

ORGANIC GARDENS *TODAY*

SPRING 2015

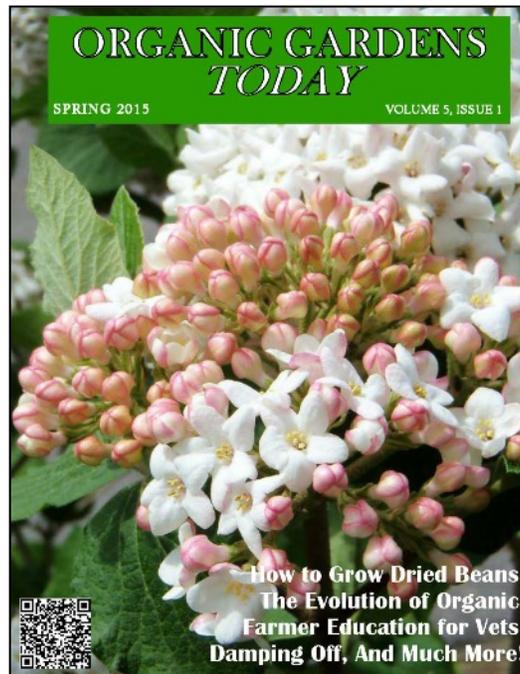
VOLUME 5, ISSUE 1



**How to Grow Dried Beans,
The Evolution of Organic,
Farmer Education for Vets,
Damping Off, And Much More!**



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“Come Grow With Us”



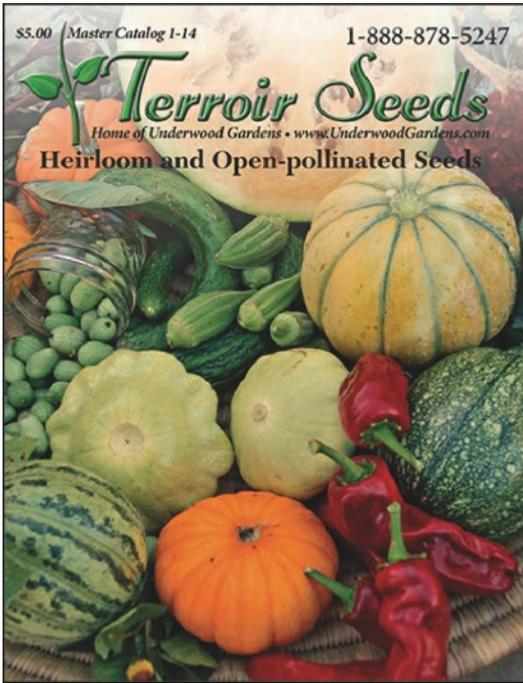
Organic Gardens Today
Magazine



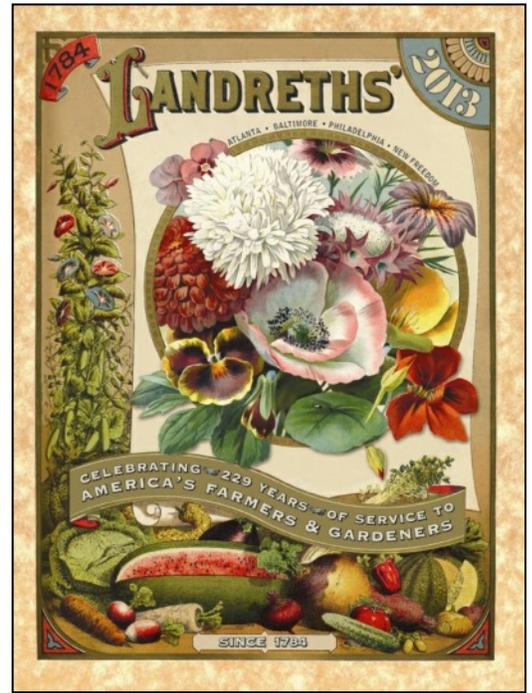
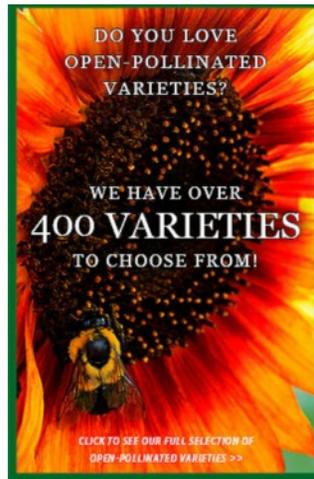
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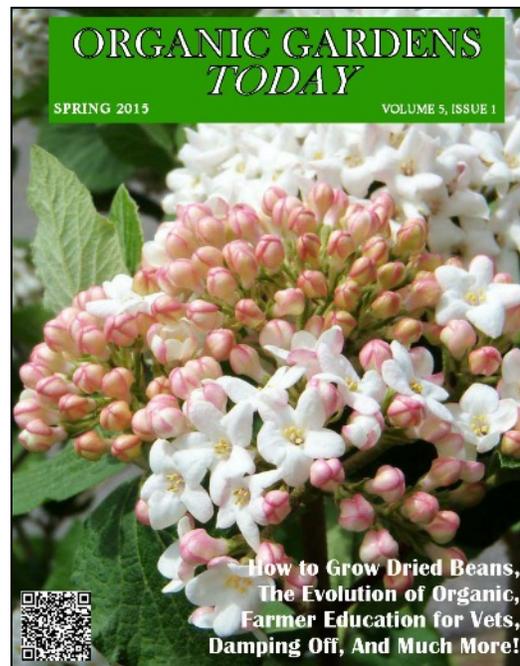
High Mowing Organic Seed



Organic Gardens Today would like to thank

Kim Daehnke

For the back page photo.



It's finally here!!!! It is now time to go out and smell the flowers and appreciate all that Spring has to offer.

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From The Editor

Welcome to the Spring edition of *Organic Gardens Today!*



All I can say is WOW! What a winter we've all had! Extreme cold, lots of snow, it was a winter that never seemed to end. The good news is we are now, seemingly, ready to move into the warmer temperatures of spring. The bad news is we will all have to be patient as we wait for the soil to dry out from all of the melting snow and any spring rains that may come at the same time. Since I experience cabin fever on a regular basis at this time of year, I am always looking to get a head start on the clean up from the winter. With the heavy snow, the first job is to look at your trees and shrubs to check for any damage with broken branches. These need to be removed as soon as possible before the sap starts flowing freely through the plants, as well as giving the plants to grow into these new voids. Secondly, I always like to clean my lawn off of any debris that has accumulated through the winter. This spring that will be delayed until the ground dries up enough for a good raking. Lastly I like to apply an organic 5-10-5 to the lawn, trees and shrubs. Since it is an organic fertilizer it will not create a surge of growth. Most lawns will green up and grow very well because turf grows best when days are warm and nights are cool, so please don't listen to all of those commercials telling you to "FEED IT". It does not need the excessive amounts of nitrogen to grow (it will grow just fine without it), and the excess nitrogen does not stay in the soil, it gets washed out of the soil and into the local water system.

If you like what we have accomplished with *Organic Gardens Today*, *share us* with your family, friends, coworkers and fellow gardeners. *We rely on word of mouth to spread the word about the magazine*, and I thank you in advance for sharing us. If you go to our website, www.organicgardentoday.com and you can click the "Share" button to share the website with your friends on any social media platform. If you already have, I thank you. We have grown more than I could have ever expected.

This spring issue is filled with useful and interesting information. Stephen Scott's article on "*Damping Off*" will help address a common concern for all of us seed starters. If you have children or grandchildren, please check out the New Products page. Al Benner, a regular contributor to OGT, has created an interactive product that will keep our next generation entertained as well as "edutained"! Finally, Cindy Meredith's article on "*Savory*" taught me more than I ever knew about this wonderful herb.

Have a great spring, take time to smell the flowers, fresh cut grass and the composting of Mother Nature!

David Daehnke, Editor



PS: Like us on Facebook page and join our group. Type "Organic Gardens Today" in the search box or use the link below

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/184728751568234>

You can start a discussion, add your comments or follow useful links to like-minded articles and websites.

MEET OUR WRITERS



DAVID DAEHNKE, THE GARDENING GURU, EDITOR

David is a seasoned gardener and lecturer, helping both the novice and experienced gardener. His fun and informative lectures are widely requested throughout the Northeast. Over the past 12 years, David has successfully managed three public gardens as Executive Director, but his true love is communicating proper gardening practices and creating gardens of beauty. He received his B.S. Degree in 1984 in Ornamental Horticulture at Delaware Valley College. David is widely known from his radio show “The Gardening Guru” on WGHT 1500 AM, beginning it’s 20th season in 2014. He is a horticultural consultant on his Internet Web page, www.thegardeningguru.com.



MAUREEN FARMER

Maureen Farmer is master gardener and the founder of The Farmer’s Garden website (www.thefarmersgarden.com). The Farmer’s Garden is an online place to make in-person connections between gardeners across the US. Gardeners and want-to-be gardeners can search and post free classified ads to share excess homegrown produce, tools, or gardening space with people in their area. Food banks can post wanted classifieds for surplus food. She is an avid gardener and also a former Board member of Urban Oaks Organic Farm in Connecticut.



DAISY LUTHER

Daisy Luther is a freelance writer and editor who lives on a small organic farm in the Pacific Northwestern area of the United States. On her website, [The Organic Prepper](http://TheOrganicPrepper.com), Daisy writes about healthy prepping, homesteading adventures, and the pursuit of liberty and food freedom. Daisy is also a staff writer at [The Daily Sheeple](http://TheDailySheeple.com), where she helps to “Wake the Flock Up”. You can follow her on Facebook, Pinterest, and Twitter, and you can email her at daisy@theorganicprepper.ca



SANNE KURE-JENSEN

Sanne Kure-Jensen is a regular contributor to Country Folks, Country Folks Grower and Wine & Grape Grower agricultural newspapers. She is also a successful agricultural grant writer, organic grower and beekeeper in Portsmouth, Rhode Island. An environmental advocate for more than a decade, Sanne works with non-profit boards and town committees stewarding open space, local farms, public gardens and Narragansett Bay. You may [Contact Sanne](#) with your comments and questions.



CINDY MEREDITH

Cindy Meredith is the owner of [The Herb Cottage](http://TheHerbCottage.com), a rural nursery in Lavaca County, Texas. In business since 1998, Cindy has a wide range of knowledge about gardening with herbs and adapted plants. The dynamic web site for herb and plant lovers is a handy source for growing information. Not just for Texans and other folks who live in hot, humid climates, the web site addresses all aspects of gardening.

MEET OUR WRITERS



CLIFF WILLIAMS

Cliff Williams has worked 20 years in the frozen vegetable processing industry. He has been involved with everything from the dirt to the package you get at the store. He has also worked seasonally for 4 years in the fertilizer industry, as well as growing up gardening and gleaning. When you add in all the supporting research that went into creating Urban Crofting to his experience, you will find that few people have the unique insight into our food that he does.

