



NEWS FROM THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF SOIL AND PLANTS

By John Ferguson

I attended the Urban Gardening and Farming Conference last week hosted by the University of Houston Downtown. A few take aways from the presenters:

- The USA is losing 174 acres of good agricultural land per hour due to chemical abuse
- just a 2% increase in our soil organic matter in our agricultural soils would offset all the greenhouse gasses produced in the world
- health care costs in the USA are costing \$1 trillion per year in direct costs and an additional \$3 trillion in indirect costs for an aggregate of \$ 4 trillion per year. All due to the poor quality of our food supply. This is covered up by the media and hidden since these costs are socialized.
- there are a minimum of over 690 million malnourished people in the world

Life spans are no longer increasing. A study by researchers at the University of Bergen in Norway (2022) has found that our obesogenic, disease promoting and pro-ageing diets are shortening our lives. More reasons to eat organic foods whenever possible and grow as much of our own fruits and vegetables as possible.

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There was a very interesting article in the August (2022) issue of Physics Today titled “Does New Physics Lurk Inside Living Matter”. In nature we observe many things that are not fully explained.

In physics it does not matter if something is left or right-handed, but why does life use left-handed amino acids but right-handed sugars? Why do single cell organisms come together and cooperate like a single organism (ex. Slime molds)?

There is a new theory that evidence is growing, that Information is a physical reality as is mass or temperature. This has led some scientists to propose a new dictum that “Life = Matter + Information.”

New ideas are being presented that Information may be negative entropy. “We are beginning to understand that biological information goes far beyond optimizing the energy budget; it often acts as a type of manager.” Another way of stating the idea is that information is actually a physical quantity that can profoundly affect the way matter behaves.

The study of life from flatworms, bacteria, to tree and fungal networks are providing more evidence of this every day. Biological molecules like sucrose or vitamin-D3 have unique electron conductance properties associated with them. Why? This has led to a new field of study called Quantum Biology.

There is so much about God’s creation that we do not know or even come close to understanding. When I read an article like this, I remember the verse “Study Nature and Let It Teach You.”

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Plants are smart as the excellent new book for gardeners “Teaming With Bacteria” by Jeff Lowenfels explains. Another example from the journal *Plants, People Planet* (2022) was on how some plants analyze the chemicals produced by some insects and then reproduce them to attract the insects in their traps.

We see this in species from orchids to gorteria daises to carnivorous plants like jack in the pulpit. When studying *Arisaema angustatum* and *A. penninsulae* they found only male fungus gnats. The plant copies the scent of female gnats luring the males into the trap.

Researchers at the university of Queensland in Australia have identified a species of insects that will eat polystyrene or what we know as Styrofoam. These super worms are actually the larva of the darkling beetle. *Journal of Microbial Genomics* (2022).

One of my favorite plants is the *Cacao* plant even though I have never grown it, as I love chocolate. Pure cocoa is highly nutritious, an excellent source of anti-oxidants, amongst other benefits.

A study in the journal *Nutritional Neuroscience* (2022) has found many benefits from eating dark chocolate. The study found that substances in dark chocolate counteract several factors that contribute to mental decline. Regular eating of dark chocolate can reverse the effects of stress and have beneficial effects on memory and learning.

Note: Other research has shown that chocolate with lots of sugar or corn syrup destroys the benefits.

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