccoons (and who doesn't?), you might try the "egg-trap", so called because the commercial version is egg shaped. This is a very safe and very good trap. It doesn't grab the leg like the leg hold traps and it is safe around dogs, cats and children.

The way this works is, you take off the back of the egg trap, put the bait in, and close it up. The trap is then put in an area where raccoons are likely to see it. The raccoon can see and smell the food, but can't get at it. So the raccoon reaches in, grabs the bait and pulls. Now the trap is so designed that the leg is held as long as the bait is pulled. Let go of the bait and the leg is released. In almost all cases the raccoon will hold on to the bait and you have him trapped!

Another good way to trap animals without hurting them (and getting the neighbors pissed at you) is to use a box trap. A box trap is just what it sounds like, a trap in the form of a box. Normally the animal walks into the trap to get some sort of bait and trips a level closing the trap door; trapping the animal with no harm. These traps are available commercially and can be easily built out of wire mesh and scrap lumber to fit just about any size or area you want to put one.

These traps can be built to trap birds, squirrels, and most any animal to about a small to medium sized dog or good sized coon. After that, the size and strength needed limit the practical usefulness of the trap as far as most urban survivalists are concerned, as it would be hard to explain away a German Shepherd sized trap in the back yard; while a "raccoon" or "groundhog" trap will not raise too many questions. I know one person who built one of these traps for squirrels and normally catches about ten to twelve a week! About the

only problem they have encountered is the trap needs rebuilding/repairing every week or so, as the squirrels really tear the hell out of trap!

The next set of traps are the so-called "kill traps", as they kill their prey by breaking the animal's neck or back when the trap is tripped. Needless to say, you don't want to use this trap where children or pets can get at it, as most people would get a little upset by this! As these traps are normally in the mink/martin size, they are not good "meat" traps, although for protecting your food supply from rats and mice they would work fairly well.