

ORGANIC GARDENS *TODAY*

SUMMER 2014

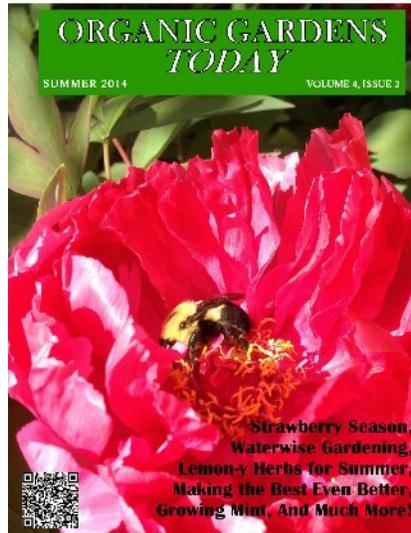
VOLUME 4, ISSUE 2



**Strawberry Season,
Waterwise Gardening,
Lemon-y Herbs for Summer,
Making the Best Even Better,
Growing Mint, And Much More!**



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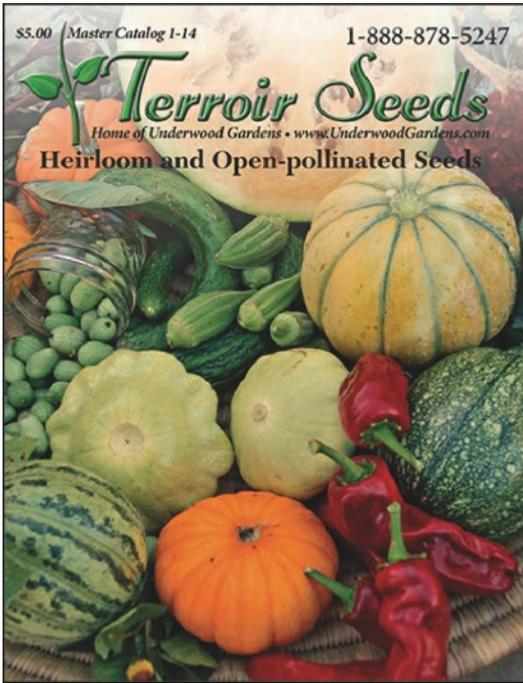
Organic Gardens Today
Magazine



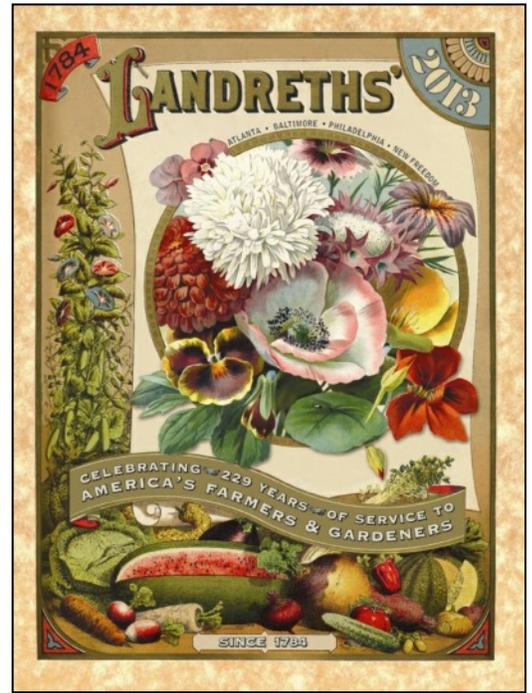
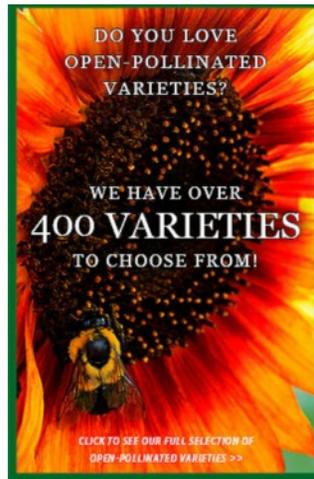
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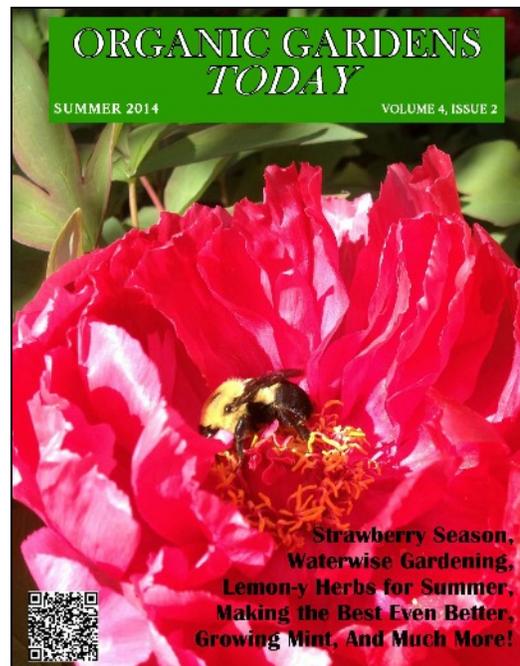
High Mowing Organic Seed



Organic Gardens Today would like to thank

Kim Daehnke

For the back page photo.



With the decline of bees across the globe, this year encourage bees to your garden, bumble bees included!

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From The Editor

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



As I sit here and compile the articles for the summer issue, I find myself asking “Where did the spring go?”. Winter held on for far too long in the Northeast, and only a week ago we were in the upper 80’s. Now I remember in my youth spring was a season, not just a short transition from winter to summer. Every Memorial Day weekend my parents would take us camping with the group of “regulars”, people I had known for all my young life, if only for that special weekend once per year. The nights were cool and crisp and the days were warm and sunny. Our big adventure was always kayaking down the Delaware river and splashing each other with the cold water. We considered the people floating down the river in inner tubes as “crazy” for being in that cold water! Nowadays I’m sure the water is quite warm and enjoyable, especially on 80 degree days.

One of my biggest duties as “The Gardening Guru” is to point fellow gardeners in the right direction when it comes to making organic choices. What I am starting in this issue is a “Questions and Answers” section where I will answer some of the questions you, our readers, send in to the magazine. Instead of communicating to only one person, hopefully I will help educate a whole group of gardeners at one time, explaining the how’s and why’s behind the answer as well. So if you have a question for me, send me an e-mail to editor@organicgardentoday.com and I will answer your question and may use it in a future issue.

What a great “March Against Monsanto” event in NYC on May 24th. It is always a good time to be with like-minded people explaining why we do this to the uninformed. There were 3,000 of us in NYC alone, not to mention the rest of the world. Every time there is a MAM event, it gets bigger and better as more people realize that Monsanto’s purpose with Genetically Modified Organisms is to control the world’s food supply while giving us, the consumer, a less nutritious often poisonous product for us to consume. For more info check out their website <http://www.march-against-monsanto.com/> for locations of the marches and how you can get involved for the Fall march.

If you like what we have accomplished with *Organic Gardens Today*, please **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.

David Daehuke, 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.



AL BENNER

Married to Deena Seligsohn Benner. Twin boys - Owen and Coleman 6 years old. Too many interests, too little time... Grew up in New Hope Solebury, PA. Attended college at Delaware Valley College in Doylestown, PA - BS in Ornamental Horticulture. Received an MBA at La-Salle University. Owner of three web businesses: www.OldSchoolFarmers.blogspot.com, www.BackyardFarmers.com, www.MossAcres.com, www.PurrfectFence.com. A founding partner for a self-sustaining residential real estate project in Costa Rica - www.FincaLasBrisas.org. Founder of www.BennersGardens.com - national supplier of deer fencing systems - company sold in Dec. 2006.



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), 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), 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



JANINE PATTISON

Janine Pattison MSGD is an award-winning UK garden designer and horticulturalist who trained with English Heritage at Eltham Palace in London and at Kingston Maurward College in Dorchester. A Registered Member of the Society of Garden Designers, the British Association of Landscape Industries and the Garden Media Guild, Janine is also a highly qualified RHS horticulturalist. Her practice is fast gaining a reputation for creating stylish, contemporary gardens often on difficult sites. www.janinepattison.com

www.organicgardentoday.com

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 gleaned. 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.



CINDY MEREDITH

Cindy Meredith is the owner of [The Herb Cottage](#), 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.



Home Grown Gardening Tips

GARDEN TIPS FOR JUNE

- * There is still time to plant water lilies in pools or in tubs (which are easy to move). Make sure you add goldfish to the water features to help cut down on mosquitoes.
- * Houseplants can be moved to summer quarters in a partially shaded section of the outdoor garden. Remember that they are in pots and need regular watering and feeding, especially if they are actively growing. Even better is to plunge to pots into the ground up to the lips of the pots.
- * There is still time to plant dahlia roots, but make sure to set the stakes in the ground at the same time.
- * When planting gladiolus corms, try to stagger the plantings by two weeks to create a succession of blooms.
- * Early flowering garden plants which spread rapidly, including Phlox, should be divided soon after they have flowered.
- * Portulacas a good old-fashioned, low growing flower for quick results in a hot, exposed situation. You can sow the seeds at this time or purchase flats at your local garden center.
- * Softwood cutting of woody plants are readily made at this time of year.
- * If grape hyacinths are permitted to go to seed, they will self-sow over a wide area, which is perfect for a naturalized setting.
- * The foliage of all early blooming bulbs should be left until it is limp or yellow. These plants are storing the energy (food) needed for blooming next spring.
- * The blooming stalks of irises should be removed once the flowers have faded. Do not permit them to go to seed.
- * This is a good time to sow seeds of perennials, and can be directly sown into the bed you wish them to grow. Remember that not all perennials come true from seed.
- * Break off the old flower heads from rhododendrons and laurels, taking care not to remove any of the branch.
- * Bedding plants of all kinds can be planted out now. Be sure to water the plants as well as the soil in which they are being planted for better survival rates.
- * Newly planted woody plants need an abundance of water to promote new top and root growth.
- * Experiments have shown that flowers, in particular roses, keep best if they are harvested late in the afternoon or evening. They should be plunged into water ASAP.
- * As you walk around your garden, take note of which plants need to be divided or moved in the fall and attach a small label to the plant to remind yourself.
- * Sweet corn can be planted now, and it will make rapid growth. A second planting can be made in the middle of the month.
- * When removing dandelions from your lawn by hand, remember that they are considered a fine eating green for your salad, and are actually grown for this purpose.
- * Lettuce will bolt (go to seed) in the heat of summer, so continue to harvest as much as possible before the bolt. A second crop of lettuce can be started in late July for a fall crop.
- * Peaches and plums can be thinned to one fruit to each six to eight inches of branch for peaches, less for plums, after their June drop.
- * Prune duetziyas, spireas, viburnums, and weigelias as soon as the blooming season is over. Japanese quince can also be pruned, but to a lighter extent.
- * Lawns should be kept well watered (town drought warnings kept in mind) during the dry spells. Cutting heights should also be raised to help shade the bases of the plants from the strong summer sun.

