



Patty's Plants

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Why Organic Garden?

Organic Gardening is not just for hippies anymore. People may still think so. But organic gardening is for anyone that wants to make a change in our planet or even in their own lives. If you just want to cut down on one thing to make a difference and you love gardening, why not try?

For those of you already gardening this way, wonderful. For those of you who haven't, I'm not going to tell you to give up the way you've been gardening completely but I do want to tell you that there are safer and healthier choices for dealing with pests, diseases and even fertilizers.

Millions of gardeners all over the world are just beginning to consider the methods of organic gardening. "Going Green" is all over the news today. I have been gardening this way since 1981. The year I was married. I was using all kinds of chemicals in my job because I had a restricted use pesticide license. Chemicals were what my boss at the time wanted me to use. But at home I could do what I wanted. What I believed in. A safer and healthier way to grow my vegetables, herbs and flowers.

I'm not going to tell you it's the easiest way to garden, at least not right away. You have

to be a little patient. Especially after years of using chemicals. The natural predators may have packed up their bags and left your yard. The birds might not think you have the tastiest worms or bugs in the neighborhood. At first you might think you have more bugs than you can deal with. You'll be very tempted to get that old bottle of spray out. You know it's easier and in this day and age we are all in a hurry. We are all busy people and we want results now!



Organic garden for OUR planet.

The trouble with that is the good bugs die right along with the bad bugs. It will take a while to get the good bugs back in order for them to eat the next outbreak of bad bugs.

Organic gardening is just a simple way to work with nature instead of against it. I will give you a few tips in this newsletter on how to grow healthier veggies, herbs and flowers for you and the environment. You will feel good in knowing your doing your part in "Going Green".

Chemicals vs. Organic Fertilizing

Chemical fertilizers give plants what they need as far as nutrients go. Some are fast acting and are a good source for short term use. But in long term, using chemical fertilizers year after year does nothing to replenish the soil. The soil must be kept alive, without soil organisms your soil can become hard, airless and unproductive. Your plants may become more susceptible to pests and diseases.

Their growth becomes softer and can be attacked easier. This will frustrate you so you could be inclined to use even more chemicals. The worms will disappear—no food-no casting. Which are my favorite. You can go to:

www.pattysplants.com to see the article on worm castings.

"Feed the soil and the soil will feed your plants" See how on the next page.

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Companion Planting

Vegetable Love



*Tomatoes love basil & parsley

*Lettuce loves onions, radishes & carrots

*Corn loves beans, peas & pumpkins

*Potatoes love eggplant, cabbage, beans & corn

See the entire

Companion Planting Chart

at:

www.pattysplants.com

“Feed The Soil & The Soil Will Feed your Plants”

Preparing The Area- Build The Soil

If starting a new area, remove the soil, weeds or existing plants. Dig at least 6-8" deep to loose the dirt. A good draining soil is very important. Dig a hole in the area you've chosen, pour water in it to see how quickly it drains. If it's slow you'll have to amend the soil. You can do this by adding a soil conditioners or sand. In a 10x5 ft area you will need at least a 50# bag of sand. Add either composted cow, chicken, horse manure, worm casting, mushroom compost or your own homemade compost. 50-100# of compost to a 10x10 area. These are all wonderful soil conditioners that will help to build your soil.

Plants are only as good as the soil you grow them in. By working in organic matter over a period of time, you will get great results. Every year will get better and better. Add leaves to your garden in the fall and let the worms take over. You can top dress with organic matter around your flower, herb beds and even around your trees and shrubs. If you would like to

know what type of soil you have or what you will need to add to it, you can have a soil test done. There are soil test kits available which you can purchase at your local garden shop or call your county extension office and they will tell you how to take soil samples and where to send them in.



Prepare the Area

Here' one way of telling what type of soil to have:

Rub a little soil between your finger and thumb, if it's sticky and rolls into a ball you have **Clay**. **Sand** is coarse and gritty . **Silt** is smooth. **Limestone** is dry, crumbly and grayish in color. **Peat** is black and moist.

Good Bugs and Bad Bugs

Before you run to get any pest control out of your garage or garden shed first try to identify what kind of bug it is.

Assess the damage and see if it's something you can live with. Is it just cosmetic or is it going to effect the health of the plants. Many plants will out grow minor damage. The pest may have already left the area. If you must take care of the problem determine the best way to care of it. There are a lot of new products available that are organic. But even some of those can hurt the beneficial insects. A good daily spray of water will discourage some of those nasty pests.

Encourage beneficials insects: lady bugs eat hundreds of aphids a day. Birds, bats, frogs and even snakes eat many pests. Make your garden friendly for these hungry creatures. Buy or build bird, bat butterfly and toad houses.

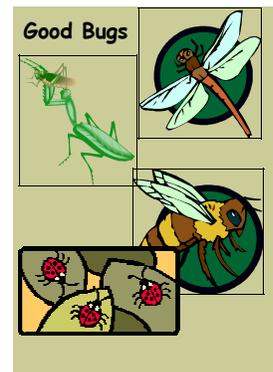
Here's a list of beneficial insects & what they love to eat:

*Lace bugs- aphids and many other pests

*Praying mantis-It will eat almost every insect it sees, including grasshoppers.