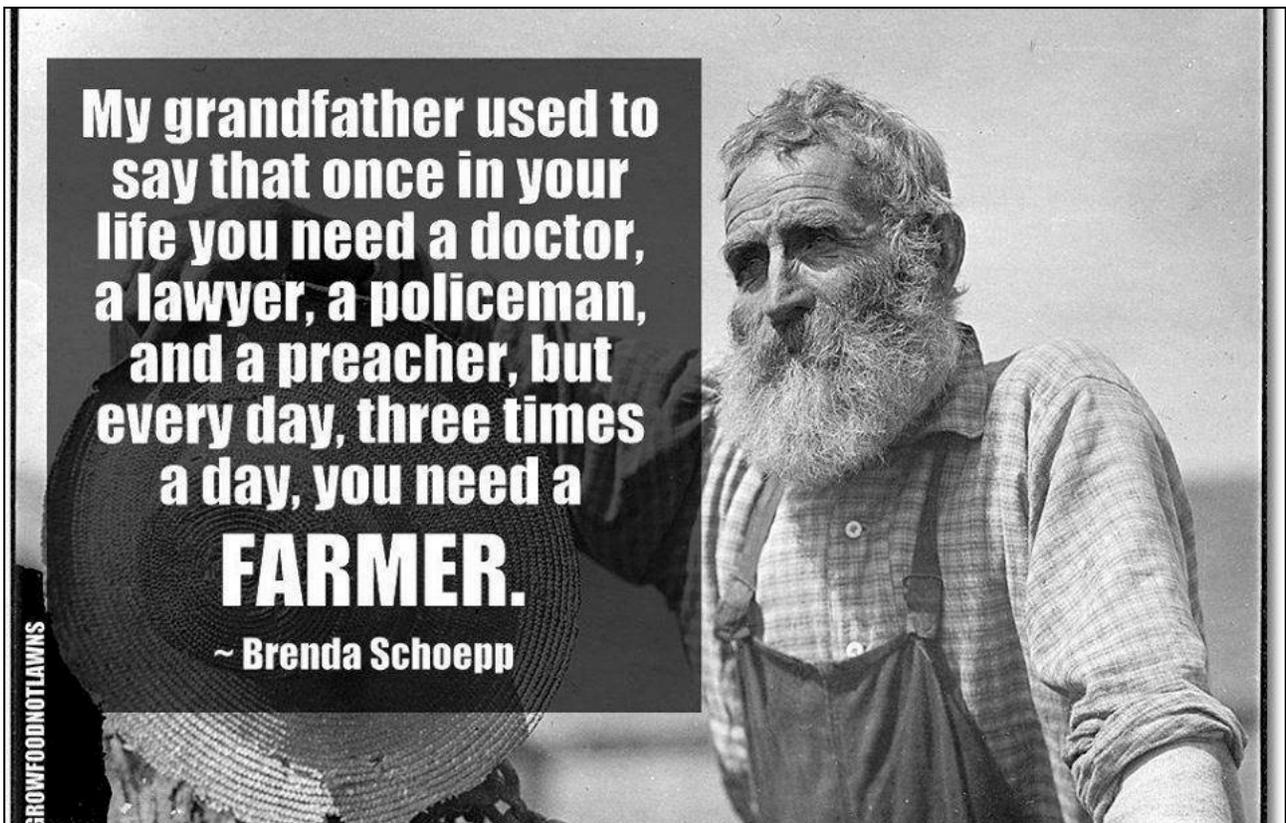


STEPHEN SCOTT

Stephen is the co-owner with his wife Cindy of Terroir Seeds, an heirloom seed company that not only provides quality garden seeds but helps customers improve their gardens and skills with a wealth of information not found anywhere else.

From his experiences in gardening, rangeland and habitat restoration Stephen has found that it's not just about the seeds; the highest quality seeds are great, but there is room and need for more, much more.

Stephen has discovered a cycle to gardening that is not being addressed much today- soil education and awareness of its role and importance; the important role of quality seed and how they interact with the soil; the critical importance of micro-organisms that feed us all that many are not aware of; how to prepare the food grown from the garden and how it can all tie in together to markedly increase our health- all from our home garden. Visit their website at www.UnderwoodGardens.com.



Home Grown Gardening Tips

Gardening Tips For March

* When the weather warms up, you can set out plants of pansies as long as the ground and garden centers are ready. They will continuously bloom if the blossoms are kept picked.

* Fast growing vines, like scarlet runner bean, the hyacinth bean, passion flower, and to some extent clematis vines are great candidates to plant against ugly fences or walls.

* Annuals can be started in the house towards the middle of the month. Sweet peas can be planted directly into the ground when it is ready.

* The Winter coverings of perennials can be removed by the end of the month. It is best to do it on a cloudy day, and remember to recycle those branches!

* Give your lilacs a light coating of lime. They prefer an alkaline soil, which is not commonly found in this area.

* Hardy roses can be pruned as soon as you are sure that chances of an extreme freeze have past.

* Hardy chrysanthemums and other late-flowering perennials can be divided when the sprouts begin to show.

* As soon as planting conditions are right, sow the following vegetables outside where they are to grow: peas, parsnips, spinach, beets, carrots, lettuce, parsley, radishes and salsify. Potatoes may go in early also.

* As always, keep an eye out for insects, eggs or cocoons and destroy them before they get the upper hand.

* Prune shrubs in the month of March if they do not flower until Summer. Prune all Spring flowering shrubs after they have finished flowering.

* Any shrubs, hedges or trees that have suffered broken limbs due to snowfall or wind can be correctly pruned now.

* Rake your lawn to remove any debris that has accumulated on it over the Winter. For more tips on lawn care, visit [Organic Lawn Care Manual](#) .

* Begin your garden book now, for future reference on what plants, seeds and other jobs have been great and which have done poorly.

* A compost heap provides good organic matter for amending your soil. If you do not already have one, begin one this Spring.

* Bird houses can now be cleaned and disinfected for the new nesting season.

Gardening Tips For April

* When doing your Spring clean-up, keep a watchful eye out for sprouting perennials. Tread lightly!

* Scatter annual poppy seeds in the borders or wherever you want them to grow. Seeds of other annuals that can be planted directly can be done as soon as the danger of frost has past.

* Clematis paniculata may be cut down almost to the ground. It will make rapid growth and will flower again in the Fall.

* Lily pools should be drained and cleaned at this time of year before the lilies start to grow. Hardy water lilies can be purchased and set out now, while tender kinds should be moved out in late May or beginning of June.

* There is no better time to divide perennials than when they first start growing in Spring. Dig the entire clump up and use your hands to feel where the plant can or cannot be split. Use of a knife to assist in the splitting may be necessary on tougher, woodier perennials. When replanting the new clumps, make sure to add organic matter to the hole, which will give the new roots a healthy start.

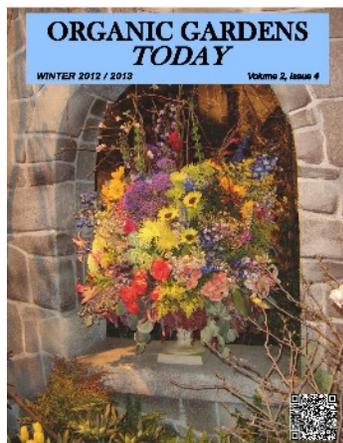
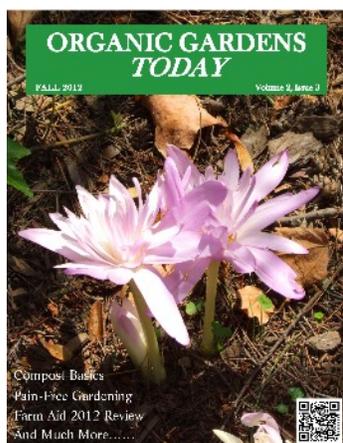
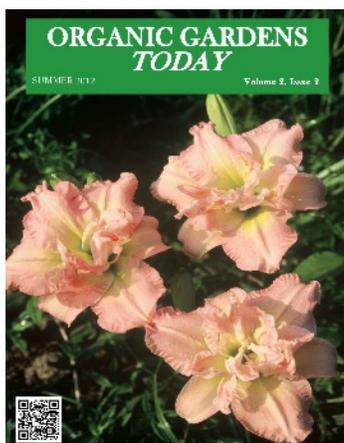
* The pruning of roses should be completed as soon as possible, cutting back to live wood and cutting the stems even more if a smaller quantity but better quality of flowers is preferred. Comparatively light pruning will create a profusion of smaller blooms instead. forced readily.

Home Grown Gardening Tips (continued)

- * Set out pansy plants as soon as the ground is ready. They will flower continuously if the old blossoms are kept picked.
- * Perennials, roses and other shrubs can all use an application of a 5-10-5 organic fertilizer to give them a jumpstart for Spring.
- * As soon as the weather is settled, cabbage, broccoli, lettuce, and cauliflower can be planted in the garden.
- * Defoliation of hawthorn trees is caused by a fungus which can be controlled by spraying now with a fungicide such as sulfur.
- * Hydrangeas, buddleias, and other late flowering shrubs may be cut back to produce a new flush of growth. These plants flower on new wood and do not produce as well on older wood.
- * Lilacs, as well as clematis, like a sweet soil, so an application of lime along with your application of 5-10-5 fertilizer can be made now.
- * Early blooming shrubs can be pruned after they have ceased flowering.
- * It is wiser to attack weeds as soon as they appear. They can be eradicated much easier now than when they have become established.
- * Now is a good time to have your soil tested for pH and soil nutrient values. This will serve as a blueprint for your fertilizer and lime needs for the upcoming year.
- * When seedlings that have been grown in a cold frame or inside the home are ready to be set out, choose a cloudy, quiet day if possible.
- * If you desire large peony blooms, you must pick off the side buds that form along the stem. This will redirect all of the energy to the lone flower bud at the tip of the stem, otherwise known as the terminal bud. Peonies should also be staked no before they get too large. A support that encircle the whole plant loosely is the best kind.
- * An easy and non-toxic way to kill the weeds that grow in the cracks of your driveway and sidewalk is to pour boiling water onto these plants. Try not to pour excess that can run off into your existing beds or lawns.
- * Chrysanthemums can be made into bushy plants by pinching the tips of the branches judiciously until the end of June, then allow the shoots to grow. These bushier plants will have more blooms than one not pinched.
- * Keep all newly planted trees, shrubs, perennials and roses well watered so that the roots will not dry out.
- * Chrysanthemums can be made into bushy plants by pinching the tips of the branches judiciously until the end of June, then allow the shoots to grow. These bushier plants will have more blooms than one not pinched.
- * Keep all newly planted trees, shrubs, perennials and roses well watered so that the roots will not dry out.
- * Remember to leave the foliage on all spring flowering bulbs until they turn yellow. Even though the plant may be done flowering, it is now storing the energy needed for next year's blooms.

Gardening Tips For May

- * Peonies require plenty of water to fill out the flower buds and often benefit from an application of organic fertilizer.
- * If chrysanthemums and asters have not been divided, this work can be done now before they get too large.
- * Nearly all flowers seeds can be directly sown in the garden during the next few weeks. Fine seeds such as petunias may be kept in place with a light coating of peat moss.
- * Keep the faded flowers picked from pansies to encourage new blooms.
- * Irises should be given an application of bone meal now. Work it into the soil and water thoroughly when done. You will not see the results this year, but will next year.



Organic Gardens Today Magazine is Looking for Writers



Are you a gardening 'expert' that would like to write for us and help share the organic principles the magazine conveys? Whether you have a gardening degree from a college or you are "dirt" educated, send me an e-mail with the subject and article you want to cover. I will review and see if we can use it in the next issue. Please remember that the magazine will be online on or about the first day of the new season, so please address your article for the upcoming season and make sure it is sent at least two weeks before the publication date for formatting.

Send your requests to editor@organicgardentoday.com

We look forward to hearing from you!

ORGANIC NEWS and NOTEWORTHY

USDA on board with shipping U.S. chickens to China for processing, then re-entry to States for human consumption

“Chinese chicken” will soon have a whole new meaning, as the U.S. Department of Agriculture recently gave the green-light to four chicken processing plants in China, allowing chicken raised and slaughtered in the U.S. to be exported to China for processing, and then shipped back to the U.S. and sold on grocery shelves here. Furthermore, the imported processed poultry will not require a country-of-origin label nor will U.S. inspectors be on site at processing plants in China before it is shipped to the United States for human consumption.

Food safety experts worry about the quality of chicken processed in a country notorious for avian influenza and food-borne illnesses. And they predict that China will eventually seek to broaden the export rules to allow chickens born and raised in China.

