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## **JOHN'S CORNER:**

### **NEWS FROM THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF SOIL AND PLANTS**

*by John Ferguson*

For thousands of years the only method for the disposition of human remains was burying a body or burning a body. This way the elements in one's body was returned to the soil to generate new life. Somewhere along the way we lost our connection with nature and started embalming bodies and placing them in coffins where they did not return to nature. Next, we started cremating human bodies which is very energy intensive and creates large amounts of greenhouse gasses. However, often those that were cremated often chose to have their ashes scattered over a garden and return their elements to the soil.

The USDA has done studies on using composting as a disposal method for animal mortalities from chickens and swine to horses. They found it is the cleanest, safest, most pathogen free and most cost-effective method. My experience confirms this, as on rare occasions over the years at my facility we have had an animal hospital bring us a dead horse for disposal. After 90 days we could not even find bones or teeth as they had all been broken down by the microbes and turned back into the elements they were made from. It was very easy and effective hence several years ago, when I saw a sign that said, "Trespassers Will Be Composted" I had to buy it for our sales office. Recently, the State of Washington has passed a law allowing composting as a modern burial method to allow citizens to return to the most natural and lowest cost disposal method. A company called "Recompose" which worked with Washington State University to develop the technology, is the first to offer this type of service. Now the old composting joke can come true, "Compost Grandma and enjoy her forever".



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We have known for years that many species of algae have the ability to take nitrogen from the atmosphere and convert it into a plant or microbe usable form, IF certain trace elements are present in the soil. This is another reason to apply a good re-mineralizer product every few years to one's yard and garden. A new research paper published in the Journal Environmental Science and Pollution Research (November 2018) by the Desert Research Institute in Las Vegas has found that the freshwater algae *Nannochloris* has the ability to remove several endocrine disrupting chemicals (EDC's) that are harmful to humans and animals from waste water from sewage treatment plants. Another study published in the journal Environmental Pollution (2019) has found the same thing. The studies suggest this species of fresh water algae would be a good candidate to use in an algal pond or constructed wetland to clean up waste water, biodegrading these dangerous chemicals before allowing the waste water to be discharged into our rivers and streams. Other studies in the past have shown that certain species of algae were effective in removing heavy metals from waste water. Using both potentially offers a solution to a major environmental health problem.

The newsletter "Truth About Cancer" has several recent articles on Ayurvedic herbs that help fight cancer by Manuela Boyle, PhD. The first was "withania" ( *Withania somnifera* ) that has been found to inhibit the growth of gastric cancer cells. Extracts from this plant block the growth of this cancer and stop its progression. The herb is an anti-metastatic and anti-inflammatory. Turmeric is another herb that has been used for 5,000 years to treat health problems that comes from *Curcuma longa*. It has been found to have anti-proliferative, anti-oxidant, anti-ischemic, and anti-cancer properties (both curative and preventative).

<https://thetruthaboutcancer.com/withania-turmeric-ayurveda/>



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Speaking of growing plants for our health, a study published in the journal Nutrition Research found that a compound in pomegranates known as punicalagin fights cancer by causing cancer cell death. Another study in the journal Food and Chemical Toxicology found that polyphenols from pomegranates helped suppress the growth of colon cancer cells and another study published in the journal Nutrition and Cancer found that pomegranates help suppress the growth of breast tumors. Pomegranates have also fight inflammation, lower blood pressure, improve memory, boost endurance, reduce joint pain, fight bacterial and fungal infections, and lower the risk of heart disease. Not to mention they are a great source of fiber, protein, vitamins C & K, folate, and potassium (K). Pomegranates grow well in Houston and along the gulf coast, they have beautiful flowers that are loved by many pollinators and they are drought and pollution tolerant. What more can one want in a plant? Natural News (May, 2019).

More and more people are turning to organic methods and products to take control of their health. According to the Organic Trade Association sales of organic products in the United States reached \$ 52.5 Billion in 2018!

Brenda did an interview with Dr. Tallamy above. Doug is a great speaker and extremely informative. He taught a great seminar for OHBA a few years ago that was a sellout, hence he has been invited back. To learn more or register go to [www.ohbaonline.org](http://www.ohbaonline.org) .

However, I want to warn you that reading his book can be dangerous and expensive. A few years ago, after reading his book mentioned below, I was so pumped up, my wife and I purchased some land near La Grange so I could have a blank canvas to practice what I had

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learned (the cover story I used was to buy some land to build our retirement home on). Below is a short book review I did at the time:

**"Bringing Nature Home - How You Can Sustain Wildlife with Native Plants"**

by Douglas W. Tallamy, Timber Press, 2014, Edith Printing,

ISBN-13: 978-0-88192-992-8

This book is for anyone who has a yard or garden and loves nature. It is one of the most interesting books I have read in a long time. Linking everything from bird watching and small animals to how and why energy from the sun flows through an eco-system like a yard or garden to the decline of butterfly and moth species.

It is a fascinating account of the interactions between plants, wildlife, insects and the trees, shrubs, and vines that feed them. It explains how exotic introduced plants can hinder the growth of our fauna disrupting the relationship between native fauna and native plants.

As the Washington Post stated; " Provides the rationale behind the use of native plants, a concept that has rapidly been gaining momentum.... The text makes a case for native plants and animals in a compelling fashion."

This book drives home the point that the use of native plants in our gardens and landscapes is critical for birds and other wildlife preventing their extinction.

The book was easy to read and the photos were excellent. Many of the ideas and concepts presented I have known for years but this is the first time I have seen them integrated and connected. It has me thinking what can I remove and how can I change my garden to make it even better.