*Dragonflies- flies and mosquitoes.

*Lady Bugs- aphids, scale, spider mites and more.



For a list of more good bugs and the bad, go to: www.pattysplants.com

Animal Pests

Our four legged creatures sometimes have a hay day in our gardens. They can actually do more harm than some insects.

There's fencing, live traps, scare tactics like: motion detectors. You can set a radio or sprinkler to go off if anything nears your garden. There are also a lot of organic repellants you can purchase at your local garden shop. Deer Scram is one of my favorites, it works for bunnies too. For the first time last year I didn't have to replace my broccoli and lettuce plants when I used Deer Scram. Find a shop that carries it or order online. It really works. There are also homemade remedies.

Here's one recipe. But watch out it will keep you away too!

Homemade Deer Solution

Mix three rotten eggs or 1 qt sour milk in 1 gallon water. Add 1 teaspoon finely ground cayenne pepper. Spray or sprinkle [with watering can] . Renew after any heavy rain or at least once a month. It is very unpleasant to prepare and apply but you won't notice the smell after it dries.



Let's have salad for lunch!

Companion Planting

The thoughts on companion planting is that some plants have other plants they either like or dislike. Combinations have helped certain plants grow better or have less insect and disease problems. Some might be considered folklore and others have been scientifically proven. For instance, tomatoes love basil. We know that they definitely taste great together but they also help each other grow and have better flavor. You can also put basil leaves on a bowl of tomatoes and it helps deter flies. Plant garlic with your roses to keep aphids away. (Garlic chives work for this too.) Companion plants can attract beneficial insects to attack the bad bugs. The companion plant will act like a decoy and lure bad bugs away. Some companion plants are not there to attack or deter insects. They can be a helpful support, beans planted with corn, for example. The

corn is a great support for pole beans or even peas. Pumpkins planted with corn are also helpful if you have trouble with raccoons. Raccoons don't like walking on the rough leaves of the pumpkins. Plant roots can also have an helpful effect on some plants. Marigold roots have been shown to reduce harmful nematodes in the soil. Bean and pea roots supply nitrogen to the soil. Whatever your feelings are on companion planting, it can't hurt to try a few combinations. See what works and what doesn't. Just have fun with it. For a list of more companion plants go to:

www.pattysplants.com



Companion planting for our health and environment

Controlling Weeds

What is a weed? It's just a plant growing where it is not wanted. Dandelions can be good or bad. If you use the young leaves in salads or make dandelion wine it is a good thing. If you just don't like them, well I guess they are bad. There are a number of different methods that organic gardeners can choose. The one I like the best is mulching. I don't have time to keep weeding. You can use straw, dried grass clipping (untreated), fine shredded cedar bark, compost or even newspapers.

Mulch protects the plants from drying out on hot days. It helps to keep your plants clean from muddy splash-ups during watering or rainy days. Mulch can protect plants from any soil-borne diseases that could also splash up on the leaves. It will prevent damage to trees and shrubs by protecting their stems, bark and surface roots from damage when your teenage son gets to close with the lawn mower, weed whacker and edger. Mulch helps prevent soil compaction by providing a cushion to walk on. Walking on bare soil will compact it reducing its aeration and ability to drain well. Mulch enriches the soil as it breaks down and releases nutrients back into the ground. Decomposed mulch will encourage microbial organisms which are beneficial to healthy plants. It also makes things look tidier.

Corn Gluten Meal is a powder created as a by-product during a milling process of corn. It is used in farm animal feed, dog foods and fish food. It contains 60% protein and 10% nitrogen. Corn Gluten is also used as a pre-emergent weed control. The nitrogen in it provides a small amount of fertilizer which helps to green up the lawn. It must be applied before the weed seeds germinate to work. It only prevents seeds from germinating so it does not work on perennial weeds that return

from their root system. You can not use it in the garden unless your vegetable or flower seeds have already sprouted. You can spread corn gluten on your lawn 4-6 weeks before weeds sprout so that means very early spring. You can also reapply it again later in the season to prevent any late season weeds from germinating.

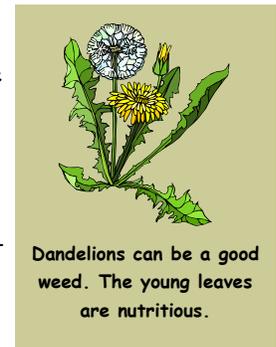
Boiling Water Use boiling water to control weeds. It will kill any plant growth it touches. It is great for killing annual weed and can control perennial weeds. It is a popular non-toxic way to kill weeds growing in cracks and in driveways. Just simply boil in a tea pot pour on weeds. Please be careful not to burn yourself.

Hand Pulling & Hoeing is the most common and time consuming if you have used any mulch.