Home Grown Gardening Tips (continued)

GARDEN TIPS FOR JULY

* Bachelor buttons which have finished their first blooming period may often be made to flower again by shearing at least six inches from the tops of the plants.

* Dahlias require little artificial watering in a normal season but should be given water enough to soak the ground deeply once a week starting in late July.

* Keep the dead and dying foliage of hollyhocks cleared away from the base of the plants to help cut down on the transmission of diseases.

* Columbines in many varieties can be grown from seed, which should be sown an eighth of an inch deep and firmly pressed into the soil. The seed take three to four weeks to germinate and can be collected when the seed pods dry out.

* Most climbing roses are best pruned as soon as they have finished blooming. If they send up new shoots from the roots (not a grafted rose), you can prune most of the old canes out.

* Cuttings should be made of coleus, geraniums, ever-blooming begonias and any other plants that may be needed for the house next Winter. Root them in moist sand. Geraniums will root easier if you let them dry in a shady, airy place for several hours before putting them in the sand.

* Oriental poppies have become dormant by late July and can be divided with excellent success. Even if the roots are divided into 2 inch pieces and planted in a good soil, most of the will develop into new plants within a short period of time.

* Bearded irises may be divided and new plants set out at any time during the next two months.

* Peony seed pods should be removed. It will be beneficial to mix into the soil a high-phosphorous fertilizer which will help in making good strong eyes for next year.

* Wisterias can be pruned now and will be benefited by a hard pruning instead of a lighter trimming.

* It is not too late to start annuals for Fall blooming, including annual lupines, stock, godetias and Drummond's phlox.

* Watch grafted plants to see that no suckers grow up from beneath the grafted area. Such sucker should be removed at once by hand picking.

* Set your cutting height higher for your lawn during the hotter summer months. This will help shade the roots by keeping the ground cool, and give the plants more water storage area in the leaves.

* July is usually a dry month and watering is most likely necessary. Do not merely sprinkle the surface of the ground, but soak it thoroughly for the most benefit. A light sprinkle will only draw the roots closer to the surface.

GARDEN TIPS FOR AUGUST

* To have forget-me-nots in bloom early next season, the seed should be sown this month. They make an attractive underplanting for spring bulbs such as tulips.

* The Virginia bluebell, *Mertensia virginica*, can be divided at this time because the plant is in its dormant stage.

* The foliage of bleeding heart, *Dicentra spectabilis*, which has died and become unsightly should be removed and disposed of in the garbage.

* Peonies should be ordered now for September planting. Many Japanese varieties are choice and little known.

* Cuttings taken from English ivy now will produce good houseplants this Winter.

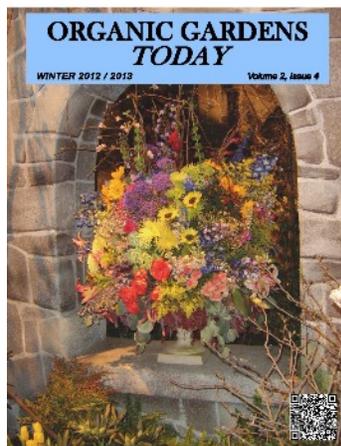
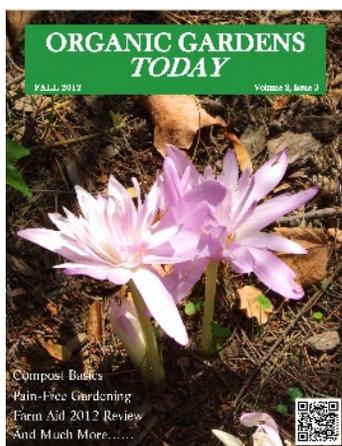
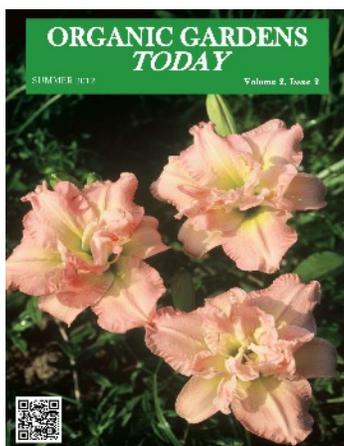
* When dividing irises, make a careful inspection for the iris borer and destroy any infested roots.

* Begin to order your Fall bulbs now. It is better to order early than to be disappointed when they are out of stock.

* Potatoes can be dug as soon as the tops have died. You can dig them as needed for they store better in the ground than in your house.

* Eggplants and peppers are now bearing. Keep the matured fruit picked so the younger ones will develop.

* Tie up cauliflower heads now by pulling the leaves over the top and fastening with a string. Then they will blanch properly.



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ORGANIC NEWS and NOTEWORTHY

Why your grandparents didn't have food allergies...but you do

Did your grandparents have food allergies? Mine sure didn't. A stark comparison to the growing epidemic of food allergies, worsening with every generation. So why didn't your grandparents have food allergies? It's really quite simple...

1) They ate seasonal real food.

Food came from farms and small markets in the early 1900's, and because food preservatives were not widely used yet, food was fresh. Because of the lack of processed food, their diets were nutrient dense allowing them to get the nutrition they needed from their food. For babies, breast milk was valued and it was always in season.

2) They didn't diet, and play restrictive games with their body and metabolism. They ate food when food was available.

Our grandparents did not fall victim to fad diets, food marketing, calorie counting, and other detrimental dieting habits that are popular today (in part because the marketing infrastructure didn't exist yet). Because of this they had a healthy metabolism, and ate according to their body's needs and cravings.

3) They cooked food at home, using traditional preparation methods from scratch.

Buying processed food was not an option, and eating out was a rare luxury. Lucky for our grandparents these habits actually increased their health.

4) They didn't eat GMO's, food additives, stabilizers and thickeners.

Food was not yet treated with additives, antibiotics and hormones to help preserve shelf life and pad the pockets of food producers in the early 1900's at the expense of the consumer's health.

5) They ate the whole animal that included mineral rich bone broths and organ meats.

Animal bones were saved or bought to make broths and soups, and organ meats always had a special place at the dinner table. These foods were valued for their medicinal properties, and never went to waste.

6) They didn't go to the doctor when they felt sick or take prescription medications. Doctor visits were saved for accidental injuries and life threatening illness. When they got a fever, they waited it out. When they felt sick, they ate soups, broths and got lots of rest. They did not have their doctor or nurse on speed dial, and trusted the body's natural healing process a whole lot more than we do today. Their food was medicine, whether they realized it or not.

7) They spent lots of time outside.

Our grandparents didn't have the choice to stay inside and play on their phones, computers and gaming systems. They played on the original play-station: bikes, swing-sets and good ol' mother nature!

Source: [Healthy Holistic Living](#)

GMO Crop System Boosts Yields, Improves Soil Quality With Far Less Herbicides and Fertilizers

According to a recent study conducted by an Iowa State University agronomist, diverse non-genetically modified crop rotation systems can provide a variety of benefits to farmers and perform better than their genetically modified (or GMO for genetically modified organism) crop system counterparts.

Research for the study began in 2002 according to this article and was conducted by Matt Liebman, an ISU agronomy professor, using a 22-acre field on ISU's Marsden Farm for experimental purposes.

The study added in a comparison of GMO and non-GMO corn and soybeans in 2008. Six crop rotation and technology system combinations were tested and evaluated from 2008-2012, and a system involving corn, soybeans, oats, and red clover that did not use any GM crops came out as the winner for overall profitability.

In addition, the more diversified three and four-year crop rotation systems with organic additions such as oats and manure produced higher yields of corn and soybeans and were able to keep weeds at bay more effectively than GMO corn-soybean rotation systems.

These systems also used far less synthetic fertilizers and herbicides. Diversifying the crop-growing operations also resulted in better soil quality by several measures.

ORGANIC NEWS and NOTEWORTHY

Currently, many farmers who grow GMO crops do so in mono cultures without rotating to non-GMO crops, which is just one practice that often results in widespread pest problems like in Illinois where rootworms were found to be ravaging GMO corn crops.

The study was funded in part through the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture's program for competitive grants and can be viewed [here](#).

The Leopold Center has been active in supporting research in Iowa, where GMO corn and soybeans are highly prevalent. In 1998, they funded a Costs and Returns survey that was conducted by the Iowa Agricultural Statistics Service using personal interviews with farmers to study their crop production practices.

Surveys of over 350 corn and soy fields each eventually found that the use of GMO crops "did not influence profitability," and that the use of GMO soybeans resulted in lower yields with lower costs while GMO corn had higher yields with higher costs. In total, returns on GMO and non-GMO crops were virtually identical.

It should also be noted that chemical-resistant weeds and pests have both hurt GMO farmers in recent years since that survey was conducted, reducing yields and forcing farmers to buy more and more chemicals. Many farmers say that yields go up at first but then level off and result in higher costs later as they become stuck on a "chemical treadmill" of sorts.

A 2008 report by the Leopold Center also found that "whole-farm returns to management for the organic farm are higher than the returns to the (GMO) corn-soybean producer," but organic farmers worked more in the fields.

Source: [ALTHEALTH WORKS](#)

You Won't Believe What Is Found In 75% Of Air & Rain Samples

A new U.S. Geological Survey has concluded that pesticides can be found in, well, just about anything.