“Economically, it doesn’t make much sense,” said Tom Super, spokesman for the National Chicken Council, in a recent interview with the Houston Chronicle. “Think about it: A Chinese company would have to purchase frozen chicken in the U.S., pay to ship it 7,000 miles, unload it, transport it to a processing plant, unpack it, cut it up, process/cook it, freeze it, repack it, transport it back to a port, then ship it another 7,000 miles. I don’t know how anyone could make a profit doing that.”

Bureau of Labor Statistics data estimates that American poultry processors are paid roughly \$11 per hour on average. In China, reports have circulated that the country’s chicken workers can earn significantly less—\$1 to 2 per hour—which casts doubt on Super’s economic feasibility assessment.

This process is already being used for U.S. seafood. According to the Seattle Times, domestically caught Pacific salmon and Dungeness crab are currently being processed in China and shipped back to the U.S., all because of significant cost savings:

...fish processors in the Northwest, including Seattle-based Trident Seafoods, are sending part of their catch of Alaskan salmon or Dungeness crab to China to be filleted or de-shelled before returning to U.S. tables.

“There are 36 pin bones in a salmon and the best way to remove them is by hand,” says Charles Bundrant, founder of Trident, which ships about 30 million pounds of its 1.2 billion-pound annual harvest to China for processing. “Something that would cost us \$1 per pound labor here, they get it done for 20 cents in China.”

China has an infamous reputation as one of the world’s worst food safety offenders. Earlier this year, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) released a report on a Chinese chicken jerky manufacturer that created dog treats tied to more than 500 dogs’ deaths.

Food Safety News aims to spread awareness of the pending USDA agreement and stop Chinese-processed chicken from ever reaching supermarkets or school lunchrooms.

Source: [Eco Watch](#)

Officials Declare ‘Eating Healthy’ a Mental Disorder

In an attempt to curb the mass rush for food change and reform, psychiatry has green lighted a public relations push to spread awareness about their new buzzword “orthorexia nervosa,” defined as “a pathological obsession for biologically pure and healthy nutrition.” In other words, experts are saying that our demand for nutrient-dense, healthful food is a mental disorder that must be treated.

CNN, Fast Company, Popular Science, and other top outlets have all begun to trumpet the talking points on cue relatively recently:

“Orthorexia nervosa is a label designated to those who are concerned about eating healthy. Characterized by disordered eating fueled by a desire for “clean” or “healthy” foods, those diagnosed with the condition are overly pre-occupied with the nutritional makeup of what they eat”.

In short, if you turn your back on low quality, corporate food containing known cancer causing toxic additives and a rich history of dishonesty rooted in a continuous “profits over people” modus operandi, then you may suffer from a mental illness. The cherry on top is that if you have the pseudo-science labeled disorder of orthorexia nervosa, you will be prescribed known toxic, pharmaceutical drugs from some of the same conglomerates.

ORGANIC NEWS and NOTEWORTHY

(Continued)

erate corporations that you are trying to avoid by eating healthy in the first place.

Orthorexia has not yet found its way into the latest edition of the psychiatric bible, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), yet is commonly being lumped in with other eating disorders. Stepping back and looking at the ones pushing this label on us shows highly questionable motives.

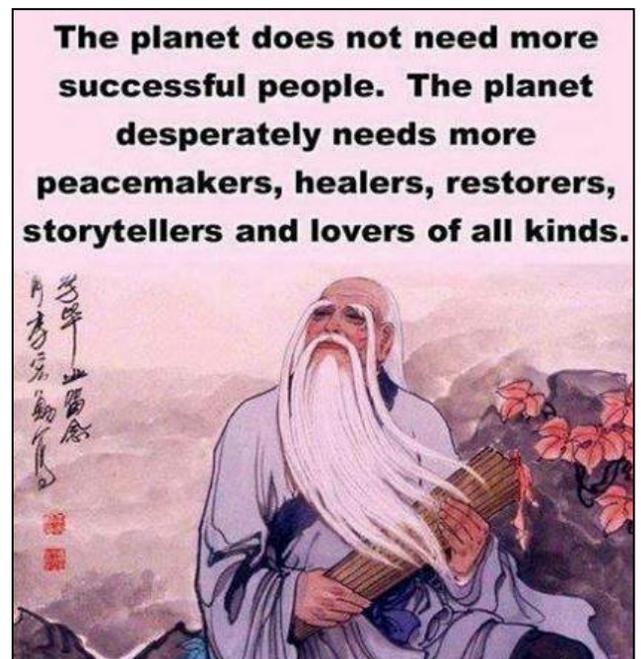
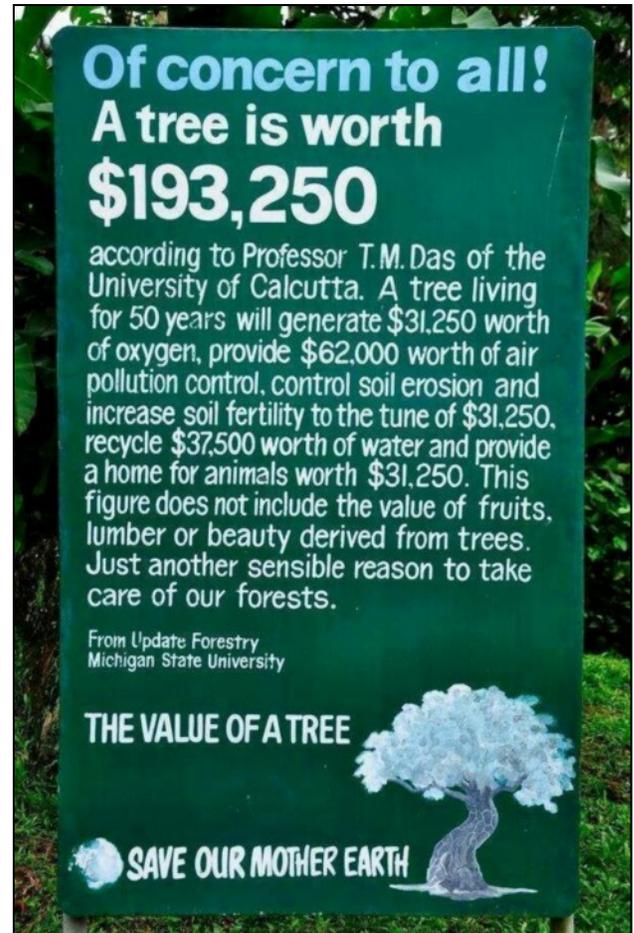
Psychiatry as a whole is deeply in bed with a pharmaceutical industry that makes the drugs to “treat” every one of these “disorders.” It is often these companies that are wielding influence behind the scenes to invent more mental health categories with their toxic products as the answer. This latest media push to popularize orthorexia as a mental disorder with a goal to marginalize or derail the food revolution appears to have been dead on arrival.

The psychiatric community has even deemed creativity to be a mental illness.

As the people continue to walk away from the broken medical and agricultural/food systems like any abusive relationship, the food makers are willing to do anything to maintain their waning control. Organic and non-GMO food markets have exploded in the last 5 years, so much so that any corporation wishing to not follow the trend risks financial hardship or ruin. In addition, pharmaceutical companies are feeling the strain as less people want their toxic medications and crippling side effects.

Perhaps some people take it too far to the point of self-harm, but the problem we face with a toxic food system is a much larger threat. In closing, let's be aware of some of the overall BS fed to us by the pharmaceutical bankrolled industry of psychiatry. When healthy eating and creativity are mental issues, something is amiss.

Source: [Global Research](#)



Damping off – Causes and Control

By Stephen Scott



Damping-off is a soil borne disease that can attack almost all young vegetable seedlings. Home gardeners often first notice that something is wrong when the very young seedlings have a constriction around the base of the stem, some of the seedlings have fallen over or there are small flying gnats around the base of the seedlings. Damping off is caused by soil fungi and the right conditions to help them flourish.

If not taken care of, losses can be severe and results in the majority of a flat of carefully planted seedlings dying in 24 to 48 hours. Damping-off can happen before seedlings emerge from the soil. With this type of damping-off, fungi infect seeds as they germinate. As the infection progresses, seeds rot and do not germinate, leading many home gardeners to think that the seed quality is poor. Another result of seedling infected damping-off is poor or weaker seedlings that become apparent days or weeks later.

Even if some of the seedlings survive damping off and are transplanted, they are often stunted and have a twisted, constricted or off-color stem – called ‘wire-stem’ – and have health and production issues. Not everyone experiences damping off, yet other gardeners in the same area fight with it yearly. Some gardeners buy seed starting mix every year, otherwise they suffer large seedling losses; while others (including ourselves) have mixed our own soil for years and have had very little problems. Just because your neighbor or gardening club friend has trouble with damping off, it doesn’t automatically mean you will also. We’ve created this article as a tool in helping you troubleshoot and control how and why damping off happens.

Causes of Damping off

The most common cause of damping off is from soil borne fungi from three groups - Pythium, Rhizoctonia, and Fusarium.

Pythium thrives in cool, over-wet and poorly-drained soils and is often the result of over-watering and not maintaining a warm enough soil temperature for the seeds to germinate. Its symptoms are a damp, odorless rot in the root, causing it to be slimy. It may run up the lower portion of the stem and cause it to be black and slimy. Pythium can survive in soil for several years.

Rhizoctonia is present in all natural soils, coming to life when a soil is over-wet and hot. This is the most common occurrence of damping off, as the seedling will have the classic constriction on the stem right around where it touches the soil.

Fusarium thrives in acidic soils that are poorly fertilized and can remain inactive for long periods of time – years. Fusarium infects the seeds, causing many of them to fail to germinate and creating the ‘wire-stem’ appearance in those that do survive.

There are also seed-borne bacterial and fungal pathogens that can decimate seedlings. These are most often seen in seeds obtained from seed swaps, gardening clubs or poor sanitation and handling techniques in processing and packing seeds. If not recognized and corrected, seed borne pathogens will continue to infect future generations of seed that is saved and distributed.

Controlling Damping Off

Damping off may not be able to be prevented, but there are several easy and highly effective methods to control the outbreaks which will greatly lessen the severity of your seedling losses.

For seeds, the easiest method to control seed borne diseases is to source your seeds from a reputable, knowledgeable and experienced seed company or person. Don’t be afraid to ask questions and listen to the answers. An experienced company, grower or garden club member will be able to easily tell you what measures they take, for what varieties and why. If you are sourcing seeds from a local grower or garden club member, it will be very easy to ask around and determine their reputation.

For soil, the easiest and most proven method is simply starting with fresh, sterilized seed starting mix from established and trusted sources. There are a number of bagged seed starting mixes in gardening centers and big box stores, and often some reputable local sources. Simply buying a fresh bag, bringing it home and dumping it into your old faithful seeding tub is not the answer – you might have just infected the fresh soil! First you absolutely must thoroughly clean and sanitize all of your seed starting tools, otherwise you've only infected new material and brought the problem into a new season.

After cleaning and removing all of the soil residue, wash with warm soapy water, rinse well then soak in a weak bleach solution – 2 Tablespoons of bleach in a gallon of water and keep the surface wet for 5 minutes. Soaking hand tools such as trowels, hand hoes and such in a small bucket is the easiest, while spraying the potting bench and sink or mixing container works well. Spray as needed to keep the surfaces wet, then let air dry. After sanitizing, you are ready to open the bag of fresh seed starting mix and let the magic of another season of gardening begin!

A good seed starting mix will not only be sterile, but drain well and ideally have a little nutrition for the young seedlings so they won't need transplanting right after they sprout. You can mix your own or buy a bagged mix from your local garden center or big box store. If you are interested in mixing your own, *Seed Starting Media for the Home Gardener* will show you what the different ingredients are and what they do.