Vinegar controls thistle. It will harm good plants too. Vinegar is inexpensive and environmentally safe. It is easy to use, simply place some undiluted vinegar in a sprayer and saturate the leaves. Usually in 6 to 48 hours you will see results.

Intensive Planting is a way to grow plants by placing the close together so the weeds don't have any space to grow. It is not a good way for vegetables but it can work for flowerbeds.

I use mulching with grass clipping in my veggie garden and intensive planting in my herb and perennial garden. I still hand weed a few areas but it doesn't take as long and is actually relaxing for me.



Dandelions can be a good weed. The young leaves are nutritious.

Patty' Plants



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March Newsletter will include articles on:

- Getting your garden ready for spring.
- What vegetables to plant first.
- Hummingbirds, getting your hummingbird feeders out early.
- Growing healthy tomatoes and peppers.
- Easy edible container gardens with herbs and vegetables.



Making Compost

Compost is a dark, rich, crumbly, earthy smelling mix that consists of mostly decaying organic matter. When it is ready, it should not smell sour or stinky but like fresh wet dirt after a spring rain. There are many different ways to compost. Most are very easy to do. These are some of the composting methods:

No Fuss, for the busy or lazy gardener (that's me)

This is the easiest way to compost yard waste. In a heap or in a bin layer chopped yard waste. Leaves, grass, weeds etc. as they accumulate. Water as needed, so the compost stays moist. In 12-18 months the materials at the bottom and center of the pile will be dark and crumbly. Take the top uncomposted material off to start a new pile.

Bucket Compost This is a small scale garden waste method. Take dry matter (leaves, dried grass, peat moss, soil) add kitchen scrapes and keep it moist. If it starts to smell add more dry ingredients. When the bucket is half full, let it stand for 1-3 months. You need to mix it once or twice a week. It should be ready in 1-3 months.

Fast Compost This is the fastest way to build a "Hot Pile" in a heap or bin. You must turn it frequently to make this work. Layer and mix green materials with dry until you have a good sized pile (3x3x3). Keep the pile moist. Turn the pile at least 2 times a week to give it the air that it needs. This will make it compost faster. I should be ready to use in 2-15 weeks. Add more or less of green or dried materials if

it's not heating up properly.

Worm Compost Worms will turn food and garden waste into rich nutritious fertilizer and soil amendment. I'm just learning about this method. I've always bought ready made worm castings and I truly believe in them. You need food wastes (no meat or bones) newspapers and red worms and a special worm box or bin. I will right more about this at www.pattysplants.com.



Compost your kitchen scrapes except for meat, cheese & bones.

Sheet composting Spread leaves or plant residues over the surface of your garden in the fall. Turn the materials into the soil then or wait until spring. I do use this method too.

Compost tea Put composted manure in a burlap bag or old stocking an sock in water to make a liquid fertilizer. Use for watering transplants, garden flowers, vegetables and container plants. Apply to the soil or make a 1/2 strength solution and put in a sprayer.

Trenching or dig a large hole. This is the method my Grandmother used. Every day she would send my grandfather out with a bucket of kitchen scrapes (no bones or meat) to put in a large hole he had dug for her. They covered it with a heavy flat board. In 2-6 months her compost was ready to use.



Southern Wisconsin Vegetable Planting Guide



Email: patty@pattysplants.com

| <u>Vegetable</u> | <u>Planning Time</u> | |
|--------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|
| | <u>Indoors</u> | <u>Outdoors</u> |
| Asparagus | | April 15 |
| Bean, bush lima | | May 25 |
| Bean, bush & pole | | May 10 |
| Beet | | April 15 |
| Broccoli | March 15 | (Plants) May 1 |
| Brussels sprouts | | (Seeds) May 15 |
| Cabbage, early | March 15 | (Plants) May 1 |
| Cabbage, late | | (Seeds) May 15 |
| Carrot | | April 15 |
| Cauliflower | March 15 | (Plants) May 1 |
| Chard | | April 15 |
| Corn | | May 10 & May 25 |
| Cucumbers | | (Seeds) June 1 |
| Eggplant | March 15 | (Plants) June 1 |
| Kohlrabi | | April 15 |
| Lettuce, leaf | March 15 | (Plants) May 1 |
| Muskmelon | May 1 | (Plants) May 20 |
| Onion | Feb. 15 | (Plants) May 1 |
| Onion sets | | April 15 |
| Parsnip | | April 15 |
| Pea | | April 15 |
| Pepper | April 1 | (Plants) June 1 |
| Potato, early, midseason | | April 15 |
| Potato, late | | April 15 |
| Pumpkin | May 1 | (Seeds) May 10 (Plants) May 20 |
| Radish | | April 15 |
| Rhubarb | | April 15 |
| Spinach | | April 15 |
| Squash, summer | | May 20 |
| Squash, winter | May 1 | (Plants) May 20 |
| Tomato | April 15 | (Plants) May 20 |
| Watermelon | | May 20 |