R

Roundup herbicide, Monsanto's flagship weed killer, was present in 75 percent of air and rainfall test samples, according to the study, which focused on Mississippi's highly fertile Delta agricultural region.

GreenMedInfo reports new research, soon to be published by Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry journal, discovered the traces over a 12-year span from 1995-2007.

In recent years, Roundup was found to be even more toxic than it was when first approved for agricultural use, though that discovery has not led to any changes in regulation of the pesticide. Moreover, Roundup's over-use has enabled weeds and insects to build an immunity to its harsh toxins.

To deal with the immunity issue, Monsanto's solution has been to spray more and stronger pesticides to eliminate the problem. The health effects of Roundup are also hard to ignore as research has linked exposure to the pesticide to Parkinson's disease and various cancers. For instance, children in Argentina, where Roundup is used in high concentrations, struggle with health problems, with 80 percent showing signs of the toxins in their bloodstreams.

However, Roundup isn't the only widespread threat to public health. The U.S. Geological Survey, along with others, have identified additional pesticides in the air and water that become more toxic as they mix and come in contact with people. Spraying Roundup may have short-term economic benefits for Monsanto, but the potential long-term risks could present significant challenges to people in affected regions of the country.

Source: [HIGHER PERSPECTIVE](#)



Questions and Answers

By David Daehnke

Q: I have tons of roses on my property. Is there an organic alternative to keep the pests and diseases at bay?

Joan from Fort Dodge, Iowa

A: Being an organic gardener, I have been dismayed by the infinite amount of chemical controls that are used to care for roses. As I always tell people at my lectures, if a chemical is used to kill something (namely an insect pest, a disease, or a weed), it is probably not good for us either. I've put together some of my favorite, non-toxic methods for insuring a happy and healthy rose garden to make sure that you remain happy and healthy. These solutions have worked for me for a number of years, and I've included some solutions that can even be made in your home with common, everyday materials.

Many gardeners suffer from aphids destroying the leaves on their rose bushes, making the plant unhealthy and stressed. A blast from the hose will take care of most aphid problems, but for a heavy infestation, try this recipe: Mix one tablespoon canola oil and a few drops of biodegradable dish soap into a quart of water. Shake well and pour into a spray bottle. Spray the trouble spots, especially buds and under the leaves. The other major problem insect wise for rose bushes is Japanese beetles. Instead of buying a hormone trap that will draw Japanese beetles to your property, use your God-given insect control: your thumb and forefinger. If you are squeamish, put on a pair of gloves before removing the beetles. When you are picking the beetles, bring a small jar that is one-third filled with rubbing alcohol. Pick the beetles and drop them into the jar, and you will never have to worry about the beetles again.

Powdery mildew is a major disease along with black spot. The best way to take care of both diseases is to prune your rose bushes properly, so that air will flow through the plant, eliminating areas where the air can become stagnant, and the spores can have the time to attach themselves to the leaves. Secondly, a tidy gardener is also the best defense against disease problems. If you see a rose bush with the beginnings of black spot, gently remove the leaves and discard into the garbage. Do not add these leaves to the compost pile, as the disease will over winter in the compost and be present when you top dress the plants in spring. Three sprays that can reduce the prevalence of disease are Wilt-Pruf

and my homegrown mix. Wilt-Pruf is used in the winter on broad-leaved evergreens to prevent desiccation in the winter. During the growing season a monthly spray on roses and lilacs will put a barrier on the leaves, deterring the spores from attaching. The homemade mix for powdery mildew is half milk and half water in a spray bottle and spray problem areas (especially tender new growth). Spray the roses weekly for problem plants, or twice monthly to help prevent problems. Finally, for black spot, combine two tablespoons of baking soda into a quart of water and spray the plant (top and undersides of leaves). Repeat once a week. Honestly, as silly as these homemade recipes may sound, both concoctions work very well!

When planning where to plant roses, try to shy away from planting them up against a wall or in a secluded corner of your garden. Air flow is minimized in these areas and these plants will always have problems with diseases.

Lastly, a happy and healthy plant is better enabled to fight off disease and quicker to recover from insect damage. Instead of using Miracle Gro, use either bone meal or a regular 5-10-5 fertilizer, both of which are organic. Organic fertilizers break down in the soil just like Mother Nature would do, which means a more balance, even feeding.

Try these recommendations this year, and I am sure you will be a convert for many years to come.

Q: I am trying to reduce the amount of store-bought pesticides I use, but cannot find any homemade recipes that would be safer for me and my family. What do you suggest? Mark from Hendersonville, Tennessee

A: Most chemical pesticides are toxic to humans as well as pets and small animals that may enter your yard or garden. Hopefully the readers of OGT know better. Anything that you apply to kill something cannot have a beneficial effect for you. That's why homemade pesticides make a lot more sense.

Here are a few of the most common homemade pesticide recipes for your houseplants, yard and garden.

Ants

This is my personal favorite. When you see the small "sugar" ants on your cabinet or outside, mix two parts molasses, 1 part sugar and one part bread or brewers'

yeast, and set this mix where the ants are. When they ingest the mixture, the sugar activates the yeast and the ants “pop”.

Snails and Slugs

Diatomaceous earth is a powder-like dust made of tiny marine organisms called diatoms. It is effective on soft-bodied insects as well as snails and slugs. Just spread it on top of the soil and it works by cutting and irritating these soft organisms yet is harmless to other organisms. You can also put out shallow dishes of beer to trap snails and slugs, where they die a happy inebriated death. Also a ring of granular lime around your plants will do the same as diatomaceous earth, but cost a lot less.

To Keep Bugs Away

This is the safest natural pesticide for any home gardener and is effective on a variety of bugs and insects. Mix 3 tablespoons of liquid detergent into a gallon of water. Use in a sprayer bottle for houseplants. This also works for aphids and whiteflies on outside plants, plus it will help keep your leaves clean and allow for proper release of oxygen from the leaves pores. Also try mixing 1 clove garlic, 1 small hot pepper and 1 quart water in a blender. Pour into a spray bottle and apply to plants. Putting hot sauce on a cotton ball in a house plant pot will also repel pests.

To Control Garden Pests

Gather together a collection of dead bugs, crush them up and mix with water. Strain the mix until it will come out of a spray bottle. Only use this mix outside.

Spearmint Hot Pepper Horseradish Spray

This is effective on many different kinds of outside bugs and insects and should be an outside spray. You need 1/4 cup of hot red peppers, 1/2 gallon water, 1/4 cup of fresh spearmint, 1/4 cup horseradish, both root and leaves, 1 tablespoons of liquid detergent, 1/4 cup green onion tops (sounds like a great hot sauce). Mix the spearmint leaves, horseradish, onion tops and peppers together with enough water to cover everything. Then strain the solution. Add a half-gallon of water and the detergent. You can use this to spray almost any plant safely. Store the mixture for a few days in a cool place.

Natural pesticides can work well for any home gardener and are much safer for you and your family. After you try a few of these recipes you'll understand that they really work. If you want to control pests naturally in-

stead of chemically, homemade pesticides may be the ideal choice for you, and you too can share this information with you neighbors and start a new revolution of chemical free insect control.

Q: I've heard that proper landscaping can help cut down the cost of heating and cooling during the summer and winter months. After last winter I could use any suggestions you have to reduce my costs! Tom from Utica, New York

A: Yes, by placing trees, shrubs, vines and landscape structures properly, homeowners can reduce the energy required to keep homes comfortable during winter and summer. Along with the reduction of energy bills, a well-planned landscape adds beauty, interest and increased property values. According to one government study, winter heating bills may be reduced by as much as 15 percent, while summer cooling energy needs may be cut by as much as 50 percent. Houses gain or lose heat in 3 basic ways, by either *air infiltration* (passage of air through cracks and around doors or through open windows and doors, which can account for 20 to 30% loss in winter), *heat conduction* (conduction of heat through materials of which the house is built, which can account for 50% of the heat transfer either in or out), and *solar radiation* (heat is transmitted into homes by penetration of the sun's rays, aka the warmth you feel by a window in the winter from the sun). Air infiltration can be reduced by simply caulking around your windows and doors. Heat conduction can be reduced by making sure the walls and attic of your home is properly insulated. Solar radiation can be a blessing in winter, but a major problem in the summer.

Three basic landscape applications which have proven to save energy are: (1) the use of shade trees, (2) windbreaks, and (3) the use of foundation plants. Trees can reduce summer temperatures significantly. Shading the roof of a house from the afternoon sun by large trees can reduce temperatures inside the home by as much as 8 to 10 degrees F. Deciduous trees provide summer shade, then drop their leaves in the fall. This allows the warmth of the sun to filter through their bare branches in winter and helps warm the home. If a home can be situated to take advantage of shade from existing trees on southeast and west exposures, energy expended to cool the house can be reduced. If there are no existing trees, the owner can select and place trees that ultimately will provide shade. The temptation is to plant

the fastest growing species available. However, this is usually a poor choice for several reasons. Trees that grow at more moderate rates usually live longer, are less likely to break in wind and ice storms, and are often more resistant to insects and diseases.

Although hedges or windbreaks have been utilized for many years, their value has increased with the advent of higher fuel costs. Winter winds in New Jersey usually blow from the northwest and accelerate the rate of air exchange between a house and the outdoor environment. Savings of up to 23 percent have been recorded in comparing completely exposed homes and a house landscaped to minimize air infiltration. Tall trees on the south and west can reduce temperature while allowing breeze to pass beneath and through the foliage canopy. Windbreaks obstruct and redirect the flow of wind. As wind strikes an obstruction, it can move over, around or through it. Impenetrable windbreaks (walls, solid fences) create a strong vacuum on the protected side, which reduces the protection. Windbreaks composed of living plants allow some of the wind to penetrate, which makes them more effective.