Practical Tips

There are a couple of tools a home gardener has in their day to day gardening to minimize the chance of damaging fungi getting a toehold in the seed beds. The easiest, most overlooked and most important is to avoid over-watering. This one mistake is responsible for most of the gardening woes today, both in the seed starting trays and the garden itself. It is best to bottom water seedlings using a standard seed starting tray and wicking seed starting pots. Paper pots have excellent wicking capacity, are easy to make and give the gardener control of how long the pot will last by how many wraps of paper are used to make the pot. Let the water sit for no longer than 20 – 30 minutes, then drain to avoid an over-wet situation. Water 2 or 3 times a day if needed to keep the soil moist during sprouting.

Over-seeding or overcrowding of seedlings creates a favorable environment for destructive fungi to flourish, so give the seedlings room to grow. If needed, thin the weakest seedlings in a starting pot or seedling tray with snips, not by pulling them out. Pulling the seedlings out disturbs and damages adjacent roots and causes more problems down the road. Planting fewer seeds in a pot or seed tray cell will lessen the amount of thinning greatly.

Air movement can significantly reduce the activity of the fungi, as a fan moving air helps to slightly dry the surface of the soil/seedling interface, making it harder for the fungi to get established. This works best in combination with carefully monitoring the soil moisture. Daily observation is another easy to do, yet often overlooked tool. Catching the fungi in action early gives you a better chance to take corrective action and save more seedlings from an early death. Get in the habit of spending a few minutes just looking at the seedling trays, looking at all of the minute details and getting very familiar with what “normal” looks like. Then compare that each successive day to see if something looks out of place or not right.



Treatment of Damping Off

Now that you've got the knowledge and tools to minimize the chance of damping off happening, let's look at some treatment options if and when it does show its ugly head.

Chamomile is one of the oldest treatments and is one of the gentlest to try first. Chamomile is high in sulphur and is a mild fungicide. Make a strong tea with 3 tea bags steeped for at least 20 minutes, then mist on the seedlings once cool.

Cinnamon is a potent natural fungicide that should only be used once. Lightly sprinkle infected soil with finely

ground fresh cinnamon if the chamomile doesn't work in the first day.

Canadian gardening guru Doug Green has found that homemade garlic spray is also very effective against damping off, as garlic is a potent anti-fungal. To make, crush or blend several garlic cloves into a quart of water, then simmer over low heat until the garlic is softened and the essential oils are released. Cool and strain, then spray on the seedlings, making sure to get the stems. If using as a soil drench, straining isn't as needed.

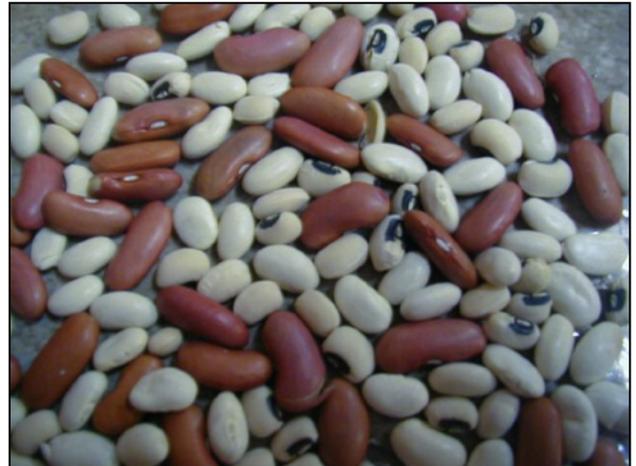
Now that you've got the knowledge to be pro-active in controlling damping off, as well as some tips and tools to treat it when it shows up, you should have a great start to a prolific garden this year!

Stephen Scott is an heirloom seedsman, educator, speaker, soil building advocate, locavore, amateur chef, artist and co-owner of Terroir Seeds with his wife Cindy. They believe in a world of healthy soil, seed, food and people. Everyone has a fundamental need for vibrant food and health, which are interrelated. They welcome dialogue and can be reached at Seeds@UnderwoodGardens.com or 888-878-5247.



How to Grow Dried Beans and Peas

By Maureen Farmer



Dried beans, also called shelled beans, are high in protein, plus fiber and minerals such as copper, magnesium, manganese and phosphorus. They are also a good source for thiamin, folic acid, riboflavin and vitamin B6.

Beans are divided by their growth habit. Bush beans are self supporting and pole beans have twining vines that climb supports. Support can be provided by a teepee, trellis or stakes with string or wire strung between them. Runner beans are similar to pole beans.

Any bean seeds can be dried and eaten, but some varieties have higher yields, and are more flavorful and nutrient dense than others. Some beans commonly grown to be dried are listed below.

- Adzuki beans (*Vigna angularis*) produce long, thin edible pods. When fully mature the 7 to 10 small, nutty-tasting, maroon-colored beans can be eaten fresh or dried.
- Black beans (*Phaseolus vulgaris*) produce pods containing jet-black seeds that when dried are commonly used in soups and stews.
- Black-eyed peas (*Vigna unguiculata*) are also called cowpeas or southern peas. The young pods may be eaten whole, shelled or dried. This bean grows best in zone 7 or warmer.
- Cannellini beans (*Phaseolus vulgaris*) are large, white half inch long beans with a firm texture. They are popular in Italian cuisine.

- Fava beans (*Vicia faba*) are also known as broad, horse, or cattle beans. They are second highest bean in protein, after soybeans. They prefer to grow in cool, damp weather. The pods are not edible. After shelling, the skin surrounding each seed also needs to be removed before they can be eaten.
- Garbanzo beans (*Cicer arietinum*) are also called chickpeas. The dried nutty-tasting beans can be baked or boiled for use in recipes or salads. They are also frequently used to make hummus.
- Great Northern white beans (*Phaseolus vulgaris*) are very popular. They are frequently used in baked dishes, stews and soups. They also can be shelled and eaten fresh.
- Kidney beans (*Phaseolus vulgaris*) are red, hearty-tasting bean that are commonly used in chili, soups, stews, and salads.
- Navy beans (*Phaseolus vulgaris*) are small, oval and cook relatively quickly. They are used in soups and to make baked beans.
- Pinto beans (*Phaseolus vulgaris*) grow on large plants and should be staked or trellised. They can be eaten fresh or dried.
- Scarlet runner beans (*Phaseolus coccineus*) grow on climbing vines and produce pretty scarlet flowers. The black-and red-speckled beans inside the pod can be eaten fresh or dried.



Growing Conditions

Beans and peas should be directly seeded in your garden after the last average frost date in your area when the soil has warmed to at least 60 degrees F. A warmer

soil temperature of 70 degrees F will produce a higher germination rate. Sow them in a sunny spot with well drained soil. All beans, except fava beans are sensitive to frost.



Beans are nitrogen fixing, so do not use a fertilizer high in nitrogen in this area of your garden. Mulch young plants for weed control. As bean plants grow larger, they'll shade out most weeds. Beans will not set pods if the temperature is above 80°F.

Plant most bush type beans 3 to 6 inches apart in rows 2 feet apart. They often take about a week to germinate. Bush beans usually mature within a two week period. Succession plant if you want a continuous harvest for fresh use.

Plant pole beans 10 inches apart in single rows 3 to 4 feet apart or double rows spaced 1 foot apart. Germination may take up to two weeks. Pole beans are more sensitive to cool temperatures than bush beans. They also take longer to mature, but they produce about three times the harvest of bush beans grown in the same garden space. Pole beans will keep producing until frost.

Celery, corn, cucumbers, potatoes, rosemary, strawberries, summer savory make good companion plants for bush beans. Pole beans grow well when planted near corn, rosemary, summer savory and sunflowers. Don't plant beans with onions, beets, or kohlrabi.

Potential Problems

Insect pests that may attack beans are aphids, cabbage loopers, corn earworms, cucumber beetles, European corn borers, Japanese beetles, leaf miners, and spider mites. The most destructive bean pests are Mexican bean beetles.

Disease that may cause a problem with bean crops include anthracnose, bacterial blight, mosaic virus, rust and downy mildew. A good practice is to rotate bean crop every year. Since beans are nitrogen fixing, rotating them also helps with the general health of you garden. If you bean plants do get infected with disease, throw them away. Wash your hand and clipper before touching other plants and don't plant beans in that same spot for at least three years.



Harvest and Storage

Leave the pods on the bean plants until they are brown, about 90 percent of the leaves have fallen off and the seeds rattle inside their pods. If the pods have yellowed and frost or rainy weather is predicted, pull up the entire plant or chop the plants off near the ground and hang them upside down indoors until they dry completely.

Remove the seeds from the pods and store them in airtight, covered containers. Some people add a small packet of dried milk to absorb excess moisture. When stored in a cool, dry place, dried beans will keep for at least 10 to 12 months and potentially up to two years.

Maureen Farmer is master gardener and the founder of The Farmer's Garden website . The Farmer's Garden is an online place to make in-person connections between gardeners across the US. Gardeners and want-to-be gardeners can search and post free classified ads to share excess homegrown produce, tools, or gardening space with people in their area. The website also includes a weekly researched blog post to teach people

about gardening. She is an avid gardener, horticultural instructor and a former Board member of Urban Oaks Organic Farm in Connecticut.

Website: www.thefarmersgarden.com

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/The-Farmers-Garden/109649678942>

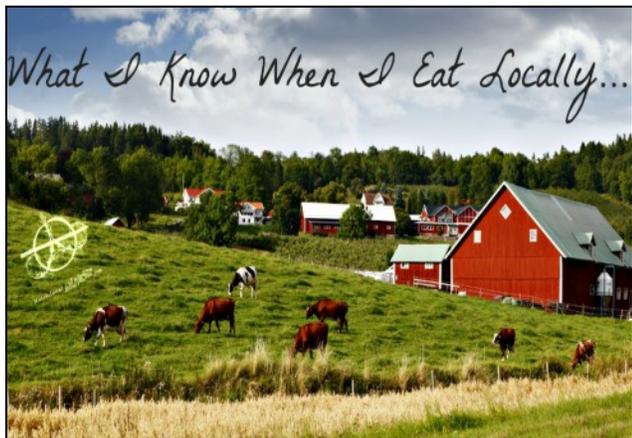
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What I Know When I Eat Locally

By Daisy Luther



The other day, I was cleaning out my freezer and something magical happened. Not only did I get a nice, organized freezer, but I realized what it really means to eat locally.

When you eat locally, you know things about your food that people who shop at the grocery store do not.

On the labels of nearly every package of meat in my freezer was the name of someone I know....whose farm I've actually been to.

I know that those incredibly delicious pork chops in my freezer came from an American Guinea Hog, a breed that is prized for its moderate size, friendly temperament, and mad foraging skills. I know that during its lifetime, that hog didn't go a single day without a scratch between the ears and a kind word. The hog had a large area under the trees to snuffle around and do his hog thing all day long with his hog friends. The hog was kindly treated and humanely dispatched, and I saw the entire litter of them numerous times when I went over to the farmer's house to pick up excess tomatoes.

And the beef in my freezer? Here's what I know about that. Those cows lived a life of open ranges with all the grass they could chomp down in a day. They didn't stand in piles of their own excrement, suffering for their entire existence. The herd that our beef came from was mostly Herefords, and I've chatted many times with the farmer.

I have chicken from a lady who knows the true meaning of free range. Her farmyard is studded with white,

plump, contented birds pecking away at unseen bugs all day long. Our freezer also contains some lamb and some rabbits, all of which were well-treated, fed their natural diets, and allowed the freedom to enjoy the sunshine, nibble on the grass, and romp around.

And the jars of fruits and vegetables lining my shelves?

I went out for 3 days in a row with my daughter, early in the morning before the sun was too hot to pick the blueberries that we then cleaned and made jam and syrup from. The farm was so close we walked there with our cotton bags. Incidentally, I just picked up a big 2 gallon bucket of honey from hives that are right across the road from the blueberry patch.

