



Northumberland Heights Community Garden

INTRODUCTION TO NATURAL (ORGANIC) GARDENING 101

Brought to you by Soul Vision www.soulvision.ca 905.342.2320

3 Basic Words

- Organic Community Garden
- What do each of these terms mean to you?
- Is this one term, or 3 separate important concepts working together?
- “Up until a few days ago, I saw this as a physical location where people can come to grow their own food. I am now learning that Organic Community Gardens means so much more”.

What is Organic Gardening?

Can be different things to different people (without chemicals)

- Healthier / Better tasting food
- Creative outlet
- Personal growth opportunity
- Getting closer to nature/self sustaining/smaller ecological footprint
- Family time
- Way to save money

The greatest gift of the garden is the restoration of the five senses.

~Hanna Rion (author, landscaper, gardener)

Organic

- Big “O” vs little “o”
- We are not just trying to meet some government standards, we are practicing spiritual ecology and honouring our Mother Earth with everything we do

Organic Garden History

- Prior to the late 1800's, all gardening was organic gardening. Many indigenous cultures continue to grow their food this way.
- With the industrial revolution and the 'bigger, better, faster' mentality came pesticides, heavy machinery to plow fields, hybrid seeds and many other "ADVANCES" – people were immediately speaking up and defending 'organic' agricultural practices.
 - J.I. Rodale (Rodale Press and Rodale Institute – 1950s) coined 'organic'
 - Rudolph Steiner (father of Waldorf Education and Biodynamic Gardening) (1920s)

New Language

- Permaculture – (next slide)
- Biodynamic (garden is a whole living system)
- Better than Organic (SANER – Sustainable, All-Natural, and Environmentally Responsible)
- GMO/Pesticide/chemical free
- Spiritual Ecology

- Permaculture: Coined in the 1970s by Australian Bill Mollison: "a beneficial assembly of plants and animals in relation to human settlements, mostly aimed towards household and community self reliance, and perhaps as a 'commercial endeavor' only arising from a surplus from the system."
- Biodynamic Agriculture
 - Rudolph Steiner -- Biodynamics employs the philosophy that the farm should be seen and treated as a whole organism and should be a closed self-nourishing system. Integrates astrology (lunar planting/star charts, etc.
- - *Organic* food is produced by farmers who emphasize the use of renewable resources and the conservation of soil and water to enhance environmental quality for future generations. *Organic* meat, poultry, eggs, and dairy products come from animals that are given no antibiotics or growth hormones. *Organic* food is produced without using most conventional pesticides; fertilizers made with synthetic ingredients or sewage sludge; bioengineering; or ionizing radiation
 - Heirloom
 - Also called "*Heritage*." Produce grown from an open pollinated seed variety usually at least 50-years-old; The flavor of the *heirloom* food is thought to be superior because it is not cross-bred to create a product that will withstand cross-country shipping, or have a perfectly blemish-free skin.

The foundation of Organic gardening

Principle #1

- We don't grow plants - Soil grows plants
- **WE GROW SOIL**

Principle #2

- Observe and emulate Nature
- What is your garden telling you?
- Your garden is an ecosystem – focus on relationships

Isn't Conventional Gardening Easier?

Divide into 2 groups to Brainstorm:

Some people think that it is:

But only if...

- You don't eat the food
- You don't mind contaminating the Earth (land, water, soil, air and inhabitants)
- Fixation on the **plant** - using controls at the expense of everything else

What are these controls?

- GMOs
- Radiation (control e-coli and salmonella)
- Pesticides
- Herbicides
- Fertilizers

What does 'OUR' Natural (organic) gardening entail?

- Soil quality
- Air quality
- Water (quality)
- Seeds
- Birds
- Insects
- Weeds
- Spiritual Practice
- Patience
- Time
- Openness



Balance

- Efforts to control or impose your 'own' balance often backfires

What does an organic garden look like?

- Not 'picture' perfect grocery store produce
- Not consistent – nature controls the results
- (share hail story)- Dan raised beds
- Result of patience – usually takes years to establish an ecosystem that supports your goals (worms, birds, healthy soil)

So, where do you start?

1. Soil
2. Seedlings
3. Garden design

What is your role?

- You are a steward – feed the soil, not the plants
- Therefore most demanding is the planning:
 - Where to put the garden
 - What to plant
 - Where to plant
 - When to plant
 - How to plant
 - How to feed the soil
 - What to use (compost, mulch)
 - How to care and nurture

Benefits

- Once established your time and money pays off
- Healthy garden that 'runs' itself as part of the ecosystem you foster
- Inexpensive in the long run – no need for pesticides, herbicides, conventional fertilizers, tools
- Simple – basic tools and needs – weeding is easier because soil is loose, rich – garden plants work together to protect each other and the soil.

Benefits

- Varieties of heirloom plants are delicious, beautiful and like nothing you'll ever find at the store!
- What we eat and do affects ourselves, our children, our planet – no harmful chemicals / sprays being manufactured or released into our global environment.
- It feels great to provide healthy delicious foods for your family and to get involved in creating something (no Xbox could ever replace the excitement that comes from unearthing a huge potato!)

Getting Seeds & Seedlings

- Local/national suppliers
- Seedy Saturdays/Sundays
- Seed List provided

Community

- What do we mean by Community?
 - As of 1950, there were more than 94 definitions of the word community
- Why would that be important?
- A group of like-minded individuals who work and live together to the benefit of each member (and the rest of the world)
 - They do not have to be located in the same geographical area (especially due to the internet)

Garden

A Garden as Defined by Nature

- Several years ago, I asked nature to define what it means when it uses the word "garden." Well, their definition was so helpful to those who have read it that I decided to include it here. It clearly explains something I've been trying to get across to people for years. That is:

Where there is form, there is nature. Where nature and humans interact, there is a garden. Where there is a garden, there is an implied co-creative partnership. Perelandra Centre for Nature Research