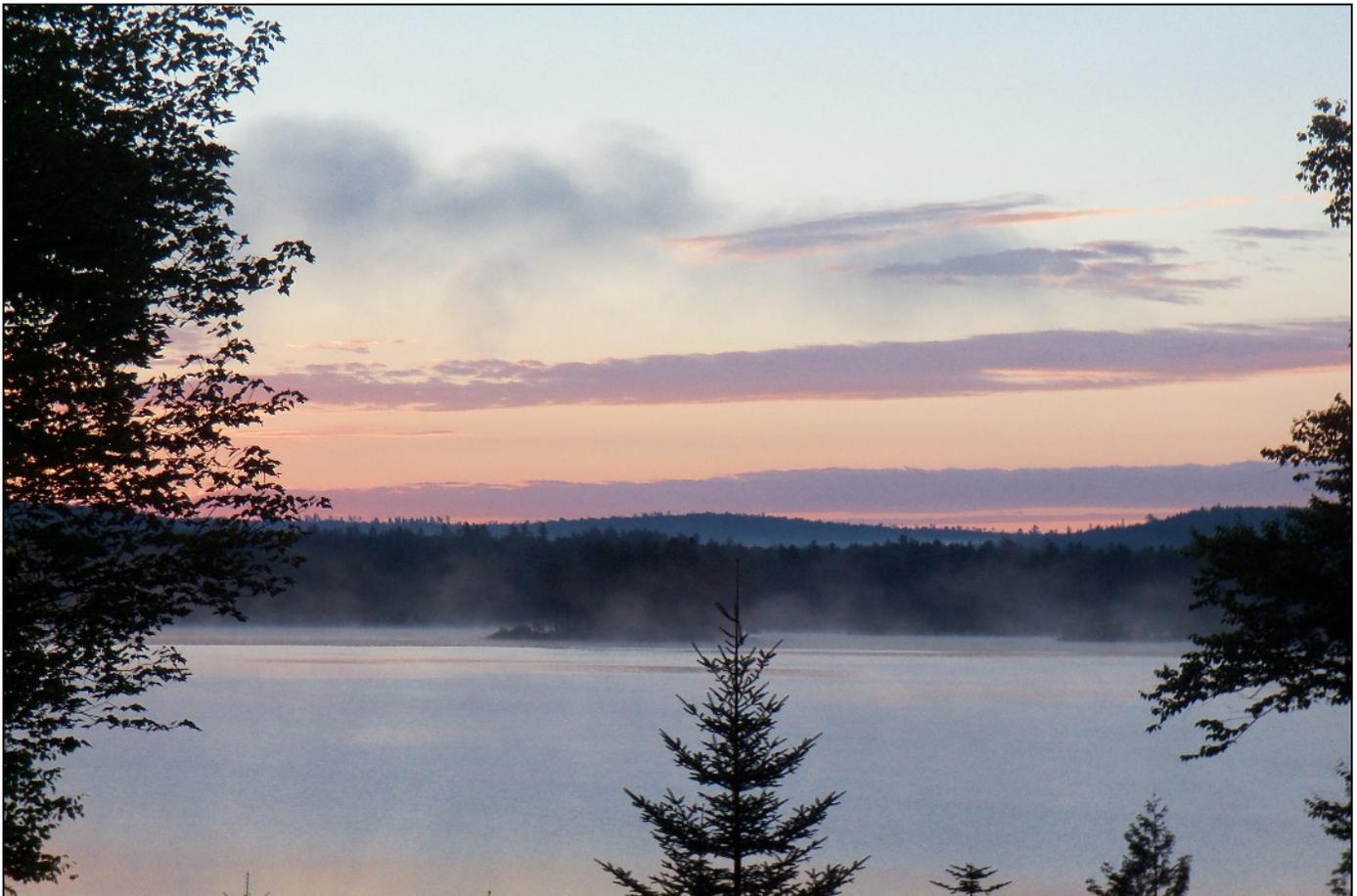
In addition to traditional windbreaks, shrubs can also be used closer to the home for winter protection. This

is more practical for small areas and subdivision lots where space does not allow the use of conventional windbreaks. For this type of protection, a combination of dense evergreen plants and groundcovers are most appropriate. They should be planted close enough to eventually form a solid wall and far enough away from the house (about 4 to 5 feet, minimum) to create a dead air space. This relatively still or dead air has much less cooling power than moving air which can decrease the loss of that through the walls.

With these few landscaping suggestions, your home will be warm and toasty this winter.

If you would like your gardening question answered, send your question to editor@organicgardentoday.com. I will respond to your question quickly and maybe your question will be in the next issue of Organic Gardens Today Magazine!

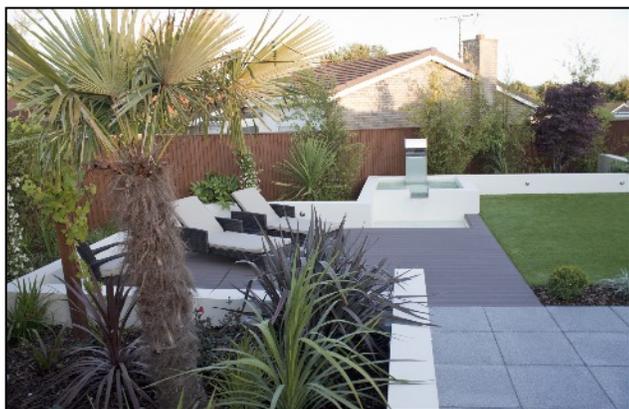
Dave



Waterwise Gardening

By Janine Pattison

After what has been, for many of us, a very long and wet winter it may seem strange to be talking about preparing our gardens for possible water shortages this summer. For most people hot dry weather is a time to connect up the hosepipe to the mains tap and pour as much water as required onto the lawn, borders and vegetable garden. Some people may have water butts to collect water from roofs of sheds or greenhouse and a small number of people may have boreholes but most of us rely on the garden tap. I believe that our current reliance on tap water for watering our gardens is simply not a sustainable practice and that we need to adapt new ways of gardening in order to be more sustainable and environmentally friendly.



How do we adapt our gardens and gardening activities to be more 'waterwise'? Well there are many things we can do to be more efficient in our use of water. The principle to 'reuse, recycle, reduce' is a good one.

Reusing water is a great idea and a large amount of waste water generated in the home could be reused in the garden. Water from baths, showers and kitchen taps can be diverted from the drain and onto the garden. Water from dishwaters and washing machines may contain too much salt and detergent but it is worth checking to see if it can be reused.

Water from roofs can be collected and recycled very easily. Rain water is very acceptable to plants because it is 'soft' - this simply means it has low amounts of minerals in it. Ericaceous plants like rhododendrons, camellias and magnolias will appreciate being watered with harvested rainwater rather than tap water and will

maintain good dark green leaf color much better this way.

Reducing our requirement for water is more difficult and may require a more radical change in behavior. Firstly we should take a look at what we grow and consider its water requirements; is there an option to grow more suitable plants in that location which will have lower water demands. The obvious area to consider in certain parts of the world is whether maintaining a resource-hungry lawn is a good idea. Our beds and borders filled with trees, shrubs, grasses, perennials, annuals and climbers are often high consumers of water. Perhaps there are better choices we could make for plants with lower water needs. Could we substitute some annuals for more hardy shrubs, grasses or perennials? Often native plants are better adapted to an area and can perform very well on the available rainfall or with minimal additional watering.

Good gardening practices will reduce the plants need for water in the longer term. Adding copious amounts of well-rotted compost (ideally homemade) will help the soil be more resilient to period of water shortage. The organic matter soaks up moisture and then releases it slowly to the roots; acting rather like a sponge. Give newly planted plants plenty of water during their first season of growth to encourage them to get established. Once established they will be better able to fend for themselves and may only need additional watering during really dry periods. If you are prepared to plant smaller plants and wait for them to grow you will often end up with better established plants which require less maintenance. Trees are especially good value if planted small and allowed time to grow - within a few years a young well-planted tree will often outstrip a larger specimen if both are planted at the same time.

The way that you water also has an impact on developing the plants resilience to periods of drought. Regular light watering encourages dependence on manual watering and the plant may keep its roots very close to the surface. This plant will be vulnerable if the watering stops. Giving less frequent but heavier watering will encourage the plant to put down deeper roots to search for moisture and will make it more self sufficient and less vulnerable to damage.

Lawns are major consumers of water in the summer and it is astonishing how much water a sprinkler can use in a few hours of use. Much of this water will be

lost to evaporation so at the very least, water in the evening to give the soil chance to absorb most of the moisture. Adding a timer to the sprinkler is an easy way to avoid over-watering as it can switch off automatically after a predetermined time.

Many people have now realized the benefits of using organic matter as a mulch between their plants. This can be shredded or chipped bark or any well-rotted farm or stable manure. This mulch will insulate the plants roots from extremes of temperature, conserve moisture in the soil and will suppress the growth of weeds. Just remember to water the soil well before applying the mulch otherwise you could prevent water reaching the roots as the mulch will absorb a huge amount of water in the beginning.

Containers and hanging baskets require lots of water to keep them looking good, especially if filled with traditional annuals. Consider using plants with lower water needs. Mediterranean plants like lavender, rosemary and sage are adapted to low water conditions. As are succulents like sedums and echiveras and these can make quirky and interesting displays. Water-retaining crystals can hold moisture and prevent water running straight

through the container and going to waste. Lining porous containers with plastic will reduce the amount of watering needed but remember to punch some holes in the bottom to allow for drainage.

Being a 'waterwise' gardener will help reduce the environmental cost of using drinking water to irrigate your plants, will help your plants grow better and will also save you money. Giving you more money to spend on other things in the garden!

Janine Pattison MSGD is an award-winning UK garden designer and horticulturalist who trained with English Heritage at Eltham Palace in London and at Kingston Maurward College in Dorchester. A Registered Member of the Society of Garden Designers, the British Association of Landscape Industries and the Garden Media Guild, Janine is also a highly qualified RHS horticulturalist. Her practice is fast gaining a reputation for creating stylish, contemporary gardens often on difficult sites. www.janinepattison.com



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Strawberry Season

By Daisy Luther

Strawberry season is in full swing. Now is the time to stock up on those delicious vivid red berries!

Some strawberry trivia: Strawberries are not actually a fruit, but a member of the rose family. They are the receptacle of the flower and were first cultivated for eating in ancient Rome. Native Americans called them “heart seed berries” and baked them into cornbread.

Health Benefits

Besides that spectacular taste, why should you eat strawberries?

* A one cup serving of strawberries provides 100% of the RDA of Vitamin C. Vitamin C is a powerful antioxidant and immune system booster.