I watched the progress just a mile from my house, as the peach trees bloomed white in the spring, then the little green fruits appeared. I was excited when I drove past one day and saw men with ladders against the trees, because I knew I could soon get some of the very first peaches of the year. I bought and preserved so many peaches I thought we couldn't possibly eat them all, but here we are, down to one last jar of jam and two jars of slices.

We picked blackberries when we found a lush patch during a walk in the woods. I made juice from wild grapes found on the same forest trail. Then the wildfires began here in our area, and there was an abundance of bear poop, so we left the rest of the berries for the hungry, displaced animals.

I supplemented my own garden tomatoes with the tomatoes of 3 other small farms. I traded homemade marinara sauce for tomatoes with one of them. I canned more than 100 pounds of tomatoes this year, into juice, purees, marinara sauce, and ketchup. Right about now, I'm wishing I'd canned 200 pounds, because the tomato product supply has dwindled too quickly.

When I picked up my apples from the local, no-spray orchard, we talked at length about making apple cider vinegar, and the orchard owner helped me troubleshoot my first batch that wasn't quite right.

(You can find the canning recipes [HERE](#))

Throughout the season, I stopped at my favorite nearby vegetable stand, run by a nice couple in their late 40s. We talk every time about new recipes we have created

to use up the produce, and the lady took me out to show me a new style of bedding she was using for her laying hens. Compost is another favorite topic of conversation, and we update one another on our rates of decomposition the way other folks talk about their kids' sporting events.

I know the name of the cow that our milk comes from. I pat her on the head nearly every week when I go pick up our fresh raw milk. She is sweet, gentle, and content. I learned to make butter this year, and I also make yogurt and cheese. And I know the ingredients and where these things come from.

I have two jars of spicy jalapeno relish left. Most of the peppers and cilantro originated in my backyard, but I did get blessed with a giant grocery bag of jalapenos from a guy who wanted me to make him a few jars of relish.

Just in time, as my shelves become emptier, I have garlic, carrots, hardy greens, and a rebellious broccoli plant coming up in my garden. I have spring peas and delicate greens started on my kitchen table. When I drove past the farmstand the other day, the hens were out there working hard to clean up the beds so that the farmers can plant. The first blooms are showing up on the trees in the nearby orchards. There are baby animals everywhere, and my daughter and I were lucky enough to help bottle feed a friend's 4 orphan baby goats. They're adorable, energetically jostling for position and butting their brothers out of the way. The owners of the goats patiently advised us how to feed them, and are a fountain of information about quails, rabbits, goats, and bees. Don't even get me started, waxing poetic about the teeny little morsel-sized quail eggs I got in exchange for some homemade jam.

We know people who are delighted to share information about raising food. They encourage us and teach us. They pass on lessons you can't learn in school, and they are generous with their time and knowledge. They know that the more people learn about the farming of food, the better off the Earth will be. This time of year, my personal Facebook feed is filled to the brim with photos of my neighbors' newly born baby animals. We barter, one person's canned goods for another person's duck eggs.

Things that you see on labels at the store, like "cage-free", "no antibiotics", "all-natural" – these things aren't

just words on a label to me. They are things I see every week, but the real meaning of these phrases, instead of some convoluted sneaky workaround to get into the wallets of people who are against factory farming processes, but who don't realize they are being deceived by big corporations and the USDA.

Eating locally means that I know, absolutely, that the meat we consume came from animals who were humanely raised and given freedom. I don't have to rely on labels and arbitrary rules that mean a greedy corporation can take a cage so tightly stuffed with chickens that they can't move and put it outside for 15 minutes a day and call them free range. Our milk doesn't come from miserable cows who are shot up with hormones to make them produce more and left strapped to milking machines. Our meat doesn't come from animals that are treated so abysmally that they have to be given constant doses of antibiotics to survive. We can watch the cycle of our food from start to finish, be it animal, fruit, or vegetable.

I know that the money I spend with local farmers pays for them to continue farming. If I never set foot in Safeway again, they wouldn't notice. It would not affect their bottom line. But the business I support – the local farms and orchards – they depend on people like me. People who want to know their farmers and know their food. I want to vote with my dollars for the kind of food everyone should have access to, so I choose to do so by purchasing food from the farm down the road, not food that has been grown in some faraway place, picked before it's ripe, and shipped halfway across the world and not processed chemicals assembled into something that somewhat resembles food.

When you shop locally, you know what you are getting. You know it far beyond what you can ever find on a label. Because I know these things and I know these people, I can trust the food I give to my family.

Daisy Luther is a freelance writer and editor. Her website, [The Organic Prepper](#), offers information on healthy prepping, including premium nutritional choices, general wellness and non-tech solutions. You can follow Daisy on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#), and you can email her at daisy@theorganicprepper.ca

Spring Ephemerals

By David Daehnke



Nothing, and I mean nothing, says spring to me more than the woodland flowers that can be seen on a walk through a local park or naturalized area. You can package all the daffodils, tulips and crocuses and they still wouldn't have the same impact as spring ephemerals. Many spring ephemerals go dormant in summer and disappear from view until the following spring. This strategy is very common in herbaceous communities of deciduous forests as it allows small herbaceous plants to take advantage of the high amount of sunlight reaching the forest floor prior to the leaf-out of woody plants. Virginia bluebells are a perfect example. The purple buds open to a blue flower (such an unusual color for early spring), and seemingly in one week they are gone. But what a color treat they are for their short time they are there!

Another favorite of mine is *Claytonia*, commonly known as Spring Beauty. This small, delicate pinkish-white flower can almost be unseen if you don't look for them. They will only grow four to six inches tall, being lost for the passerby who doesn't look down, a loss on their part. A great collection of the naturally occurring plants can be found at the James A. McFaul Environmental Center in Wyckoff, New Jersey, up by the sugar shack in the upper parking area. It was not uncommon to see thousands of these small beauties in bloom at once, carpeting the ground in pinkish-white flowers. Personally I

think that Mother Nature is creating her own spring display in contrast to all of the mass plantings of daffodils in public parks, saying to us "Now beat this!"

Trillium or wake robin is a very unusual plant. Unusual you say, but from a botanical point of view, they are quite different from most plants. Those three green, leafy parts are not actually the leaves of the plant, but are the flower bracts. The actual leaves are papery coverings underground surrounding the rhizome! The large white, red or yellow flowers cannot go unseen, as these plants can grow up to 2 feet tall. The only problem is people have the tendency to pick the flowers and stem when they see them, and this will have a very detrimental effect to the plant. It can take up to five years for the rhizome to regenerate another flower, so when walking through a wooded area, please only take pictures.



Talking about detrimental effects, do you know what the greatest problem for spring ephemerals are? For the first time I can say it is not man, at least directly. The biggest problem is Norway maples. First, this tree leafs out earlier in spring than our native trees, not allowing the spring ephemerals enough sunlight to properly produce and store nutrients for next year, either making them weaker or even killing them. Also Norway maples are tremendous producers of seed, aka Pinocchio noses, which germinate readily anywhere, so once you have

one, you have 100. Many parks are now trying to eradicate Norway maples from their native woodlands in hopes of encouraging the return or replanting of the spring ephemerals.

So as the warmer weather arrives, don't just look at the pristine landscaped beds of your neighbors. Take a walk in a wooded area and see how many spring ephemerals you can spot. Even better, take a camera along and grab a few photos and show them to your friends, and get them interested in the "other spring flowers". Not only will you be amazed at what is in your local woodlands, you will get a good walk in to combat our laziness during the winter. Last but not least, take a deep breath and smell Mother Natures' natural composting at work!

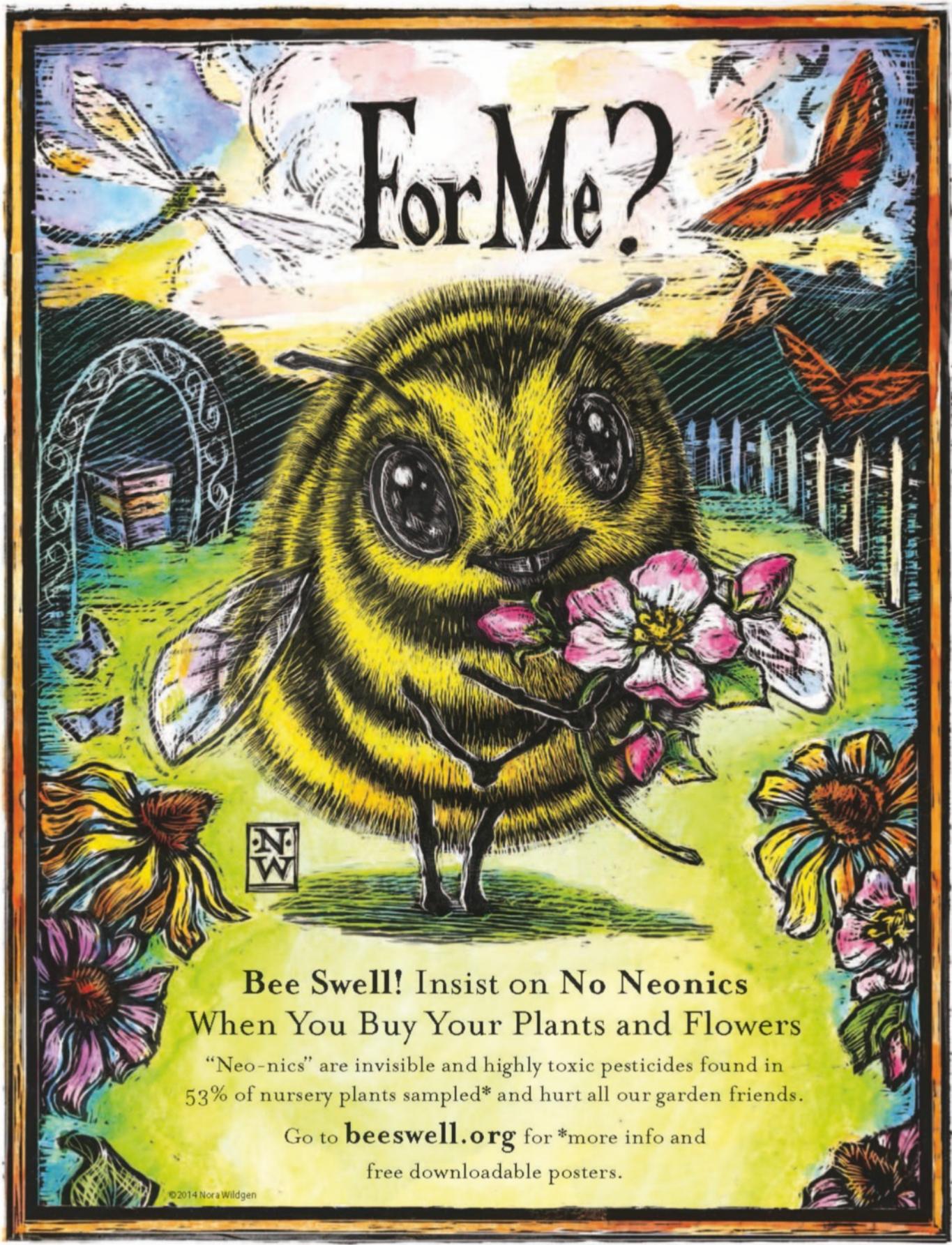
David Daehnke is widely known as "The Gardening Guru" and can be heard on WGHT 1500 AM (www.ghtradio.com). David is also available for lectures. Please visit his web site, www.thegardeningguru.com for more useful organic gardening information.



