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**The Peroxide Phenomenon—Gardening Miracle**

**By Paul Tukey**

He unabashedly begins his stories in newspapers, magazines and online by proclaiming, "This will be the most phenomenal article you will ever read." He claims to have cured his own cancer, to have removed his own warts and to be the most robust 82-year-old on the planet — ever since he discovered the miracle solution known as hydrogen peroxide.

Bill Munro immediately grabbed my attention with a story titled "Gardening with H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>" in Acres U.S.A., the highly respected farming journal from Austin, Texas. In 13 years of applying hydrogen peroxide to his gardens, Munro said he has experienced better yields, faster seed germination and far fewer insect infestations.

"Try it," he said during our phone interview from his home in Michigan. "The peroxide will change the way you garden forever. If you let it, it will even change your life."

If you type the phrase "Bill Munro peroxide" into Google on the Internet, you'll quickly come up with all sorts of articles that talk about his experiences curing his cancer by inhaling hydrogen peroxide several times daily. He cites a book titled Hydrogen Peroxide: The Medical Miracle by Dr. William Campbell Douglas, and offers detailed instructions for using this commonly available liquid to improve your health. Much of the traditional medical community doesn't seem to put much stock in hydrogen peroxide as a health aid except as an antiseptic, but it is known that white blood cells do produce small amounts of hydrogen peroxide in our bodies to help fight infection and disease. Even the skeptics say inhaling hydrogen peroxide probably won't hurt you if you decide to give it a try. For our purposes, however, we were most interested in Munro's gardening claims, all of which appear to be true.

**Extra Oxygen Makes Magic**

Readily available in drugstores and supermarkets in familiar brown bottles that block light, hydrogen peroxide is simply water (H<sub>2</sub>O) with an extra oxygen molecule that is loosely attached to form H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>. That extra oxygen is highly unstable in the solution and vaporizes easily upon contact with other substances, thereby accounting for the fizzing that occurs whenever hydrogen peroxide touches your skin. The 3 percent solution most commonly sold in stores is widely used to clean cuts and abrasions

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in pets and humans, and for numerous other cleaning and sterilization applications around the home. The federal Food and Drug Administration has approved hydrogen peroxide to be used for "aseptic" packaging in the food industry, and many people use H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> as an environmentally friendly alternative to chlorine in pools and, especially, hot tubs.

That same oxidation action that keeps water clean apparently also has a positive impact in horticulture. Numerous hydrogen peroxide manufacturers recommend soaking seeds in H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> prior to planting to speed germination rates. Watering with hydrogen peroxide is also recommended to help keep fungal and bacterial diseases at bay. Most instructions call for diluting the 3 percent solution to a few tablespoons per quart of water prior to soaking your seeds or spraying your plants.

Munro's instructions are quite different. He uses an 8 percent solution, which he produces by diluting the 40 percent solution that he purchases at hair-salon supply stores.

"This was just trial-and-error on my part," he said. "Having no prior knowledge of what strength to use, I started my experiments with 8 percent and the plants didn't die. I've stuck with the 8 percent ever since. At some percentage, I'm sure, the peroxide could burn the plants, but I can assure you that at 8 percent it doesn't."

Munro said he soaks many seeds in peroxide prior to planting and has found germination rates to be as much as 50 percent faster. Depending on the seeds, he'll soak them anywhere from a few hours to overnight. He said he sprays all seedling roots and their planting holes, and also sprays all trees, shrubs and his lawn. He said his only fertilizer is the ash from his wood stove, and his water is from his own well.

The seed soaking doesn't work for everything — especially beans — but he said it works really well for potatoes, corn, squash, cucumbers and radishes.

"I've got one of the best gardens around," he said. "You can ask anyone who has seen it."

Munro has plenty of fans, including Acres U.S.A. founder Charles Walters and online journalist Joyce Morrison, author of the web site

<http://NewsWithViews.com>

"Although we have never met in person, Bill Munro and I have talked over the phone and e-mailed for several years, and I have never known Bill to tell me anything that was not well-researched," Morrison said.

Recent experiments conducted in Australia also support some of Munro's theories about hydrogen peroxide. Researchers reportedly included peroxide in the drip-irrigation systems for crops of zucchini, which in turn produced 29 percent more fruits weighing 25 percent more than the fruits produced without hydrogen peroxide treatment. Yields of soybean pods increased 82 to 96 percent compared to

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crops that were not treated with hydrogen peroxide.

### Fewer Insects in the Garden

Yields and germination rates aside, Munro's most compelling claim about hydrogen peroxide in the garden concerns insect infestations.

"I started spraying just about everything that was green in my yard with the peroxide, and the results were a huge surprise to my wife and me," said Munro. "We had no mosquitoes or other flying bugs in our yard. There were a few ladybugs, but they were few and far between. I don't think the peroxide did any harm to the ladybugs, but since there are so few other insects for them to eat, the ladybugs just don't come around."