* Strawberries help protect against heart disease by protecting the blood vessels from oxidative damage and inflammation. The phytochemicals that are abundant in strawberries counteract the effects of low-density lipoprotein (LDL or “bad” cholesterol), which aids in reducing the plaque buildup in the arteries.

* Regular consumption of strawberries can lower a person’s risk of Type 2 Diabetes by aiding in blood sugar regulation response.

* There is some evidence that strawberries can reduce symptoms of inflammatory bowel problems like IBS, ulcerative colitis, and Crohn’s disease.

* The antioxidants in strawberries can defend against cancer. Vitamin C, ellagic acid, lutein, and zeaxanthins have been proven to suppress the growth of cancer cells. Strawberries are also loaded with other valuable nutrients, like potassium, fiber, and magnesium.

* A one cup serving of strawberries contains only 52 calories, a great benefit if you’re trying to lose a few pounds.

Growing Strawberries

Strawberries are fun and easy to grow. Best of all, they’re a perennial, so you don’t have to plant them every year – they just magically start blossoming come

spring. The first year, don’t expect an abundant harvest – but after that, you may just end up with more strawberries than you can eat! You can learn everything you need to know about growing strawberries [HERE](#).

If you don’t live some place where you can grow them as perennials, don’t despair. Certain varieties flourish in pots and hanging baskets. Some urban farmers overwinter their containers and set them out again in the spring with good results. Learn more about growing strawberries in containers [HERE](#).

The obvious benefits of growing your own strawberries are the great price and the fact that you have control over the farming method – no nasty pesticides for you!



Washing and Storing Fresh Strawberries

Moisture is the enemy when it comes to keeping your strawberries. It is best to store them in the refrigerator (not in the crisper) and wash them just before eating them. This reduces the rate at which the strawberries will mold.

If you want to store them already washed, line a baking sheet with paper towels. Gently dry your strawberries and then place them on the baking sheet. This will absorb moisture and keep them fresh for longer.

I recommend organic strawberries if possible. Here’s why:

For example, don’t be fooled by those juicy non-organic strawberries displayed in the market. They may look luscious, but they have a dark side. Their red color has been enhanced by a fungicide and they have been infused with methyl bromide, a gas that is injected by

tractor into their growing soil. These substances then become part of fruits' flesh, and can't be washed off.

This being said, not all conventional strawberries are grown this way. I often get strawberries from the farmer's market that are non-organic because I've been able to ask the farmer about his or her growing process. There is a world of difference between a small local farm conventional strawberry and a grocery store shipped-across-the-planet strawberry. Don't be afraid to ask questions. Most farmers really enjoy talking about the growing process.

How to Preserve Strawberries

Now for the really fun part – let's talk about what you can do when your strawberry bounty is too abundant for you to eat them all before they spoil! We'll discuss 3 methods of strawberry preservation.

Dehydration

Dried Berries

* To dehydrate strawberries, there is a little bit of prep work. Wash them as described above, then place them in the fridge on a paper-towel lined cookie sheet for at least an hour.

* Remove them from the refrigerator. Remove the stem end and thinly slice the berries long ways, about 1/8 to 1/4 inch in thickness. Place the slices in a single layer on the racks of the dehydrator.

* Dry according to the directions for your dehydrator. I have an inexpensive one and it usually requires an overnight stay in there (about 8-10 hours) to get the berries sufficiently dry.

* The dried strawberries are great in trail mix or rehydrated for baking. If you expect to have them for long, you'd be wise to hide them from your children because mine seem to think that they are candy.

Fruit Leather

* If you have some mushy strawberries, don't despair: you can still use your dehydrator.

* Remove the stems and place them in the blender to puree them. At this point, you can add another

fruit if you want to – pears, apples, other berries or bananas make a tasty mixture.

* Line your dehydrator shelves with parchment paper. Pour the puree in a thin layer on the parchment. I space big glops of puree on the parchment – I find this dries a little bit better than covering the entire parchment.

* After 12 hours, you will have a delicious, home-made fruit leather with no artificial colors, flavors, or sugar.

Freezing

* Wash the berries as outlined above. Remove the stems.

* You can either halve the berries, slice them, or leave them whole.

* Place them in a single layer on a cookie sheet in the freezer. Once they're frozen, place them in a large freezer bag for use in smoothies or baking.

Canning

My favorite method of preserving anything is canning! Strawberries are sufficiently acidic, so you can use your water bath canner for strawberries.

Strawberry Jam

Ingredients

8 cups of strawberries

1 packet of pectin + 1/4 of a package (I like to use the no-sugar-needed, but then still add sugar – just less!)

4 cups of sugar (I use organic turbinado sugar)

1 tbsp of lemon juice

Directions

Prep your strawberries by washing them and removing the stems

Smush your berries. You can do this with a potato masher, food processor, blender or food mill. Some people like to puree them and have a smoother jam and



Directions

- 1 - Prep your strawberries by washing them and removing the stems.
- 2 - Smash your berries. You can do this with a potato masher, food processor, blender or food mill. Some people like to puree them and have a smoother jam and others like chunkier jam – it's up to personal preference.
- 3 - In a small bowl, use a fork to mix $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the sugar with one packet of pectin.
- 4 - In a saucepan, stir the fruit, lemon juice and pectin together well.
- 5 - Bring the mixture to a boil over medium heat, stirring frequently.
- 6 - Once it is boiling, stir in the sugar and return to a boil for one minute.
- 7 - Test your jam...(see below!) If isn't the proper consistency add the other quarter packet of pectin, simmer for another minute, then retest.
- 8 - Ladle the jam carefully into your awaiting sanitized jars, wipe the rim and cap your jars with snap lids and rings.
- 9 - Process in a water bath canner for 10 minutes, adjusting for altitude.

Jam Making Rule of Law:

Always test your jam!!!!

How?

You do this by keeping a spoon in the freezer – to test, drip a bit of the hot jam into the spoon to allow it to quick cool – the consistency it reaches is the consistency your finished product will be. At this point, I nearly always end up adding another $\frac{1}{4}$ – $\frac{1}{2}$ package of pectin – I use the cheaper pectin to “top it up” – return to a simmer for a couple of minutes and test again. Omitting this step may result in a very tasty ice cream topping or waffle syrup, but not jam!

Canned Strawberry Filling

These jars full of deliciousness can be used for pie filling, ice cream topping, stirred into yogurt, or for a mid-winter treat of strawberry shortcake. (My October baby likes strawberry shortcake on her birthday!) This recipe doesn't even resemble the gelatinous goop you get in cans at the grocery store.

Ingredients

- 6 pounds of strawberries
- 4 cups of sugar (I use organic turbinado sugar)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 packet of pectin (The USDA recommends a modified cornstarch called Clear Jel, which I have never tried)
- 6 cups of red grape juice
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of lemon juice

Directions

- 1 - Prep your strawberries by washing them and removing the stems
- 2 - Slice your berries or cut them into halves or quarters, depending on your preference. I like chunkier pieces of berry.
- 3 - In a small bowl, use a fork to mix $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the sugar with half the packet of pectin.
- 4 - In a saucepan, stir the fruit, lemon juice, grape juice and pectin together well.
- 5 - Bring the mixture to a boil over medium heat, stirring frequently.

- 6 - Once it is boiling, stir in the sugar and return to a boil for one minute.
- 7 - You may get a weird pink foam on top – just skim it off and discard it.
- 8 - Test the consistency to see if it is what you are looking for. If isn't the proper consistency add the other half packet of pectin, simmer for another minute, then retest. Keep in mind that when it's time to make your pie/cake/concoction, you can whisk in some cornstarch to thicken it further if needed.
- 9 - Ladle the filling into your awaiting sanitized jars, wipe the rim and cap your jars with snap lids and rings.
- 10 - Process in a water bath canner for 30 minutes, adjusting for altitude.

Daisy Luther is a freelance writer and editor. Her website, [The Organic Prepper](http://TheOrganicPrepper.com), offers information on healthy prepping, including premium nutritional choices, general wellness and non-tech solutions. You can follow Daisy on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/daisy.luther) and [Twitter](https://twitter.com/daisy_luther), and you can email her at daisy@theorganicprepper.ca





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Lemon-y Herbs for Summer

By Cindy Meredith

Lemon flavored herbs are great for summer: they make light and refreshing iced tea, add bright notes to grilled fish and seafood and combine well with salads.

Here are my favorites!



Lemon Verbena, *Aloysia citrodora*

A perennial shrub from 3 to 6 feet tall, Lemon Verbena is also known as Lemon Beebrush due to its attraction to bees when in flower.

The leaves will freeze and fall off the plant at 32 deg. F, but the wood is said to be hardy to -10 deg. F. Since I don't live where it gets that cold, I have no experience with such low temperatures. I do know, my Lemon Verbena comes back every Spring on the old wood. So, if yours freezes, do not prune the woody stems all the way down. Prune for shape, if you like, but know new leaves will soon populate the old, woody stems.

In containers, I've found the smaller woody stems to also freeze, but new growth reliably comes from the root system.

Lemon Verbena can be a bit of a lanky, leggy grower and a bit of Spring pruning can help shape the plant. Left on its own, it's not the most attractive plant in the herb garden. The flavor of Lemon Verbena, however, easily makes up for any lack of physical beauty.

In the garden in the Southern US, give Lemon Verbena some afternoon shade and it'll be very happy, providing you with lots of leaves for tea and cooking. If you have a bee garden, Lemon Verbena is a good addition. The flowers are very attractive to our little pollinating friends. It makes sprays of white to pinkish flowers. Very attractive in arrangements, too.

I like to refer to Lemon Verbena as The Queen of Lemon Herbs! Its flavor and scent is most like a real lemon, giving it the ability to make terrific tea, hot or iced. Used in cakes and cookies, it adds a distinct lemon flavor.

Here's a recipe I found using Lemon Verbena in a muffin recipe with another summer favorite, zucchini:

Lemon Verbena and Nut Muffins

2 cups flour
1/2 cup sugar
1 Tbsp baking powder
1 tsp salt
2 Tbsp grated lemon peel
1/2 tsp cinnamon
1 cup chopped pecans
2 eggs
1/2 cup milk
1/3 cup oil
1 cup packed shredded zucchini - do not drain
12 lemon verbena leaves, sliced finely

Into a large bowl, put the flour, sugar, baking powder, salt, lemon peel, cinnamon and nuts.