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*We believe in a world of **healthy soil, seed, food and people**. Everyone has a **fundamental need for vibrant food and health**, which are interrelated. We work to achieve this by **challenging** conventional gardening practices, **providing** successful agricultural methods along with the **finest heirloom seeds**, all while **inspiring** the power of individual choice and action. We work for a world where the **food we grow is good for us, our health and our communities!***



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New Products

Powerful Plants



Powerful Plants is a new healthy lifestyle brand for elementary age children. Our company's mission is to get kids interested in plants and inspire them to become involved with growing and preparing their own food. We accomplish this by "edutaining" children, and creating a bridge between technology, the world outdoors,

and the food they eat. *Powerful Plants*' initial products are an interactive storybook, organic heirloom vegetable seeds, and free contests and prizes on our website.

Using our free app, the characters in the book and on the packs of thirty-six varieties of vegetable seeds come to life when viewed with a tablet or smartphone! This cutting edge technology is called *augmented reality*. The characters share growing information, preparation tips and other fun facts. The goal is to inspire kids to become more interested in the food they eat and their own personal health by communicating with them in a fun, yet informative way.



Tom Thumb

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Powerful Plants is a way for parents, grandparents, and teachers to connect with kids and get them interested in plants, food, and to help foster a healthy lifestyle.

To learn more or to order seeds or a copy of our book, please visit PowerfulPlants.net

Al Benner, a contributor to OGT and founder of Powerful Plants is not only passionate about plants, he is also the father of twin, eight year old boys. First and foremost, Al believes being a kid should be about one thing - having fun. If it isn't fun and entertaining a kid isn't interested for long. It's what that "fun" is however that can be critically important to the development of a child and how they perceive the world around them.

Enter Powerful Plants - storybooks with an endearing cast of characters that are sure to win the hearts and minds of most any 4 – 12 year-old child (and to be honest quite a few older kids and adults too!).

The Evolution of Organic Continues

By Cliff Williams

Oh, the anticipation of spring and a new season of growing with all the new strategies and plans. Even though I garden year round in a winter greenhouse, I still look forward to my gardens outside. Last year I experimented with an idea I had about gardening with low water usage and ways to conceal a garden. This year I will be focusing on producing as much of my family's food as possible.

My view of things where food is concerned, is that the world's food system is corrupted both morally and nutritionally. It has grown too big, and things have gone so far down the wrong path that it may not be repairable. For this reason I put a lot of thought and effort into creating a better path for my family. I may be preaching to the choir, but the giant chemical/agricultural/food producing corporations are only after profit, and words like health and nutrition are only used in their advertising campaigns. Organic Gardeners are among the very few to realize this and actually take an active role in doing something positive about it. This is why I go through the time and expense of winter gardening.

There are quite a few thoughts I would like to share in this article, beginning with greenhouses and winter greenhouses, and producing food longer than a typical growing season. I understand that very few people have winter greenhouses, but by the time this article arrives, standard greenhouses will be in season in most parts of the country. While many greenhouses will have the ability to grow plants in early spring, cold nights will make it hard to germinate your seeds. This is an issue especially where winter greenhouses are concerned, so you have to create a space where your seeds will germinate. In the past, I have built a small greenhouse inside my greenhouse and heated it with a small ceramic heater. Also pictured below is my new greenhouse in a greenhouse. Since my greenhouse is built onto the south side of my house, I have built a mini greenhouse into one of my windows and inside my greenhouse. This open and is accessed inside the house for constant heat and ease. You can also get your starts going in your house, providing your pets will leave them alone, mine won't! My early spring starts were planted at the end of January, and the sooner you start, the sooner you eat!

Constant adaptation and learning - Life and gardening are not a static thing, there is always something new to learn on the path to perfection in food. I do have a vision of a new lifestyle that is more in harmony with the natural world, the world that we escape to in our gardens, rather than the path mankind is on now. We have the luxury of experiencing some of the cycles of life where our gardens are concerned, and that is much different from the linear philosophy that is modern agriculture. They plow, dump in the seeds and fertilizer, spray the pesticides, harvest it, process it, and wait to do the same thing again the following year. All of the advancements in modern agriculture are actually just efforts to survive the damages caused in the previous years. If anything else was the case food would be getting bigger, tastier, and full of nutrition but it is not. As a result, I read this year that America's top soil has been depleted by about half over the last 100 years. My point in all this that nobody has any business being part of the status quo; Organic Gardening is part of being in harmony with the earth and we need to keep growing, pardon the pun, towards a more sustainable life. It is not linear, it is cyclical, hence the word recycle, we compost and recycle our waste back into the soil. This year I will be installing a grey water system to recycle and drastically reduce the amount of water I use. Many aquifers are drying up and fresh water is becoming a precious and expensive commodity.

For months I have been acquiring some of the necessary parts needed, and have been studying and planning for this. This year I plan to use the water from showers, dishes, laundry, etc... for gardening and for use in my toilets and see just how far I can go in recycling water. The big issue is to incorporate some of the plants into the filtering system and to eliminate the need to store unfiltered, bacteria-contaminated water. As long as nothing toxic goes down our drain, good active soil makes a perfect filter. This will be a fun project, and hopefully I can pass on my findings this fall. There are a lot of examples where others have done this and it is certainly not rocket science, it is just another step towards creating that harmony.

Clean Air, Clean Water, Clean Food and a house that can facilitate all of those things sounds like some futuristic utopian concept, but you are closer than you think because of your dedication to growing organic. We are facing some very uncertain times, and I feel that this unsustainable path the world is on will get much worse,

much faster than anyone wants to believe. Our homes and the way they are designed need to evolve also, because for the most part all of our houses and their components are based on using fossil and nuclear fuels, and lots of them. What I am talking about here is working towards creating a home that can produce food, clean water, and clean air. I have attached my greenhouse to my house for the purpose of saving both time and energy, and as I build my water system it will also be incorporated into the structure. I am getting closer to my goal and my home will also provide fresh air as it is exchanged with the air in the greenhouse. Earthship houses are an excellent example of this integrated approach that we are evolving towards. While this may seem kind of way out there for some, the need for a solution such as this is beginning to become more and more obvious.

An integrated approach is really just the beginning, because as you start adding all these components together, you start to create more work and systems to manage, and part of the reason you went to the garden in the first place was the simplicity and solitude it has to offer. Things like the grey water system will need to be designed to be automatic; you don't have to turn your present heater on and off or manage your hot water tank. The more systems you get under one roof the easier life becomes. We need the time we spend in the garden, but we can also give these other aspects of our life that same attention, other parts of our life can also be organic.

I have probably said enough about that for now, just keep what I have said in mind as you watch the news and internet, to see what is taking place. Anyways, back to the garden and all the hopes that it has to offer now. Perfection in the food you grow depends greatly on the perfection of the soil that you create. I like to look at the soil in those terms, it is the lack of creating good soil and just using the earth as a growing medium that has brought commercial agriculture to its despicable lows and abominable genetic violations. To create soil is to add to the soil and build the soil. This is a continuous process, every year, in a cycle, and you need to be adding and building the soil.

This may sound sarcastic, but most of the world still doesn't get it, when you grow stuff, you take things out of the soil and then they are gone. Most people put back a little bit of fertilizer and call it good. The truth of the matter is that growing food takes out over 50

different nutrients. Genetic modifications and pesticides grew out of ignorance of the simple fact that they took many things out of the soil and only put back a few. When crops failed, corporate sponsored science was right there with mess we have today.

Some of my other articles in Organic Gardens Today go into great detail on this, but just a little review wouldn't hurt. Over half of all substances known to man should be available to our plants, and thus to us, through the food they provide. Mankind is seriously deficient in the nutrients we need because our food is seriously deficient in the nutrients it needs. This is the root of most of the modern health issues including cancer, arthritis, bone loss and disease.

First off we need look at what a plant uses, the biological sequence or growth cycle of plants, **Boron** activates **Silicon**, which carries all other nutrients starting with **Calcium**. **Calcium** binds with **Nitrogen** to form amino acids, DNA and cell division. Amino acids form proteins such as chlorophyll and tag trace elements, especially **Magnesium**. **Magnesium** transfers energy via **Phosphorus** to **Carbon** which form sugars which are carried through the plant by **Potassium**. **Boron**, **Silicon**, **Calcium**, **Nitrogen**, **Magnesium**, **Phosphorus**, **Carbon**, and **Potassium** are obviously important and need to be accounted for, these are the things most needed by the plants. There is much less known about the other 44 nutrients, but many are associated with your immune system and other bodily functions.

There is a right way and a wrong way to go about getting these nutrients for your plants, and some of these are in great supply, and some are depleted and washed out of the soil quickly. The best advice I can give is to do some research into fertilizers and organic methods of getting nutrients. As an example, plants and the soil (countless organisms, bacteria, etc...) surrounding the roots can manufacture or fix nitrogen naturally for the plants in high quality soil, whereas adding commercially available nitrogen, and or poorly composted manure (both called soluble nitrogen) inhibits the plant's ability to naturally fix nitrogen and degrades the amino acids, DNA, and cell division of the plant. There is a natural symbiotic relationship between plants and the microbes in the soil. The microbes help feed the plant by producing or making available certain nutrients which are carried up the plant from the roots. In turn plants

send back down the excess nutrients and food to feed the microbes.

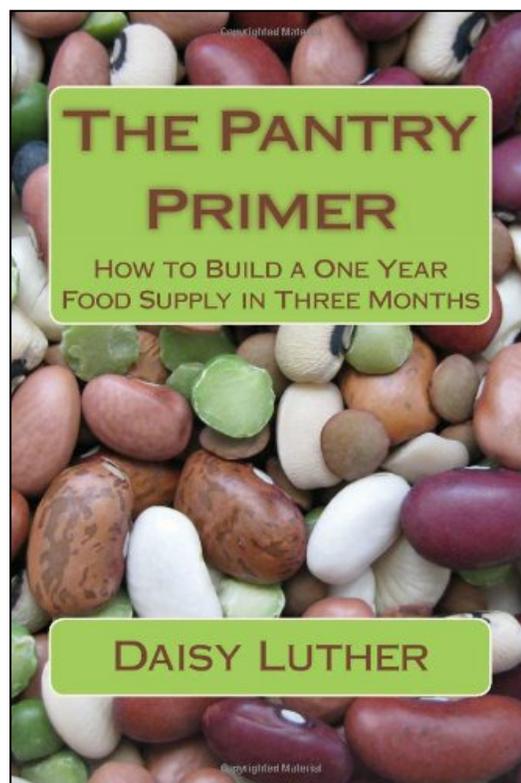
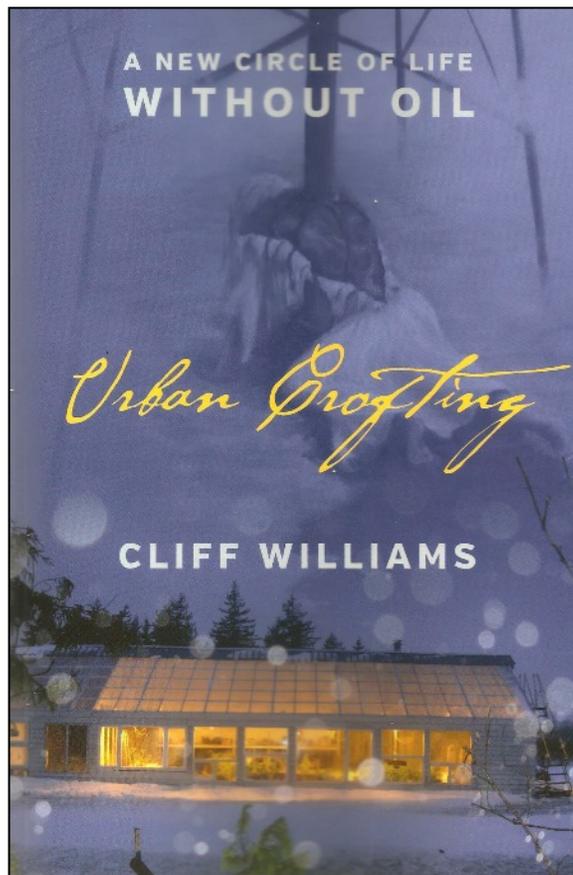
Weeds are natural nitrogen scavengers and thrive on the soluble commercial fertilizer, while the intended plants are hurt by the excess unnatural nitrogen. Does that sound like something you've seen in your garden, weeds growing like crazy and your food is struggling to grow? The solution to this vicious cycle is composting and building your soil. This solution is only available to those who grow on a small scale, because there is no way large scale agriculture could ever make a switch to a compost based feeding program. This is the time to study and make plans for feeding your plants. I came across a new way to compost that mimics the way nature feeds itself. Material that is to be composted is broadcasted on top of the garden or orchard continuously. Layer after layer after layer, year after year after year. The material composts naturally over time and feeds the plants, but what originally caught my eye was the fact that this reduced watering to almost nothing, even in California. I wish I had the article to refer to and give credit to the folks who came up with it, but I'm giving it a try this year.