According to Rene Larose, a retired microbiologist from Manchester, Conn., hydrogen peroxide does reduce insect populations — not by eliminating adult insects, but by oxidizing and killing their eggs and larvae. Larose developed and owns U.S. patent 6455075, defined as "a method for control of insects on plant tissue, which includes applying a solution that includes hydrogen peroxide to the plant tissue."

The hydrogen peroxide in Larose's formulations has a concentration of 0.05 to 3 percent and includes other proprietary ingredients such as acetic acid and phosphoric acid.

"These other ingredients add to the efficiency of the hydrogen peroxide," said Larose, who formed a company in Glastonbury, Conn., known as BioSafe Systems LLC that is now run by his son, Robert. "Hydrogen peroxide is capable of doing everything (Munro) said it can do. Our products simply increase the efficiency. I can tell you that it's not snake oil. It's just as good as it sounds."

BioSafe produces several products for the horticulture, farming, turf, food and sanitation industries. All of the products are billed as environmentally friendly and many are certified as organic by the Organic Materials Review Institute (OMRI), which now sanctions most mainstream organic lawn and garden products. Oxidate, for example, is sold as a broad-spectrum bactericide and fungicide, but the peroxide-based product also has the side effect of adding oxygen to the leaves of plants and to the soil.

"We don't really talk about the beneficial side effects of the products, because the FDA is very strict about what claims you can make," said Larose. "But everything grows better in the presence of extra oxygen. That's basic botany. In Latin America, farmers spray this product from airplanes as a fungicide on crops, and they can stand in the field while the plane passes overhead. They aren't using any pesticides and their yields are greatly improved."

### Where Has This Been All Our Lives?

The question, obviously, is that if a product as common as hydrogen peroxide offers so many benefits in the garden, why hasn't everyone been utilizing it for years? Why isn't BioSafe a household name brand after 11 years in the marketplace?

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"That's what we want to know," said Larose, with a laugh. "I can tell you that the EPA loves us because the products are 100 percent, absolutely safe alternatives. I can tell you that science gives you perfectly rational explanations for how this works. But I can also tell you that the chemical companies don't like this because of course it cuts into what they're doing. The universities don't like this because they didn't develop the concept."

Munro agrees. He theorizes that in a world driven by profit, the economic powers have little motivation to promote something as inexpensive and commonplace as hydrogen peroxide.

Our disclaimer is that we don't have any personal experience with peroxide in the garden. We'll be trying our own dilutions of H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> as well as some of the BioSafe products this season right along with many of you, and we'll report back to readers in a future issue. We'll experiment with different percentages of peroxide in seed soaking and also spraying of plants, and we'll compare the results with seeds and plants that are not treated with peroxide. We also hope to hear right away from anyone with personal experiences with peroxide and related products.

It is important to use hydrogen peroxide with caution, testing it on limited crops prior to spraying the entire yard and garden, and to only use pure H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> or "food grade" formulations. Some brands of peroxide may contain harmful byproducts.

Another important consideration is dilution of the peroxide when the percentage is higher than 8 percent. Concentrated peroxide of 35 or 40 percent is highly corrosive and would certainly be harmful to plants and soil.

"Anyone ought to see what works for him or her," said Munro, the outspoken octogenarian whose

instructions can be found all over the Internet. "I think people need to see that this works for themselves."

<http://www.pplants.com>

### **What's in Store for National Home Gardening Club Members?**

**By Nicky Pilkington**

The National Home Gardening Club offer many benefits to its members.

It is said to be the largest home gardening organization with paid membership. For a nominal fee, various benefits are available.

If you choose to become a member the National Home Gardening club, you will be entitled to the following perks.

1. Members can enter competitions to win free gardening products such as gardening accessories,

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tools, and other gardening supplies.

2. A coupon will be given to members to claim a free gardening shears.
3. Members can also access a free trial subscription of the Gardening How–To Magazine.
4. They may be eligible to test and keep gardening tools such as pruning shears. These are some of the products tested by members in the past two issues of the Gardening How–To magazine:
  - Honda Harmony Lawn Mower
  - Miracle–Gro Garden Weed Preventer
  - Sunflower Garden
  - Cobra Head Precision Weeder and Cultivator
  - Preen 'n Green
5. Members can enjoy a free directory of public gardens, which contains information about lush gardens, arboretums, and conservatories throughout the US.
6. They can interact and talk about tips, ideas and methods with other members.
7. Members can obtain gardening and landscaping tips and plans for the completion of various gardening projects.
8. They have access to the members–only gardening website.
9. Members can also preview gardening books, gardening videos, etc.

Indeed, the for–members–only benefits are that grandiose. They are all for the gardening enthusiasts to grab.

After the 30–day trial, you can continue your membership for only \$1 per month.

Many garden–lovers think this is a small price to pay for all these privileges.

Find out more about gardening at

<http://aboutgardening.org>



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