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Organic Gardening In The Backyard - Fun, Healthy, and Easier Than You May Think

By C.J. Gustafson

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Gustafson

Organic gardening, which is sometimes thought of as something out of the 60s hippie culture, has been steadily growing in popularity over the years. Not only can you find entire aisles of organics at the local supermarket, the number of specialty stores dedicated to organically grown foods has increased dramatically. Part of this popularity is due to an increasing understanding of the dangers associated with synthetic pesticides and fertilizers. Growing organically generally means gardening without these potentially dangerous chemicals. Many backyard gardeners are turning to organic methods as they realize how easy and effective organic growing can be.

Part of the reason chemical pesticides and fertilizers are so widely used is because they work well. In deciding to use organic methods in your backyard garden, you first will need to accept the fact that you will likely have more pest damage and lower yields than if you were employing chemicals. Many people are willing to make this trade off in return for the opportunity to harvest chemical-free foods for themselves and their families.

There are several different approaches and techniques used in organic gardening. You may find that you are using some of them already. If you have selected cultivars that are resistant to pests or drought, you are involved in one form of organic gardening. If you put out a scarecrow or bars of hand soap to keep animals away, this too is organic gardening. Compost is an organic fertilizer. Organic techniques are around in many gardens already. By utilizing them more and moving away from chemicals, you can improve the environment and lead a healthier lifestyle.

There are different levels of organic gardening and different reasons why people choose organic methods. Some do it because they do not want to harm any animals, even aphids or cutworms. So they try to develop a system where they can cohabitate peacefully, keeping insects and other animals out when possible and removing them or learning to live with them when other options don't work.

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Some people are not opposed to pest control and extermination but they don't want to add any more chemicals to the environment or to the food that they eat. Others go organic as a means of getting back to a more historic, natural, and even challenging way of gardening. You will need to decide which methods match your personal philosophies and reasons for going organic.

Pest control and fertilization are two of the key areas to focus on with organic gardening. In addition to using native, resistant plants, mulching, and practicing crop rotation, the use of other natural methods of pest control and of compost and manure as fertilizer can go a long way toward creating a more organic garden.

Pest Control

There are many ways that backyard gardeners can control insects and other pests without the use of synthetic chemicals.

- Use mesh row covers to keep insects off of plants. They need to be removed from squashes, melons, cucumbers, peppers and other plants that require or benefit from pollinations during flowering.
- Collars placed around young plants will help prevent damage by cutworms.
- Allow natural predators such as ladybugs and wasps to assist you in your efforts by planting vegetation that will attract them to your garden and avoiding pesticides that harm them as well.
- Screens, cold frames and fences can help keep some insects and animals such as rabbits out of the garden.
- Aphids can be removed from plants with a strong stream of water. Hand removing insects such as potato beetles can be effective in small gardens.
- Weed your garden and turn the soil regularly to help reduce the growth of insects that like to nest in certain plant debris.
- Learn to identify the egg clusters of harmful insects and remove them immediately
- Use homemade insecticides such as garlic spray or other harmless pest inhibitors.
- Try using non-invasive methods of pest control including soap bars, cuttings of human hair, or an alert dog in the yard. These techniques may or may not be effective, but are worth a try before resorting to chemicals.
- Some home pesticides such as those that use rhubarb or tobacco plants can be very dangerous to humans and other mammals. Use caution and be sure you know what you're getting into before you begin.

Organic Fertilizers

Of course you want your plants to grow quickly and produce large yields. However, chemical fertilizers are potentially harmful to those who eat the plants and to the environment, especially if applied too heavily and allowed to run off into water supplies and habitat areas. Using organic fertilizers can decrease the problems associated with chemicals.

Manure is a natural, effective fertilizer if used properly. Not only does it improve soil structure, it provides the nutrients plants need to develop. Manure that is allowed to age and decompose before use is most effective. Pasteurized manure is less likely to include active weed seed or harmful bacteria.

Do not apply too heavily.

Create and maintain a compost pile to use as fertilizer. Not only does it incorporate the use of natural organic material such as leaves, lawn clippings and household waste such as potato peels and carrot stems, it also provides a free source of fertilizer and reduces the amount of waste that is hauled to landfills.

If you choose to use chemical fertilizers, use sparingly and choose a slow release variety that is less likely to leech into vulnerable areas.

Companion planting, which is the practice of putting together two plants that seem to benefit each other, has been offered as a means of enhancing organic gardening practices. It is thought that plants such as nicotina and marigolds are natural pest deterrents. However, there is no firm research to support this as yet. Still, many gardeners have reported success with this method.

Additionally, planting vegetables with prickly vines, such as watermelon or squashes around the perimeter of vulnerable plants may help keep out rabbits and other animals that don't like the scratchy vines.

These days, many gardeners are looking for ways to reduce the use of chemicals and rely on more natural and inexpensive means of providing food for their tale and backyard growing enjoyment. Organic gardening techniques provide fun and healthy options.

C.J. Gustafson is an amateur gardener and a professional photographer, providing valuable tips and advice about

and other

topics. She would rather lose a few

ears of corn than go without wildlife in her garden.

Growing Fruits And Vegetables The Way Nature Intended Them To Be

By George Hapgood

Gardening can add more quality to the way you live and even to some extent may also add quantity to one's life. There are many benefits of gardening, particularly organic gardening that can make one can forget about whatever is bothering him or her.

Organic gardening is the way of growing vegetables and fruits with the use of things only found in nature.

Why would one want to indulge in organic gardening?

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1. Organic gardening is less boring.

One can easily make his own compost from garden and kitchen waste. Though this is a bit more time-consuming than buying prepared chemical pesticides and fertilizers, it would surely be one rewarding activity.

2. Less health harming chemicals on the food that you and your family may consume.

Pesticides contain toxins that have only one purpose kill living things. One of the best known benefits of organic gardening is the zero tolerance for pesticide use. This is the most widely know reason for the boom of organic gardening and is also the best of what we get from the benefits of organic gardening.

3. Less harm to the environment.

Organic gardening has residual effect on ground water. The Environmental Protection Agency says that 38 states have cases of contaminated ground water.

The protection of the topsoil from erosion is another concern dealt with the practice of organic gardening.

The Soil Conservation Service says that an estimated 30 – 32 billion tons of soil erodes from United States farmlands every year. Commercial farming causes this.

4. Cost savings

One does need to buy costly chemical fertilizers and pesticides with organic gardening. One example of organic fertilizer that one could make use of is as lowly as the stale coffee and coffee grounds. If one wishes to attract off aphids from vegetables, plant marigolds. One frugal garden pest spray could be concocted through mixing 1 tablespoon of liquid dishwashing soap and 1 cup of cooking oil. Put 3 tablespoons of this mixture in 1 quart of water and spray on plants.

Mulch, which is used to keep moisture in and weeds out, could be in the form of grass clippings and pine needles.

5. Organic gardening makes one feel better knowing he is doing his part in safeguarding the future of the next generations.

On the average, a child ingests four to five times more cancer-causing pesticides from foods than an adult. This can lead to various diseases later on in the child's life. With organic gardening, these incidents are lessened.

You Too can have a green thumb. Visit Georges Blog [here](#)



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