In another bowl, beat the eggs with a fork, beating in the milk and the oil.

Add to the flour mix and stir well.

Then add the zucchini and lemon verbena and stir all together.

Grease mini-muffin tins and then fill 3/4 full.

Bake at 400 deg. F for 15-20 minutes, depending on the size of the tins.

Test with toothpick.

Glaze: juice the 2 lemons from above and add enough confectioners sugar to make a thin glaze. While the muffins are still hot, dip the tops in the glaze and set on wire rack to drain.

Recipe from In the Kitchen at Shale Hill Farm



Lemon Basil, *Ocimum x citriodorum*

Many people don't realize there is more to basil than simply the Italian or Sweet variety that is so popular for Pesto and other cooking applications. There is Lemon, Lime, various red and purple leaved varieties, African of several types, holy basil or Tulsi from India, Cinnamon, Licorice, Thai and more. Lemon and Lime are similar in that they have a soft and fruity aroma and flavor. Lemon Basil is said to be a cross between standard Basil and African Basil.

Lemon Basil is grown in Northeastern Africa and Southern Asia for culinary purposes. In Laos, it is used in a popular stew called a 'lam' and in Indonesia it is called 'kemangi' and is said to be the only basil used.

It grows like the other basil types, likes warm weather, lots of sun and is not particularly drought tolerant. The leaves are narrower than the Italian types. It's flowers are white and attractive to bees. As with the other basil, it makes a nice container plant or addition to the herb or flower bed.

Use Lemon Basil instead of your traditional basil for pesto, either alone or mixed half and half with parsley or even standard basil. Then try it on pasta, to top steamed, roasted or grilled vegetables or in iced tea for a different flavor. Here's an easy [Basil Pesto Recipe](#) which can be adapted by using varied combinations of leafy green herbs such as Lemon Basil, Parsely or even Lime Basil.

If using chopped Lemon Basil in a dish, add it to the food at the very end of cooking as the flavor cooks out rapidly. Or, simply sprinkle the chopped herb over your dish for a burst of lemony basil flavor. Sautéed Spring or Summer vegetables tossed with Lemon Basil is easy and flavorful to mix with pasta, quinoa or couscous.



Lemon Thyme, *Thymus citriodora*

Ah, Lemon Thyme! If you like lemon and savory flavors, then Lemon Thyme is the herb for you. It is so delicious with grilled or steamed vegetables, chicken- stuff it under the skin of a breast portion- and in dips and spreads. Try in with salmon, trout and shrimp.

Lemon Thyme, a variety of the common thyme, *Thymus vulgaris*, is a perennial herb in most areas. It comes in a couple of types. There is a green variety then there is the Variegated Lemon Thyme with bright green leaves edged in gold. Both have a bright lemony scent and flavor. Lemon Thyme, like the other thymes, grows low to the ground, needs really good drainage and, in the Southern US, grows best with afternoon shade in

the summer. The variegated variety is not as winter hardy as the green-leaf type, but I have no trouble with it in my Zone 8b garden.

It puts on tiny pink to lavender flowers during the summer that are visited by bees and other pollinators. Thyme is a great container plant because you can give it perfect drainage there and it looks cute cascading over the edge of a pot.

Lemon Savory, *Satureja biflora*

I wrote a rather long newsletter last year on the Satureja, or Savory, family of herbs. Included was this lemony flavored herb known as Lemon Savory. It looks a little like a cross between thyme and an oregano with small rounded leaves. It's very tender- winter hardy only to Zone 11, but is well worth growing in the summer months. It dried well and keeps its flavor, so if you should grow a lot of it, you can preserve it for winter use. I've never seen it sold commercially as a dried herb.

Like many herbs, it likes lots of sun and like other savories, it's fairly drought tolerant. I grow it easily from seed found at The Thyme Garden, a wonderful nursery located in Oregon. If you have an established plant you can ground layer it to propagate it. That is nothing more than letting a branch or two or three... touch the soil nearby, keeping the soil moist until new roots form where the little branch meets the soil. You can bury a part of the stem and put a rock on it to keep it in the ground or use a bent piece of wire to keep the stem in contact with the soil so the roots can form. Once roots have formed, simply clip the stem the new plant off the mother plant, gently dig it up and replant it where you want it.

I use Lemon Savory much the same way I use Lemon Thyme, on fish, especially salmon, with shrimp and other seafood. It is a nice addition to a vinaigrette either as a tossed green salad dressing or a marinade. It also pairs well with grilled, sauteed or roasted vegetables and is delicious added to chicken soup or stock. You can add it early in the time, as, unlike Lemon Basil, for instance, it does keep its flavor during cooking.

Lemon Balm, *Melissa officinalis*

Lemon Balm is one of those herbs that is found in lots

of old herb gardens. It has quite a history of medicinal use and is also used for flavoring food. It is in the mint family and can be a bit of a garden thug if it's happy where it's growing. It grows in a mounded form, but sends out runners like other mints and can end up taking over quite a bit of garden real estate. I would not be without it, however.



I use it for tea, distill it into a hydrosol that is used to soothe irritated skin, add it to baked goods and let it flower to attract bees.

The plant is named 'Melissa', which is Greek for honey, due to its sweet aroma. 'Officinalis' is the medicinal designation for a plant, meaning it is the one traditionally used in herbal healing. It makes a soothing tea which will settle an upset stomach. It blends well with other tea herbs such as peppermint, hibiscus and green tea.

Here in the Southern US and especially in South Texas, Lemon Balm likes more shade than sun. In more temperate areas, it can be grown in a sunny spot. It's not particular about soil conditions and can take heavier, less porous soil than some of the other herbs. It flowers in late summer here. After the flowers fade, I trim the plant down quite a bit... at least by half. By then, the leaves are looking sort of ratty due to the high heat of summer and the plant looks better after a pruning. As the summer wanes, new growth is put on and by fall there is lots of fresh, new growth ready for harvest.

You can view more information on Lemon Balm [here](#).

Lemon Balm Quick Bread

3/4 cup sugar
8 tablespoons butter
1/4 cup lemon balm leaves, finely chopped
2 large eggs
1 1/2 cup all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
1/8 teaspoon salt
1/2 cup milk
grated rind of one lemon

Grate the lemon peel and remove the juice from the lemon. Reserve the juice for the glaze.

Cream butter, sugar, and finely chopped leaves.

Add eggs and beat well to get a smooth consistency.

Add remaining ingredients (flour through lemon rind).

Pour into one large or four miniature greased loaf pans.

Bake at 350 degrees for 40-45 minutes if using a large pan or 25-30 minutes if using miniature pans.

Before removing from the pans, use a toothpick to prick holes in the crust.

Pour Lemon Balm Glaze over the top while the loaves are still warm.

Allow to cool completely before removing from the pan.

Loaves can be frozen for later use.

LEMON BALM GLAZE

1/2 cup sugar
2 tablespoons finely chopped lemon balm leaves
juice from one fresh lemon (about 4 tablespoons)

~~TIP: To avoid having bits of chopped herbs in the bread, steep the chopped leaves in the liquid for a half an hour or so. If you heat the liquid first, then add the herbs, the flavor develops more fully. This liquid can then be stored in the refrigerator for later use, or used right away in the recipe.

I hope this article has given you some inspiration to grow and try some of the fresh, flavorful, refreshing Lemon-y Herbs that are out there for you. A cold glass of iced tea on a hot afternoon is a great way to start using these lemon-y herbs.

Cindy Meredith is the owner of The Herb Cottage, a rural nursery in Lavaca County, Texas. In business since 1998, Cindy has a wide range of knowledge about gardening with herbs as well as using herbs in the kitchen and landscape. The dynamic web site for herb and plant lovers is a handy source for growing information for Texans and other folks who live in hot, humid climates.

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Send your requests to editor@organicgardentoday.com

We look forward to hearing from you!

Spring Juggling Act

By Al Benner

We have had so much going on here at the farm it is hard to know where to begin... Not only is it now planting season, but Farm Manager, Dave Campeau has been performing a juggling act of sorts, as we have had multiple infrastructure and construction projects going on all at the same time.

The project that has been most time consuming has been the build out of our soon to be inspected for certification, commercial kitchen in our timber frame barn.

The kitchen is in the corner of the barn adjacent to the earthen oven which is right out the back door under the shed roof overhang. Right now Dave is finishing coating all the wood surfaces with urethane and is also finalizing the butcher block-style maple counters. The 3 bay stainless sink is in place and the used stainless frig and range will be delivered tomorrow.

We experienced our first farmer's market at The Cooperage in Honesdale yesterday. We will be there every Wednesday from 4 - 6 pm right on main street - stop by and say hello. This week we had an early spring offering of ramps (wild leeks), rhubarb, and our first picking of asparagus. We sold out quickly.

Our asparagus is something truly extraordinary. Not only does it grow like bonkers down in our silty river bottom soil, but the flavor is like no other asparagus - incredibly rich and very tender. We even enjoy it raw. Now that we have crop insurance, we plan on expanding this perennial crop that can produce for up to twenty years!



We've tried two rounds of eggs in our incubator this spring and the hatch rates have been abysmal. So far only 10 birds have hatched from close to 60 eggs. We are trying one more round. Our turkeys are another story. Our farmer friend and retired teacher, Dave Nonnemaker took a few of our eggs and had his midget white turkeys sit on them - so far 18 poults have hatched! We also had our first hatching in our coop this evening... we were hoping for this, as it means we don't have to keep ordering poults through the mail every year.

Our truck engine is shot. We are currently waiting to decide who will do the work to re-build the engine. This came at an inopportune time given the busy spring season.

We have been planting quite a bit in the garden - potatoes, broccoli, peas, and onions are all in. Tomatoes go into the high tunnel tomorrow.



Our warm weather seedlings were doing great in our sun room until we got nailed with a major aphid infestation - our eggplants and peppers really took it hard and will be lucky to survive transplanting. Our tomatoes seemed to have not been targeted by this light green aphid. Neem oil and other organic measures only had a minimal effect.

Our one room cabin construction for our intern couple has been delayed until June. We made the decision to first complete the kitchen area, and for now these folks will be staying on a futon in the barn living area. We did level the building site with a mini-backhoe rental.