At the end of the day, or winter in this case, we are left to do the best we can to get our plants the nutrients that they need, because they are the nutrients that we need. Just as the plants and soil have a symbiotic relationship, so do humans and plants. It is now being discovered that all life is connected, this includes plants and humans, and our cycle of life has been abused for so long it is a wonder humans aren't already extinct. It is time for a do-over, a "re-cycle", and the only way you are going to get it is to do it yourself.

May as well have some fun, too - get in the dirt!

Cliff Williams has worked 20 years in the frozen vegetable processing industry. He has been involved with everything from the dirt to the package you get at the store. He has also worked seasonally for 4 years in the fertilizer industry, as well as growing up gardening and gleaning. When you add in all the supporting research that went into creating Urban Crofting to his experience, you will find that few people have the unique insight into our food that he does.

Recommended Books From our Writers



Savory - Herb of the Year 2015

By Cindy Meredith



Every year has a designated herb, named by the [International Herb Association](#). This year, the designated herb is Savory, a very hardy perennial or short lived annual, depending on the variety. In fact, there are lots of herbs in the Savory, or *Satureja* genus.

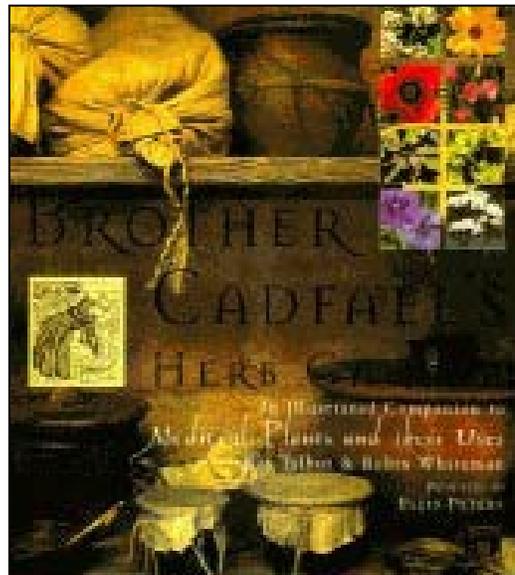
Satureja means "Savory" and once you've tasted these herbs and used them, you will savor their flavor and the dishes you create with them. Most varieties are from the countries surrounding the Mediterranean, although there is at least one from South Africa, one from the Caribbean and one from Iran and the surrounding area. The flavor is somewhat spicy as well as "savory", and was actually classified as a spice rather than an herb by the early Romans. It does have a bite to it and is used to flavor many various foods.

Summer and Winter Savory were used by the Greeks and Romans to spice up their food. In Rome, a sauce was made with vinegar and Summer Savory, similar to a modern Mint Sauce. All beans and peas are enhanced by the use of Savory and it can be added to sausage, stuffings and herb mixtures. Summer Savory, an annual, can be easily harvested and dried for later use. Winter Savory, a perennial in much of the U.S., can also be dried and used that way. Winter Savory makes a small attractive evergreen bush where it is hardy and takes well to pruning for shape. It is very tolerant of extreme heat, as well.

Summer Savory seems less tolerant of our Texas heat and I've found it to be a short lived annual, once Summer really sets in. But, it grows quickly, and can produce a lot of material to harvest in just a couple

of months.

The Romans brought Savory with them to the British Isles, and there it was adopted and much used by the native population. In Shakespeare's time, Savory was familiar and is mentioned in *A Winter's Tale* with mint, marjoram and lavender.



In the book [Brother Cadfael's Herb Garden](#), Savory is listed as a culinary as well as a medicinal herb.

During the Middle Ages it was used for stomach complaints and intestinal disorders, including flatulence, which may be why it is often added to bean dishes. It was infused into a tea and used to stimulate the appetite and ease digestion. It could be used as a gargle for sore throats. It was never recommended for pregnant women.

Beyond its culinary and medicinal uses, Savory was used as an aphrodisiac by different societies. Even the name, *Satureja*, is thought to be derived from the Greek for *Satyr*, saturos. Satyrs being known for their love of pleasure and women perhaps gave rise to the quality of Savory as an herb having to do with libido. The early Egyptians used it in a love potion, the French sipped Savory mixed with wine as an aphrodisiac and in England, Savory was mixed with beeswax and used in a massage to stimulate the libido in women. In Italy, mothers who wanted their daughters to have a successful wedding night would feed them Savory for some weeks leading up to the wedding.

One of the early American settlers, John Josslyn, lists both Winter and Summer Savory as herbs they could grow to remind them of their gardens left behind. By planting Savory in your garden, you can not only add spice and flavor to your food, you can connect to our early settlers, and, who knows... maybe spice up other aspects of your life as well!!

The Varieties



Satureja hortensis

Summer Savory

Annual

USDA Zones- all zones as a warm season

annual

Native to: Mediterranean

Soil- average garden soil

Sun- full to part sun

Here in the U.S., the best known Savory is Summer Savory, an annual with a piquant flavor somewhat reminiscent of thyme. It is easy to find seed for Summer Savory, not as easy to find plants, in my Experience.

You can direct seed or grow as transplants. Plants can be placed as close as 6 inches apart. Here in Texas, it has a short season for growing due to our heat, so it's best to grow a few plants and harvest often for drying. I've found the plant gets pretty leggy if it's not harvested often. It dries well, or you can simply freeze sprigs for later use in cooking. For use in uncooked dishes, salads, etc., fresh or dried works well. You can buy seed for Summer Savory from The Herb Cottage [here](#).

Green Bean Salad with Gruyere Cheese and Summer Savory

- 1/4 cup thinly sliced red onions
- 1 lb green beans, cut into 2 inch pieces

- 1/3 cup olive oil
- 1 T red wine vinegar
- 1 t finely minced fresh marjoram
- 1/4 t black pepper
- 1 T finely minced fresh summer savory
- 1/2 cup shredded Gruyere cheese

Coarsely cut onion slices. Steam beans until crisp/tender, 3 to 5 minutes. While still hot, place in a medium-size bowl, and add all ingredients except cheese. Let stand at room temperature for 1 hour or longer, mixing occasionally.

When ready to serve, transfer to a serving dish, and sprinkle with cheese.

(The Herb & Spice Cookbook: A Seasoning Celebration by Sheryl & Mel London , Rodale Press 1986)



Satureja montana

Winter Savory

Perennial

USDA Zones 5-11

Native to: Mediterranean

Soil- average, well-draining

Sun- full sun to part shade

Winter Savory grows to about 12 inches in height and can be pruned to shape. The best parts for culinary use are new shoots from older woodier stems or from the roots as they emerge. Woody stems can produce tough and less tasty leaves.

Although the leaves have a strong flavor, they do not hold up well to long cooking, so should be added toward the end of the cooking time.

It is very versatile in the kitchen and mixes well with most savory herbs such as bay, rosemary, thyme, oregano and basil.

Tiny white flowers are produced throughout the warm weather and are attractive to honey bees. As with many of the plants in the Genus *Satureja*, this plant is not attractive to deer.

Savory Herbal Marinade (featuring fresh herbs from your garden)

For use on Meat or Game:

- 2 1/2 Cups Red Wine
- 3/4 Cup Red Wine Vinegar
- 1 Small Onion or Several Shallots, chopped
- 2 Carrots, diced
- 1 Stalk Celery, chopped
- 2 Cloves Garlic, sliced
- 2 Fresh Bay Leaves, broken into pieces
- 2 Teaspoons each Fresh Thyme, Oregano and Winter Savory, coarsely chopped
- Salt

Allow meat to marinate overnight or about 12 hours. To use on Chicken, exchange the red wine for white wine and the red wine vinegar for white wine vinegar. Change the herbs to French Tarragon, Lemon Thyme or Rosemary or any combination of those. For Pork, add fresh mint to the White Wine Marinade. For Fish, use lemon juice and the Winter Savory chopped fine. Recipe courtesy of [Mountain Valley Growers](#). On this page, you'll find more recipes, too!

From the International Herb Association comes this recipe for traditional Herbes de Provence:

HERBES DE PROVENCE BLEND

Makes 1/2 cup

- 2 tablespoons dried thyme
- 2 tablespoons dried marjoram
- 2 tablespoons dried savory
- 1 tablespoon dried rosemary
- 2 tablespoons dried lavender flowers

Combine all ingredients in a blender process on a low to medium setting for about 10 seconds or until the lavender has been broken down into very small pieces. Store in an airtight container.



Satureja biflora

Lemon Savory

Annual- all zones as a warm season annual, Perennial- very tender

USDA Zones 11 +

Native to East Africa

Soil- rich, well-drained

Sun- full sun

I first discovered this plant browsing a seed catalog. Having a great affinity to lemon-flavored herbs, I ordered seed and grew it out. Wow! What a great lemony flavor! It is considered a tender perennial, so if you grow it and like it, grow some in a pot to keep from freezing. Keep the soil fairly dry in the pot for indoor growing. Outdoors, harvest often, so the plant stays nice and compact. The leaves do dry well and keep their lemon fragrance and flavor. I buy mine from [The Thyme Garden](#).



Satureja smageigera

Creeping Savory

Perennial

USDA Zones 7-9

Native to West Asia, the Caucasus

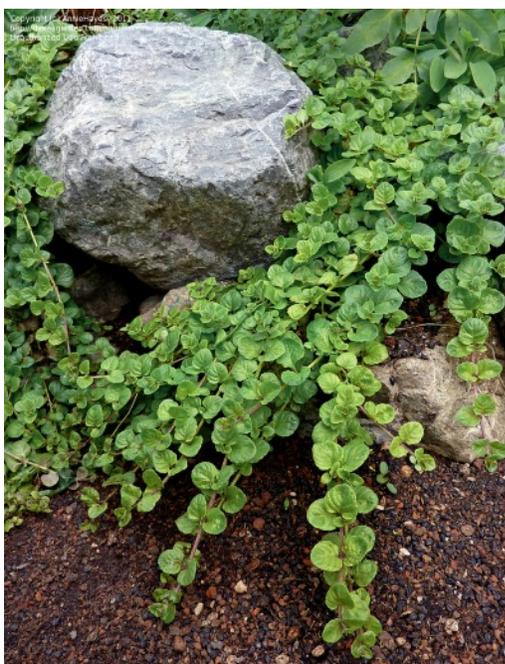
Soil- well-drained, rocky, alkaline

Sun- full sun

From West Asia, the Caucasus, so it is very hardy in cold climates with alkaline soil that can provide good drainage. Likewise it can tolerate hot, dry conditions. Grown in the Southern U.S. under high humidity, it needs very good drainage and lots of sun.

Like Winter Savory, the flavor is peppery and strong when used fresh. The plant is harvested when it is flowering in summer and can be used fresh or dried. An ointment made from the leaves has been used to help relieve arthritis.

As with many of the plants in the Genus *Satureja*, this plant is not attractive to deer.



