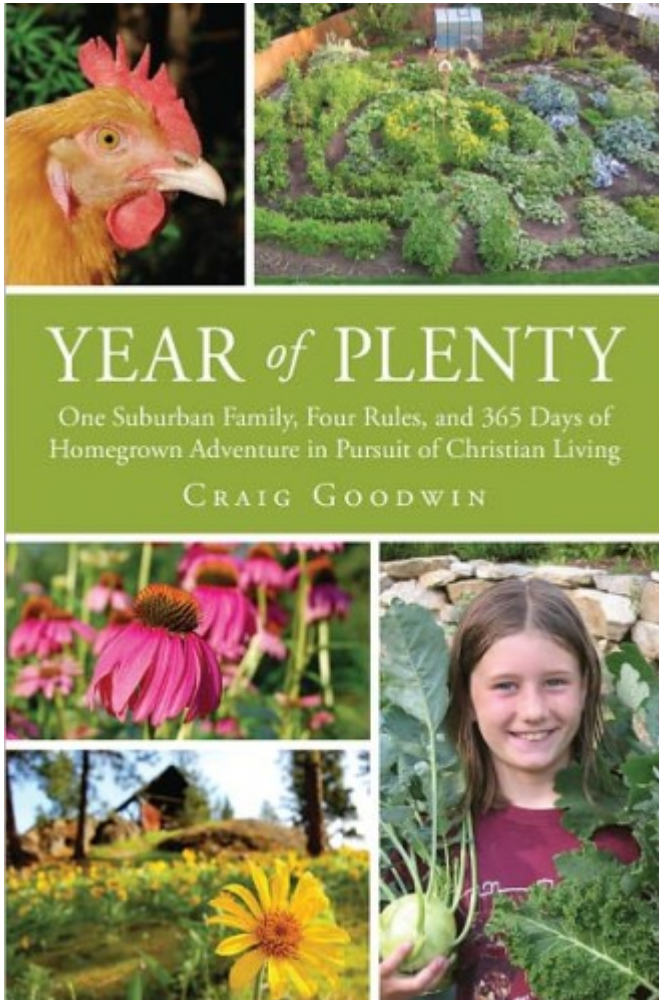


Craig Goodwin's year off

By [Amy Frykholm](#)

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In Review



Year of Plenty

By Craig L. Goodwin
Sparkhouse Press

Where I live at 10,200 feet, the trees have not yet budded. May is still early, early spring in Leadville, Colorado, but all around me is a sudden burst of gardening. For months, people have been filling their homes with starter plants; now they're calling around to see who has space for more in the few small greenhouses. There have been several meetings discussing large-scale community gardens, and now there is more than one plan in place.

All this is truly a renaissance for a town where piles of mining slag are referred to as "heritage"--and where gardening is truly hard work, with only about 30 frost-free days per year.

Leadville is riding a cultural wave of local food production and just beginning to model efforts like those of the "Garden City" of Missoula, Montana. We're a decade behind the curve--but being ahead or behind may not be the most significant matter. I recently read *A Year of Plenty*, by Presbyterian minister Craig Goodwin, who details his family's attempt to take a year off from a consumer-driven life.

Goodwin's odyssey into local food began with a post-holiday argument with his wife about who was more to blame for their rushed, packed and altogether disappointing Christmas. They decided to try an experiment. They didn't know at the time that they were following the lead of Barbara Kingsolver's family or such famous bloggers as "No Impact Man." They were self-described suburban Christians who were just trying to get their heads above the cultural water.

Goodwin and his wife set four rules for the upcoming year regarding their shopping: they could only buy things that were used, local, handmade or from Thailand. That last rule is a weird one: it came from the fact that Goodwin's wife had spent time in Thailand, and they were uncomfortable with a model of consumption that cut them off completely from the global economy.

Goodwin writes with humor and insight. In one of my favorite passages, he takes the reader step by step through the connection between American Christianity and consumer culture. His

discussion is personal and unassuming but also incisively critical and deeply theological. While I've felt this connection many times, I've never seen it laid out quite so clearly.

Goodwin continues to blog at [Year of Plenty](#). His book is worth a read--not so much because he is an original thinker about matters of local food and local economies, but because he is an insightful and humorous writer who wants to reach "recovering conventional Christians" like himself.