

# Organic Land Care *with*



"We simply can't go on as we are. Somehow we have to find the courage to reassert the once commonplace belief that human beings have a duty to act as the stewards of creation."

H.R.H. Charles Prince of Wales , San Francisco, 2005

**Organic Land Care with SOUL** is published monthly by the Society for Organic Urban Land Care

This newsletter is distributed free of charge to all SOUL members. Please feel free to share this publication.

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To find an organic land care professional in your area please visit the SOUL website at: [www.organiclandcare.org](http://www.organiclandcare.org)

## **December, 2005**

### **Research**

Chungui Lu et al., "Markedly different gene expression in wheat grown with organic or inorganic fertilizer", *Biological Sciences*, Volume 272, Number 1575 / September 22, 2005

For decades we've been told that plants don't care about the source of their nutrients - that it doesn't matter whether the nitrogen comes from organic or synthetic sources. Well, apparently there is a difference. Researchers in the U.K. have found that several plant genes have "surprisingly different expression levels" when nitrogen is supplied either in an organic or an inorganic form. The function of many of these genes is not yet known.

### **In the News**

The United States Environmental Protection Agency's newly proposed federal regulations titled "Protections for Subjects in Human Research," would allow pesticide testing on orphans and mentally handicapped children. More information at this website: <http://www.organicconsumers.org/epa6.cfm>. Our regulators are clearly putting the chemical industry's profits ahead of human welfare. Obviously this regulation must be stopped. Beyond that, we must stop supporting the toxin industry with our purchasing dollars. Organic gardening is so much easier anyway!

### **Did you know?**

Pesticides and chemical fertilizers are totally counterproductive. Here a quote from Dr. Phil Callaghan (U.S. Agricultural Research Service): "No method of insect control will ever work as long as poisoned crops outgas ethanol and ammonia in small parts per million. Those two powerful fermentation chemicals are the mark of a dying, decaying plant and serve as attractants to all plant-eating insects."

## Who has time for a Garden Log?

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The dark months of winter are the perfect time to create a bug binder to catalogue pest outbreaks in your garden. By tracking where pests have established, you put yourself one step ahead of the beasties that like to invade your plants.

Sit down on one of our dark and rainy days with a pen and paper or a book purchased specifically for this project. Make note of the type of season it has been and the successes and failures you have encountered.

The content you include does not have to be meticulous but remember the more information you have the more knowledge you are armed with. For my own garden I have a large book I purchased at one of our local markets. I keep this book beside my breakfast table and just make a few notes about each day...or every few days. As a small business owner I don't always have the time to spend detailing everything but what I do, goes a long way.

I include details on what is blooming and what insects have arrived. I make note on the timing of transplants and their following growth. The first year I started this habit I received some rewards, as I was able to note the total time to harvest and monitor the success of tried varieties. However, now that I am in year 6 of this endeavor I can review years past and know when to expect a bloom or when the slugs generally arrive. I must say, it was quite the eye opener this past season to discover that the arrival of our native tree frogs was 2 weeks earlier than in years past. Is this information useful? Indeed it is. Frogs are carnivores that feed on a variety of insects, which indicates to me that the food source was available and my garden was

more active than expected. If the frogs are active and the insects are active, then the temperatures must be a little higher than normal.

Sure enough, when I checked my soil temperatures we were 4 degrees above 2004. Since this was the case I knew that I could put my seeds in the ground a little earlier thus receiving an earlier bloom. I was also able to predict the arrival of aphids as I knew the timing coincided with that of the self seeded calendula starting to sprout. Given that, I prepared my roses for the onslaught by releasing just a few ladybugs to conquer the first arrival of pests.

Timing of insect arrival is not best determined by the date on the calendar but by what activity is playing out in the garden. In nature everything is interconnected with everything else and operates in a domino effect of response. You can use these indicators to track events in the garden, forecast pest outbreaks or bloom expectations. The trends you see develop will also aid in determining the plants needed to attract the appropriate natural predators. For example, if you are having a reoccurring thrips problem in your Gladiolas you will want to add plants that attract thrips predator Orius insidiosus or The Pirate Bug You will want to plant; shasta daisies or sunflowers.

Nature is a strong and powerful force that we can never control. What we need to do is work with the environment so that our relationships in the garden are symbiotic not antagonistic. In this way we will help shape the beauty nature has to offer.

### **Coming Up: Educational Opportunity for Landscape Professionals**

**1-Week Intensive program in Organic Horticulture, January 16th through 20th, 2006**

**Visit [www.gaiacollege.ca/professionals](http://www.gaiacollege.ca/professionals) for detailed information.**



### SOUL Holiday Social!!

All members are invited to join the board for drinks (b.y.o.) and appetizers on Saturday December 10th, 2005, at 7:00 p.m. at Dayle Cosway's place at 3485 Upper Terrace in Victoria, B.C.

Please RSVP to [dcosway@shaw.ca](mailto:dcosway@shaw.ca) - 250-598-6245