

The New 'In' Thing: Organic Gardening

Hey, you "in" folks who are onto organic foods -- you can grow your own. And you don't HAVE to be a health food fan to go for organic gardening. It's as good for the system as it is for you.

It doesn't make sense to eat foods that have been sprayed with pesticides, and nobody has proved yet that tomatoes taste better with DDT. Grow your own and you know your food is pure -- and super fresh.

Also, you can grow your own fruits and vegetables and flowers, too, without using any chemical fertilizer -- just compost, manure, or organic fertilizers. Actually, the purity and food value is the same whether organic or chemical fertilizers are used. It's just better for the general environment, though, to recycle organic material and use it to improve and fertilize the garden soil.

FIRST STEP is to choose a sunny spot for the garden. Vegetables just won't grow in the shade. Unless you have sun, forget it.

Prepare the soil. Dig and turn and remove weeds, sod, sticks and stones. Rake it and make it fine and smooth. Work in compost or manure. If it is a large garden rent a rototiller and save your back for other things.

Next, read the seed packets. There are directions that tell when it is safe to plant, how far apart to make the rows, and how far apart the seeds or plants should be in each row. It really pays to make a little plan and figure out what you are going to put where, so you get the best use of that garden space. It wasn't THAT easy to dig it up.

Next plant the rutabagas and zucchini or whatever appeals to your commune. Water 'em a little from time to time -- and watch 'em grow. Hey, don't forget to weed and cultivate once in a while.

What do you do when trouble strikes -- when the bugs come or disease develops? First call in the neighborhood birds. They are your best friends. Give 'em a little drink (just water, please) and they will stick around and dine on bugs.

Next roll up your sleeves (and maybe put on a pair of gloves) and pick off the bugs. Squash them or pop them into a paper bag and burn them. Tomato worms, rose chafers, even aphids can be taken care of by hand picking.

SLUGS AND SNAILS will crawl under an inverted half shell or an orange and can be collected and destroyed, or they will drown themselves in a little dish of beer set in the garden. What a way to go!

Humus Pile Should Have Its Own Poem

Humus! It's great stuff. So great that someone should write a song about it. It's fine to write poems about the pretty posies, but why neglect humus?

The flowers that bloom in the Spring
Wouldn't grow into anything
Without humus.

Not bad for a start, but someone ought to be able to improve on it. Here are the facts.

Humus is the organic portion of the soil. It is partly decomposed animal or plant material, and it supplies plants with many of the compounds they need to grow.

As humus in the soil decays, it produces carbonic acid and other acids which make rock minerals more soluble so plants can use them.

Humus also improves the texture of the soil. Makes it like a sponge that holds water but also is porous so excess water drains away.

SO HUMUS IS great, but where do you get it? Not all soils are rich in humus. Animal manure makes superb humus.

Decomposed plants make good humus, too.

The best way for the home gardener to get humus is to make a compost pile. It's a nice, rather flat pile of grass clippings and weeds that turn themselves into humus. Just pile 'em on. Sure, there are some things you can do to help and speed up the change.

Build up the pile like a layer cake or a sandwich. After six or eight inches of green stuff, spread on a thin layer of garden soil or old decomposed compost.

Moisture is needed, so it helps to make the top of the pile like a saucer to collect rain. Also, water the pile if there is a long dry spell.

The decay process needs oxygen -- so stir up the pile a couple of times a year and keep it sort of loose and not packed down tight.

IT'S THAT TIME AGAIN!

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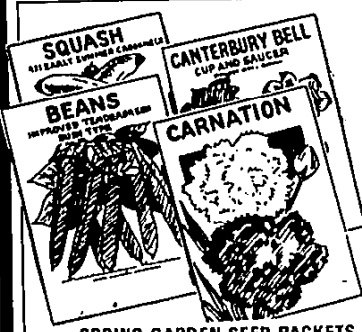
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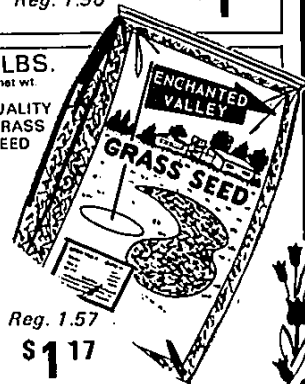
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