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JOHN'S CORNER:

NEWS FROM THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF SOIL AND PLANTS

by John Ferguson

One of the benefits of gardening is our health, from exposure to nature, to vitamin D production and exercise. In addition it is hard to beat the flavor of home grown vegetables and fruits. I read the quote below the other day on one of the alternate health care websites:

"We believe that the healthcare crisis that exists in America is not the result of insurance companies, but is instead the result of severe nutritional, physical, social and financial stressors that have created an unprecedented burden of illness and chronic disease. The sheer magnitude of these stress-related epidemics coupled with the runaway cost of "modern" medicine has earned America's healthcare system the dubious distinction as the most expensive, and among the least effective in the developed world."

I finished reading two books this week that help explain why the above quote is so true and why we need to grow as much of our own food as possible or at least purchase organically grown and from local farmers whenever possible.

The first book is: "genetically engineered FOOD - A self defense guide for consumers", 2nd edition, Ronnie Cummins and Ben Lilliston, Marlow and Company, 2004, ISBN- 1-56924-469-3.

This book is a few years old but everything is still relevant and the health problems caused by eating GMO foods have become far worse over the last few years.

The second book is: "Death by Regulation - How We are robbed of a Golden Age of Health and How We Can Reclaim It", Mary J. Ruwart, PhD, 2018, Sun Star Press, ISBN: 978-0-96332336-1-5

This book is about the FDA and the corruption within it, that has led to the pre-mature deaths of tens of millions of Americans and to the tremendous increase in the costs of prescription medicines and health care cost that is bankrupting America. This book explains how the FDA has "muzzled manufacturers of vitamins, foods, and other forms of nutritional support, thereby sentencing the American public to debilitating diseases that might otherwise been prevented." This book is written from the point of view of a researcher whom worked for a drug company for many years.

A book I reviewed a few years ago, tells essentially the same story from a medical practitioner's point of view.



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FDA - Failure, Deception, Abuse - The Story of an Out-of-Control Government Agency and What It Means For Your Health , Life Extension Foundation, Praktikoa Books, 2010, ISBN: 978-1-60766-001-9
The point of all this, is that if we want to be healthy we have to grow at least some of our own food and buy local organic whenever we can.

A study published in the Journal Osteoporosis International has found many people around the world no longer consume enough calcium (Ca) which leads to many health problems. When growing plants, calcium is a required nutrient and a shortage will cause problems (e.g. blossom end rot on tomatoes). To ensure one has good levels of calcium available in the soil we often use supplements. A couple good one are bone meal and greensand. For years bone meal has been a good source of calcium and magnesium for plants. For more information on bone meal see <https://www.natureswayresources.com/nl/87OrganicFertilizer21.pdf>. Greensand is also a good source of calcium and may other minerals. <https://www.natureswayresources.com/nl/91OrganicFertilizer23.pdf>
Note: Eating food with glyphosate (Round-Up) on it prevents the body from absorbing calcium even if calcium is in the food.

A study by the University of Missouri has found that infertility affects 20% of the American population and it cost billions of dollars in the livestock industry. They found that zinc (Zn) plays a key role in fertility. Good zinc levels lead to a much higher quality of sperm. Note: Eating food with glyphosate (Round-Up) on it prevents the body from absorbing zinc even if zinc is in the food. Livestock (cows and pigs) are fed GMO corn and soy that have even higher levels of glyphosate. When we eat meat from these factory farmed animals we ingest additional glyphosate. Another reason to eat meat from only organic grass fed animals.

I have often talked about avoiding sewage sludge (biosolids) in our vegetable gardens and here is another reason. A study from the University of York (published in the journal Chemosphere 2018) has found that birds whom eat earthworms or maggots living in the sludge absorb the many pharmaceuticals including things like Prozac. As a result the birds become less attractive to the opposite sex even at extremely low levels of these chemicals and it leads to failure to breed.

An article in the Health Science Institute publication volume 19 (October 2016) was on beneficial herbs. Comfrey (*Symphytum officinale*) helps when treating pain and injury. This plant has been used for centuries for its miraculous healing powers from broken bones, damaged connective tissue and muscles. Polygonum or Smartweed calms runaway inflammation and helps in healing wounds, tendons and cartilage injuries.

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A recent report at the annual meeting of the Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry showed that when sparrows ingested small amounts of the neonicotinoid pesticide imidacloprid as might be found on eating a few small seeds, they lost weight and flew confused migratory patterns. A study in the journal Science last year found 86% of all honey samples tested were contaminated by these pesticides.

In the Soil Science Society of America Journal (February 2018) there was a study on using chipped branches from pruning's as a mulch. The mulch significantly reduced rainfall induced erosion, soil sealing and crusting, which promoted infiltration of water into the soil. Depending on the mulch thickness it reduced rainfall run-off from 16-90% and sediment yield by 41-99%! The mulch was processed to be less than 3/4 inch in particle size. The researchers only used a single species mulch. Note: Numerous research by others has shown that multi-species mulches work even better. This is what is known as Native Mulches and can be the highest quality mulch available.

In the August/September (2018) issue of Mother Earth News there is a short article titled "Hospital Farms Growing Across the Country". Hospitals are signing contracts with organic growers to produce food for their kitchens. Other hospitals are making it a priority to buy direct from local farms to ensure higher quality food as part of their care to patients. Remember the old saying "Let food be thy medicine".

The National Wildlife Federation has a program to get your landscape certified as a wildlife habitat. Their website has instructions on what and how to do it. With a little creativity all forms of gardens can be certified. One can get the just certification for a \$20 fee or a very nice garden sign and certification for \$50. <https://www.nwf.org/Garden-for-Wildlife/Certify>

The Fall 2018 issue of Popular Science has several great non-technical articles on microbes, and several other articles on nature.

The Texas Parks and Wildlife now has 9 regional driving maps that can be printed for free or purchased, that show native plants and the wildlife one might expect. It covers parks, hiking trails, nature centers, historic sites, and hot spots ideal for wildlife viewing. Over 950 locations are marked. <https://tpwd.texas.gov/huntwild/wildlife/wildlife-trails/>