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JOHN'S CORNER:

NEWS FROM THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF SOIL AND PLANTS

by John Ferguson

A paper in the journal, Proceedings of The National Academy of Sciences, has found an unexpected role of large scale fires (grasslands or forest) whether man-made slash and burn or from lightning. The organic nitrogen from those fires is swept up into the atmosphere and then deposited on forests. In nature everything is recycled and not wasted.

Another mystery of nature is how some plants trap and eat insects. Research at North Carolina State has found that Venus Fly traps are pollinated by certain insect species and the Venus fly trap does not trap and eat these pollinators. How the plant distinguishes pollinators from dinner is unknown.

The United States Presidents Cancer Panel (USPCP) has found that of the over 80,000 chemicals in use only a couple hundred have ever been tested for safety. "Their 2010 report written by scientists and medical specialists in the field clearly states that environmental toxins, including pesticides, are the main causes of cancers". This report was published by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the National Institute of Health, and the National Cancer Institute. I find it amazing that these independent groups find the chemicals toxic but the EPA, USDA, and FDA whom are run by presidential appointees from the companies that manufacture these dangerous chemicals find them safe.

A growing practice (pardon the pun) is using wastewater for irrigation of plants. A study published in the Journal of Environmental Science, Toxicology and Food Technology showed that irrigating agricultural fields with waste water, may result in the hazardous build up of heavy metals (copper, lead, zinc, nickel, chromium and cadmium). The pesticides, agrochemical and chemical fertilizers are also known to be major sources of heavy metals. Comment: It amazes me that so many companies and government regulators think our food supply is a great place to get rid of toxic chemicals. The reasons to grow as much as possible of one's own food organically continues to increase.

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A paper in Nature Ecology & Evolution found that weed resistance to herbicides is increasing faster than new more toxic products can keep up. These super weeds are reducing crop yields and lowering profits for farmers. The toxic chemistry rescue methods have failed miserably from agriculture to our back yards. It is time for people to wake up and only use the modern methods based on soil biology that we call "Organic". These modern methods give better results, at lower cost and do not have negative health and environmental consequences.

A few weeks ago the Dr. Mercola e-newsletter had a good article on the microbes in our guts and our immune system. When our microbiome falls out of balance or loses its diversity, it can impact many of the processes in our bodies and place one at risk for chronic disease. The result is we get sick and have major health problems. The biggest risk factors are antibiotics, heart burn pills, fluoridated and chlorinated water, processed and refined sugar, processed and refined foods, bioengineered foods like GMO's and agricultural chemicals, NSAIDs (Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, stress, and pollution. The book "The Hidden Half of Nature - The microbial Roots of Life and Health", by David Montgomery and Anne Bikle explore the link between the soil microbiome and the human microbiome. David and Anne will be speaking at the OHBA educational event March 21 at the United Way on regenerative agriculture - healing the soil & human microbiome.

The organization, "The Truth About Cancer" had a recent paper on the element Iodine (I). Iodine deficiency has reached epidemic proportions worldwide over the last 20 years. The World Health Organization (WHO) now estimates that *two billion* people are now iodine deficient. The propaganda of our officials is "The issues of physical and intellectual development have been virtually eliminated through the iodization of salt". Several factors prevent this from being a true statement. First the RDA that was set in the 1940's was only enough to prevent goiters, not to maximize health. The amount of iodine in Americans' urine between the decade of the 1970's and the decade of the 1980's dropped by 50%.

Several things have happened since then. Health conscious individuals began avoiding commercial sources of salt because of the toxins used to make it. Today's table salt has harmful halides in it such as fluoride sodium bicarbonate added to it. Toxic chemicals like



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fluoride, chlorine, bromide and others prevent the body from absorbing iodine! If you remember from our study of the elements last year these halides are in the same chemical category as iodine and can replace it. Bread manufacturers have replaced iodine with bromide as a dough softener. Fluoride, chlorine and bromide are found in swimming pools that we expose our skin to. Another chemical called perchlorate that contains chlorine is now found in many products, and of course chlorine and fluorine is in our public water systems. A few symptoms of low levels of iodine are: swelling or soreness in the throat, weight gain, fatigue, muscle soreness, brain fog, mood disorders like depression or anxiety, hair loss, dry skin, several types of cancers, etc. The above coupled with a lack of iodine in our food supply from growing on nutrient depleted poor soils are a few of the reasons. Foods high in iodine include seafood, kelp, cranberries, strawberries, and green leafy vegetables. This is why more and more gardeners are growing their own organic vegetables on soils that have had trace minerals added to them so their plants can absorb them. Good sources of trace minerals are greensand, basalt sand, and granite sand that can be added to any soil to increase its fertility. Other products from the ocean like fish emulsion and seaweed products can also provide some iodine for the soil. The Microlife line of organic products includes Ocean Harvest (fish emulsion) and Super Seaweed that are both great products that I use personally.

A study published in the journal Food Science & Nutrition confirms other studies that have shown that dairy products (milk, cheese, butter) from grass fed beef are of much higher quality than products from feedlots where the cows were fed grain and GMO contaminated feed. They found the organic milk was perfectly balanced between Omega 3's and Omega 6 fatty acids. The organic milk from grass fed cows also had a lot more CLA (conjugated linoleic acid) which helps protect our brains from dementia. While raw milk has the most of these good fats, the pasteurization process required by the USDA destroys a lot of the benefits.

Another article in Dr. Mercola's newsletter mentions the "farm effect" where children raised on a farm have less allergies than those who were not. European children whom consume raw milk have stronger immune systems with more "T" cells which help with allergies and asthma. The Amish which regularly drink raw milk, are among the least allergic populations in the world.