We also trenched for a power cable along the driveway from the house to the springhouse. We will be installing a well pump down in the water basin to pump water

up to our middle pasture for our sheep during summer-time.

We've also acquired a couple of "old school" plows and disker for turning and breaking up soil for new planting areas as we expand our growing areas in the river bottom area.

The sheep are doing great and our lamb "Mary" is as frisky as they come. She really enjoys hopping up on her mom's back for a better view

Until next time, enjoy all the photos and the great weather this time of year...



Our very busy Spanish Black tom is looking very regal this time of year



Fiddleheads begin to emerge. Ostrich ferns are a sure sign of spring



Wood Turtle

Too many interests, too little time... Grew up in New Hope Solebury, PA. Attended college at Delaware Valley College in Doylestown, PA - BS in Ornamental Horticulture. Received an MBA at LaSalle University. Owner of three web businesses: www.OldSchoolFarmers.blogspot.com www.BackyardFarmers.com, www.MossAcres.com www.PurrfectFence.com A founding partner for a self-sustaining residential real estate project in Costa Rica - www.FincaLasBrisas.org Founder of www.BennersGardens.com - national supplier of deer fencing systems - company sold in Dec. 2006.

The Next Evolution of Organic Making the Best Even Better

By Cliff Williams

My articles are about making the best food even better and we are poised to take organic gardening to a new level. As organic gardeners, we have already attained two of the three essential attributes of food and they are getting out the harmful chemicals, and being able to eat our food moments after it is harvested as opposed to weeks. Making sure our soil has *all* of the necessary nutrients for human life is the last challenge. I have uncovered some shocking correlations between the lack of human nutrients in our food and the incredible ill health society is facing. In this article I want to show you just a couple of these nutrient deficiencies, and then finish with a nutrient strategy for your garden and ultimately you.

This article is a continuation of “The Next Evolution of Organic” that was featured in the Spring Issue of Organic Gardens Today. The fundamental defect in our food is caused by feeding the plant and not the plant and the human. As a quick review, plants should be able to supply all of our nutrition, and have the ability to bring up the nutrients that they need as well as the nutrients we need even though they are different. But the nutrients have to be in the soil to begin with, and unfortunately many have been farmed out of the soil. Like some mysterious veil, we have only fed the plants, plant food, and we should’ve also been feeding them people food, or rather the nutrients we need. This new paradigm in food and will require a new level in organic gardening but the results will be priceless after you see some of the deficiencies.

Iodine is one of the first deficiencies we will look at and is one that has been around for at least 95 years. Iodine keeps the thyroid functioning properly and secreting a hormone that is needed in almost every function of your body. I’m sure you know many people with thyroid problems, and the lack of Iodine also causes mental retardation in babies.

This Iodine can only come to us through the food we eat, yet this lack was dealt with in a peculiar manner. Someone somewhere decided that the solution to the problem would be to put the missing iodine into table salt, hence *Iodized Table Salt*. This is an excellent window into the world that organic gardeners try so hard to get away from. The science of the time knew that iodine should come from our food but couldn’t put the pieces together enough to put it back in the soil where it belonged. Can you imagine the world we would live in now if someone back then thought to rebuild the soil. The whole point of my articles is that we need to be putting these missing nutrients back into our soils.

This is a good time to bring up a good point, and that is that these are micronutrients or trace elements and as those titles suggest, are only needed in small quantities. In a nuclear event Iodine tablets of significant strength are used to shut down the thyroid because it collects the radio-active particles taken into your body. Small amounts are vital to our health and too much is dangerous. When we do get it right, our plants know just how much of these nutrients to bring up, even if there is too much in the soil, just don’t get carried away.

The next missing nutrient is Boron and the extent of the lack of boron in the soils is an incredible story, oh yea, mystery, suspense, cover ups, it has it all!! Boron is absolutely essential for plants, in fact it begins the biological sequence or life cycle of a plant. It is already added to commercial fertilizers and is routinely tested for. What most people don’t know is that people need it almost as bad as plants. It seems that the lack of Boron in humans is a major cause of arthritis and bone and joint issues. There are several studies by Dr. Rex Newnham who is a medical doctor with botanical experience and training. He has shown a huge increase in arthritis in cultures where Boron deficiencies are severe. Obviously, agriculture seems to be adding just enough Boron to make plants grow but not enough to keep people from getting arthritis. Although I don’t have arthritis, I know plenty who do. Here are two papers you can look up for further

information on the subject, you can find them online. I sent it to everyone I know because although I don't have arthritis, I'm sure we are all deficient; (Boron – a paper by Dr. Rex Newnham) and, (The Borax Conspiracy by Walter Last). The second article has dosages of Borax as a remedy for arthritis (it can be toxic at too high a dose so read the article if you are going to try it, my wife and I both use it). Conspiracy? Borax that you find in the laundry section of your store is an effective cure for arthritis and it is also anti-fungal and has many other health benefits, yet has been shot down by the FDA who favors the use of expensive patented drugs as a cure. Anyway 4 bucks will get you a ten year supply for arthritis and enough to treat your soil for Boron deficiency.

The next deficient nutrient on the list is chromium. I heard of this probably 25 years ago from a vitamin salesman. He had a vested interest in selling me on this deficiency, but it's not hard to see the effect of Chromium deficiency in our population today because Chromium helps the body use insulin properly. How big of a problem is diabetes these days? Last night I was in the checkout line at the store and the lady in front of me was telling the checker about her new baby being born with diabetes and then the lady behind me spoke up and said she had a child with diabetes and she was in a support group, "there's lots of us she said". I have diabetes and have recently increased my intake of Chromium, I also feed it to my plants. There are also other micro nutrient deficiencies that affect diabetes including magnesium.

Of that list of over 50 nutrients from my previous article in the spring issue: Zinc is necessary in at least a dozen bodily functions including the immune system. Silicon is pertinent to osteoporosis, heart disease and stroke. Selenium affects dozens of bodily functions and inhibits cancers as well as increasing the actions of antioxidants. The lack of Magnesium has recently been found to be a major contributor in Type 2 diabetes. The list of nutrient deficiencies could be a whole book in itself, but I

think you can see the correlation to the enormous health consequences we are experiencing.

I don't know that anyone really realizes how much damage has been done to our bodies from growing up without sufficient amounts of these nutrients. We are in a nutritional war and I feel very strongly that the solution needs to be fought on two fronts. First of all we quickly need to keep from causing further harm to our bodies by supplementing with vitamins and minerals until we feel confident that our home grown food can deliver what we need. Just understand that all supplements are based upon minimum standards and we have already inflicted major damage to our bodies, one a day doesn't cut it. There is an excellent DVD you can get online that supports what I've said about deficiencies, I watch it every month just to help keep my focus on repairing the damages that have been done. "Food Matters" by James Colquhoun and Larentine ten Bosch. Personally, I take four multi/mineral vitamins and a few other individual elements each evening. We have to look at this in the light of repairing damage that has been done already, even if we don't have deficient symptoms. First take care of your health then look to repair the cause.

A new paradigm in gardening is what we need to arise to, we need to be aware of not only the plants needs but ours as well. There seems to be two areas in plant and human nutrition that we are still not addressing. One is the fact that our plants are not fed all the ingredients to support human life, and second, the nutrients that they are fed are often insufficient to support human life.

Here is a partial list of necessary nutrients for both plants and humans. These plant nutrients are already considered by agriculture to some extent and the human nutrients are already known and included in some supplements. To have a sufficient amount of these in your soil is an excellent start.

Plant Nutrients: Boron, Calcium, Carbon, Chlorine, Cobalt, Copper, Iron, Manganese, Magne-

sium, Molybdenum, Nickel, Nitrogen, Phosphorus, Potassium, Silicon, Sodium, Sulfur, Zinc.

Human Nutrients: Boron, Calcium, Chlorine, Chromium, Copper, Iodine, Iron, Magnesium, Manganese, Molybdenum, Nickel, Phosphorus, Potassium, Selenium, Silicon, Sodium, Tin, Vanadium, Zinc.

This accounts for only about half of the list of fifty necessary nutrients, but these are the most prevalent where information and studies are concerned. These two lists obviously have more similarities than differences but the evidence of poor health indicates that we need to be including these in our gardening practices, *and in sufficient quantity for plants and humans*. When we get these nutrients in order we will off to a great start. This is a journey right now and not a destination, there is no complete fertilizer mix you can buy, in fact it is hard to find one that has more than maybe 6 of these ingredients. This is new territory.

I am not a licensed agricultural consultant and cannot legally give you fertilizer recommendations. I can however tell you what I have done and share with you where I have found some of these nutrients. You will have to figure out some things for yourself like dosage and application.

OK then, let's feed some plants. The nutrients listed below are readily available and this is a good place to start. As we progress in this journey to include all 50 nutrients, we are going to find many are very hard to come by. To help understand the importance of these to a plant, it is good to look at the life cycle of a plant.

This is the sequence of growth for a plant. Boron activates Silicon which carries all other nutrients beginning with Calcium. Calcium binds nitrogen to form cells and amino acids and those amino acids form proteins and chlorophyll and attach trace elements, especially Magnesium. Magnesium and Phosphorus transfer the energy of photosynthesis to carbon which forms sugars that are carried

throughout the plant via Potassium. Let's make sure we have these in order first.

Boron, can be found at your local farm store in a liquid form and as Borax at the grocery store, much was written of above.

Silicon is extremely abundant in nature and its importance to plants is a relatively new to agriculture. Ashes of burnt plants are apparently 50% silicon which is probably why adding your fireplace ashes has always helped grow plants. It is also abundant in sand and soils with much humic (decaying plant) matter, although this relies on healthy soil and microbes for availability. It can also be found in liquid form as a plant supplement, I ordered some on line.

Calcium is available in egg shells, oyster shells (ground oyster shells are available at your farm store as a supplement for chickens), etc... Calcium is a very common human supplement and is easily added and readily available to the plants until the soil can prepare other sources, i.e. ground shells.

Cobalt deficiencies are rare and I have only been able to find cobalt in other plant supplemental micronutrient blends. It is only needed in small trace amounts.

Chlorine is abundant in most tap water, but if you have a well a good source is bleach, just a very small amount.