(Image courtesy of davesgarden.com)

Satureja douglasii

Yerba Buena or The Good Herb

Perennial

USDA Zones 7-10

Native to west coast U.S., eastward to

Idaho and Montana

Soil- moist, well-drained

Sun- mostly shade

Unlike many others in the Genus *Satureja*, Yerba Buena likes moisture and shade. It tolerates clay soils and sandy soils. Under a tree in dense shade, it creates a flat, evergreen groundcover. It can grow up to 2 feet tall by 6 feet across.

It is not considered invasive, however, because it does not spread by rhizomes or underground stems like mint, but roots along the stems. It is perfect for a hanging pot or trailing down a shady slope or wall. It is drought tolerant, but in very hot areas, summer water will be necessary. The leaves are quite fragrant and make a healthy and tasty mint-like tea. It has been used for relief of indigestion, insomnia, colds, fevers, arthritic pain and toothache. Deer resistant, too.



Satureja viminea

Jamaican Mint Bush

Perennial

USDA Zones 10+

Native to Caribbean

Soil- average, well-draining

Sun- full sun to part shade, can do well indoors in bright light

Jamaican Mint Bush can grow to be a large shrub or small tree in its native areas. In areas where it is not hardy- most of the U.S., for instance- it will stay smaller and do quite well as a potted plant. Grow outdoors in summer and bring indoors for the cold season. Indoors give it bright light and good drainage. Do not overwater.

It is well worth finding this plant and growing it. The aroma is minty/savory and very piquant. A traditional use for the leaves is to make a bath and body wash. There is now a commercial product called Kama Sutra Luxury Mint Tree Bath Gel and Body Wash. According to the literature, "A refreshing bathing gel that cools and tingles. Legend says that the mint plant grows into a tree only after a great deal of time and care, the same

attention we've paid to the process of creating Mint Tree Bathing Gel.

Blended from pure invigorating mint, ten pure vegetable oils and wheat germ rich Vitamin E, this refreshing cleanser cools, tingles, and transforms a shower or bath into a keenly sensual experience." You can make your own body wash from the leaves by making an infusion with 4 cups boiling water and 1 cup of fresh leaves. Let sit about 24 hours. Strain. Add the juice of 1 lemon and 1 to 2 tablespoons of a bath gel, if desired. Use as a body wash or add to a warm bath.



(Image courtesy of [Mountain Valley Growers](#))

Satureja thymbra

Pink Savory, Thyme Leafed Savory

Perennial

USDA Zones 7-10

Native to the Mediterranean

Soil- alkaline, well-draining, rocky

Sun- full sun, a little shade OK

Pink Savory grows in warm, dry locations with alkaline soil with good drainage. It has a flavor similar to Winter Savory, with overtones of oregano and thyme. It can be used in any recipe calling for savory.

It flowers in early to mid summer, with pink flowers that also attract honey bees. The flowers are edible and are good as an edible garnish or in a herbed vinegar.

This plant is sometimes incorrectly referred to as Zatar, which is actually a blend of herbs. Pink Savory can be a

component of Zatar, which often also contains oregano and thyme.



(Image Courtesy of [West Crete](#))

Satureja spinosa

Pygmy Savory, Crete Mountain

Savory

Perennial

Hardy to -10 deg. F

Native to the southern Aegean

Soil- alkaline, rocky, well-draining

Sun- full sun

This little Savory grows to only about 6 inches tall in the mountains from 4,000 to 7,000 feet above sea level. It is very hardy to cold and likes a dry, warm, rocky location. It is used as a culinary and medicinal herb, as with the other Savories. The flowers are much prized as nectar for honey-making bees.

The plant grows well in Alpine Gardens, on walls and in ceramic or clay pots. In hot, humid areas, give it excellent drainage and little water.



other workshop attendees. Educators may find events or activities finished early. Conrad said, “It is helpful to having something extra in your bag of tricks.”

Conrad, an agricultural specialist and veteran, described a full day, veterans’ livestock training event that included a fence-building activity. By 11 a.m., the host farmer was scrambling to find more fence posts and cable to take advantage of the highly efficient, free labor. Conrad said, “The farmer commented that his previous farm interns were never that energetic. That section of fencing would have taken them all day to complete!”

Veterans do not approach farming like traditional, civilian farmer audiences. Often characterized as “Warriors” in the Pearson-Marr archetypes, veterans are good at planning, are goal-oriented and value honor almost above all. Injury or pain does not concern them but veterans value safety tips learned in farmer training. They value and rise to a challenge. Veterans see farming challenges as something to defeat, slay or an obstacle to convert. Their goals are to win and to make a difference. Like other farmers, veterans struggle for what matters. They tend to shun weakness or incompetence. Presenters need to be “genuine” and know their subject matter. Veterans do not want a handout; they want to earn their own way. Many veterans wrestle with the warriors they have become. They do not shrug off their military experience.

Veterans tend to think and operate in teams of and share a sense of brotherhood developed from their experience of unit cohesiveness. They work to help other veterans and generally respect leadership structures. Military leaders have earned the right to lead their units and to give orders. As farmer educators, service providers need to earn and maintain their dominance in their instructor roles. Conrad urged educators to use specific examples, not generalities and minimize references to institutions or government agency abbreviations.

The most effective educators for veterans are other veterans. Conrad suggested educators work with successful veteran farmers as teachers and farm hosts. The veteran farmers who communicate well will engage other veterans as they share their experience, skills and knowledge.

Conrad NCAT’s “Armed to Farm: Sustainable Agriculture Training for Military Veterans” program in a workshop for beginning farmer educators at the Beginning Farmer Learning Network (BFLN) Conference in late

2014.

Armed to Farm

NCAT has offered sustainable farming education programs for veterans since 2010. Agricultural Specialists at NCAT’s regional offices in Texas, Arkansas, Pennsylvania and Montana are veterans of various wars spanning from the Viet Nam era to recent Afghani wars.

Training programs range from conference workshops, 2-day weekend workshops to weeklong immersion training. Many programs have a competitive application process. Participants pay their own travel costs to these programs. In most cases, the Armed to Farm program covers the costs of housing, most of the meals, materials and instruction through grant funding. Training scenarios include:

- Visits to farm sites
- Hands-on experience
- Business and financial planning
- Develop a resource network of peers and educators
- Fun
- Follow-up assistance and further training opportunities

Training sites should include some veteran-owned farms and value-added facilities. Conrad knows that this can be a challenge to arrange. His workshop evaluations indicate that veterans value peer training. Veterans should hear an overview of what they need to know then grab tools and “do” their lesson with minimal oversight. This may involve installing fencing, trimming animal hooves, erecting hi-tunnel structures or transplanting seedlings.

NCAT’s Armed to Farm educators introduce holistic farm planning and risk management concepts in their workshops. Whenever possible, veteran and their farm partners (spouse, older teenage child, parent, etc.) attend workshops as a team. This veteran team agrees on their farm goals as the basis for their farm business plan. Conrad said this team approach comes from the reality that no one “farms alone.”

In Conrad’s experience as an educator, weeklong intensive education programs, online training and 2-year Associate degree programs work well with veterans. Minimally structured internships or traditional 4-year Bachelor’s degree programs in residency settings do not typically appeal to veteran farmer, especially when veter-

ans have exhausted their VA educational benefits.

Learn More

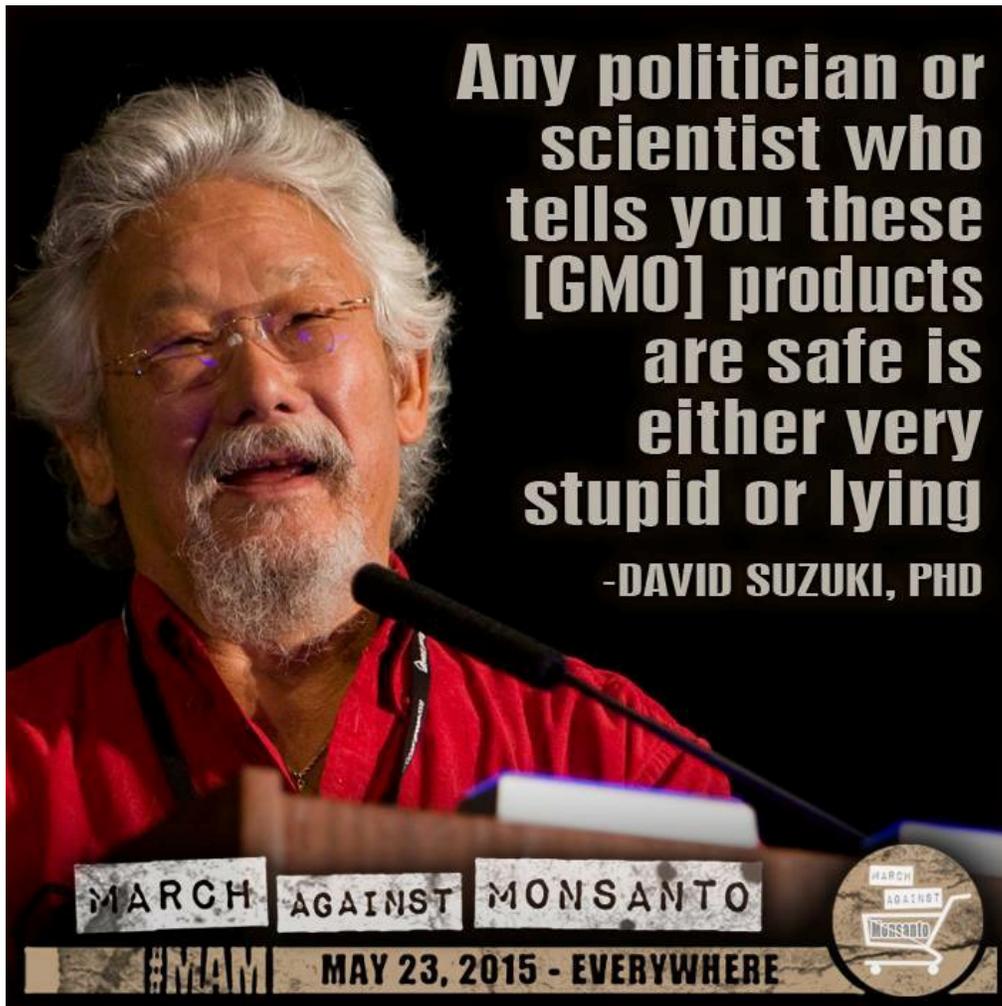
See sample beginning farmer resources and training materials for veterans at ncat.org/armedtofarm. Beginning this summer, NCAT and the Cornell University Small Farms program, Cooperative Extension, the state Veterans Affairs office and the Farmer Veteran Coalition will offer Armed to Farm training in New York state. NCAT's website will have more information and applications later this spring.

View Norm Conrad's presentation called "Veterans as Beginning Farmers" here. Send questions to Norm Conrad at normc@ncat.org.

The National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT) has been offering farmer training and curricula for veteran audiences for over six years. Online resources are available through the National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service (NSAIS) formerly known as ATTRA. (attra.ncat.org)

The Northeast Beginning Farmer Learning Network (BFLN) is managed by Cornell Small Farms Program and was funded by the USDA Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Development Program. The BFLN facilitates peer learning and collaboration among groups who serve beginning farmers to strengthen the support network for new farmers. BFLN Conference participants included beginning farmer service providers representing extension services, organizations and government agencies from nine states.

Sanne Kure-Jensen is a regular contributor to Country Folks, Country Folks Grower and Wine & Grape Grower agricultural newspapers. She is also a successful agricultural grant writer, organic grower and beekeeper in Portsmouth, Rhode Island. An environmental advocate for more than a decade, Sanne works with non-profit boards and town committees stewarding open space, local farms, public gardens and Narragansett Bay. You may Contact [Sanne](#) with your comments and questions.



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