Magnesium is available as Epsom Salt (magnesium sulfate), also gives sulfur.

Manganese is available as a human supplement and I dissolve and add it to my liquid fertilizer mix. It is also available commercially and can be purchased in a liquid supplemental mix with other nutrients or in bulk.

Molybdenum is a necessary nutrient for plants but at only one part per million. It is part of a human

vitamin/mineral supplement that I take orally and dissolve into my fertilizer mix.

Copper and Sulfur are available as powders for organic garden problems like mold.

Iodine is relatively inexpensive as an equine supplement at your farm store.

Most of the rest of the list is available in a good multi vitamin and mineral supplement. I use Costco Daily Multi, mainly because of the cost, a large bottle costs about \$12. Some of the nutrients are available by themselves as supplements and I also add extra Chromium, Zinc, Selenium and Calcium. Once you start looking for these various items you will find this is actually relatively inexpensive source where micronutrients are involved. I dissolve these into a quart of water the night before and add that to my liquid fertilizer mix.

My ace in the hole, is a concentrated form of seawater that is supposed to contain about every mineral known. I put it sparingly into my liquid mix and also use it as a foliar spray. The reason I don't rely solely on this is because they are vague about quantity and composition, but it seems to help. I have seen several companies offering this and the one I have used is from Ocean Solutions.

Nitrogen, Phosphorus and Potassium are major ingredients and your plants need plenty, consequently they are readily available. Calcium, Magnesium and Sulfur are secondary nutrients and you need a fair amount in your mix and are easy enough to find. All the rest are only needed in very small amounts, some only 1 part per million and some are hard to come by. We take these out of the soil when we grow our food and they eventually need to be replaced.

First of all we need to get those nutrients in sufficient quantity to feed not only the plants but us as well, then we can look at ways to keep them there. I want to say a bit about overall strategy and where we will eventually need to go with all of this to keep these nutrients available. Sustainability im-

plies that our nutrients are used over and over again in a circle of life. Presently, we take nutrients out of the soil, use them and then flush them down the toilet where they are for all practical purpose, gone forever. We obviously are now engaged in a downward spiral and the world's ill health is the result.

Eventually we will need to be able to get the nutrients in our waste, back into our gardens. This is not a new or untried concept and millions already use small methane digesters to treat their personal waste and put it back into the soil where it belongs. I am developing a small scale, automated, user friendly system, but first we need to address the lack of nutrients and then deal with hanging on to them. If this sounds gross to you, consider that if you own a boat or RV, you already deal with wastes in a similar manner and if it was so bad, the campgrounds and harbors across America would be empty. If you are curious about methane digesters on a small scale, Mother Earth News has several good articles including the whole of Chapter 8 from my book, "Urban Crofting", about digesters. You can type (tips for installing a methane digester, Mother Earth News) into your search bar to find it.

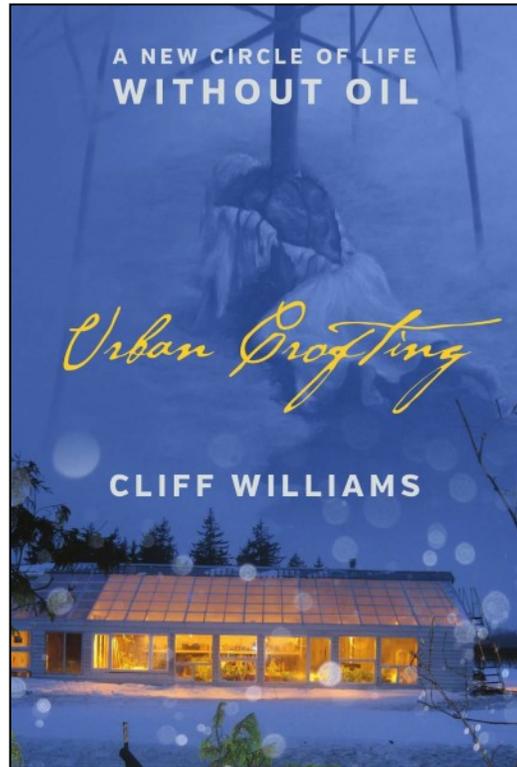
Replacing these nutrients is only a part of the solution and building the soil with composted matter and char are also on the path to creating a topsoil that is a healthy environment for the flora, the microbes and bacteria that create life. These microbes and the likes in the soil are the stomach of the plants. In the not too distant past there was a culture that as part of their honor for nature held a special reverence for the topsoil and its health. They were rewarded for their diligence with extraordinary physiques and health, to the point of appearing miraculous. Our world has desecrated the top soil and can no longer afford health care. We have the means to evolve organic gardening to mean more than the absence of chemicals to that of complete health and only those willing to take the next step will be able to enjoy the fruit this wholeness in food. This new frontier means

rebuilding soil until it is whole and this will most likely happen in the gardens of those who put the effort into growing organic.

These articles are part of my preparations for my second book. Simultaneously, while working on rebuilding the soil, I am also developing new techniques and time saving strategies for personal agriculture. By creatively changing a few parameters, you can grow your own food year round in most places of the world. Nutrient enhanced, fresh picked produce can also be grown in significant quantities in urban neighborhoods. My website, urbancrofting.com has more details as well as a link to my book; *Urban Crofting*, by 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.



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.

Building Community, One Tomato at a Time™

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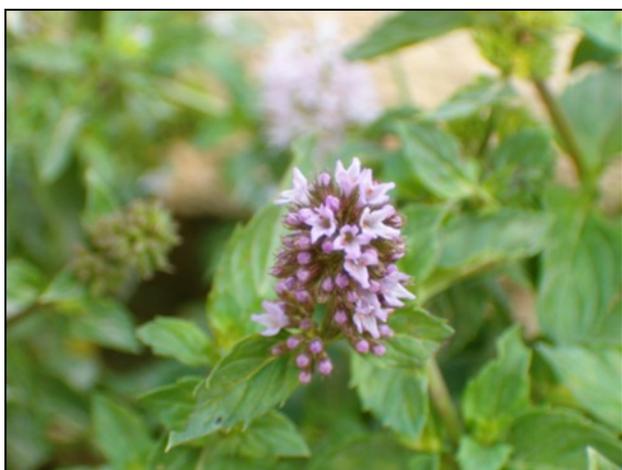
Growing Mint

By Maureen Farmer



The genus for mint is *Mentha*. Mints spread rapidly by underground root runners causing many gardeners to consider it to be invasive. If you don't want it to take over your garden, grow mint in a container.

According to Greek mythology, Minthe was a beautiful water nymph that attracted the attention of Hades. Hades ruled the underworld and was married to Persephone. Persephone found out that her husband was unfaithful, stepped on Minthe and turned her into a plant. When Hades found out Minthe had been turned into a plant, he gave her a sweet smell. Whenever someone steps on Minthe again, her sweet fragrance is released.



Getting Started

Mint can be grown from a purchased seedling or from a cutting. To grow mint from a cutting, get a sprig from a neighbor, friend, etc. and remove the bottom

leaves. Place most of the cutting in a container, set it in a sunny location and keep it moist. Within a few weeks, the cutting will double in size.

Types of Mint

There are hundreds of varieties of mint. A few of the most commonly grown types of mint are described below.

- Apple Mint (*Mentha suaveolens*)

Apple mint produces 24 to 36 inch tall sturdy stems with large, fuzzy, grey-green leaves that smell slightly like apples. As you handle the mint while washing and chopping it to add to salads or cooked dishes, the fuzziness disappears. It bears white flowers during the summer and is hardy in zones 5 to 9.

- Chocolate Mint (*Mentha piperita*)

Chocolate mint has dark green leaves, 36 inch tall purple stems and lavender flowers. It has a chocolaty-mint taste and fragrance. It's less invasive than many other mints and is hardy in zones 4 to 9.

- Lemon Mint (*Mentha* × *piperita* f. *citrata* 'Lemon')

Lemon mint smells citrusy, has dark green leaves, grows 36 inches tall and produces purple flower spikes. It can be used to keep flies away and is the true source of the oil or essence of Eau de Cologne.

- Mint Julep (*Mentha spicata*)

Mint Julip is named after the famous beverage made with Kentucky bourbon associated with the Kentucky Derby horse race. Since Mint Julip has great flavor and is sweeter than most other mints, it's one of the best mints for tea and sweet recipes. It produces lavender flowers.

- Orange Mint (*Mentha aquatica citrata*)

Orange mint has an orange citrusy scent and flavor. It's spicier than most other mints, has bright green leaves with a slight reddish tint, grows 12 to 18 inches tall, produces pink flowers and is hardy in zones 4 to 9. It is also known as bergamot mint.

- Pineapple Mint (*Mentha suaveolens* 'Variegata')

Pineapple mint has fuzzy edible leaves, but it is more commonly used as an ornamental plant due to its pretty foliage. The leaves are pale green with cream colored edges. It grows 24 to 36 inches tall, produces white or

light pink flowers and is hardy in zones 5 to 9.

- Peppermint (*Mentha x piperita*)

Peppermint has the strongest flavor of all the mints due to its high menthol content. It grows 12 to 30 inches tall, produces lavender flowers and is hardy in zones 3 to 8. Peppermint has strong medicinal properties for relieving stress, relaxing muscles and as a stimulant.

- Spearmint (*Mentha spicata*)

Spearmint has a milder flavor than peppermint. It can withstand more moisture than many other mints, produces pale purple flower, grows 12 to 24 inches tall and is hardy in zones 4 to 9. It is commonly grown as a culinary herb or ground cover.

Harvest and Storage

You can pick leaves as you need them or cut all the stems one inch from the ground before flowering. You can usually get two or three harvests in a single growing season.

Mint leaves have the best flavor when used fresh, but they can be dried and stored in an airtight container for later use.

Mint makes a great addition to a flower or vegetable garden. It's nice to walk by and smell its fragrant leaves. Make sure you plant it in a container with a saucer so that it doesn't take over your garden.

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 and individuals can post wanted classifieds for surplus items. Maureen also writes a weekly gardening blog on her website to teach people how to grow their own food. She is an avid gardener, horticultural professor and a former Board member of Urban Oaks Organic Farm in Connecticut.



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