



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

**By John Ferguson**

**We** often talk about the importance of growing more of our own food organically and re-mineralizing the soil. Many medical doctors are unaware of the critical importance of quality nutrition in preventing disease and the link to soil health. However, due to COVID that is changing as this excerpt from a recent medical newsletter indicates.

“Nutrient deficiencies are a major cause of failure of the immune system to prevent a serious infection and can cause the multiple organ failure and sepsis that occurs in the cytokine storm caused by COVID-19 pneumonia. The problem is not just a diet deficient in essential nutrients such as vitamin Bs, C, D, and minerals such as magnesium, zinc, and selenium -- which often happens in our "modern lifestyle" from processed fast food.

In any serious infection such as viral pneumonia, the body's resources can be quickly depleted fighting the infection, which can cause deficiencies of the very nutrients the body needs to successfully engage the immune system and fight the infection.”

**Orthomolecular Medicine News Service, Dec 28, 2022**

**With the recent arctic blast killing many plants, this spring is a great time to start growing more of one's own fruits, vegetables, and herbs in the empty spaces on re-mineralized soils amended with lots of good compost. Good compost is full of beneficial microbes that help plants absorb all the elements needed.**

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Many customers are experiencing an increased interest in native plants after the major freezes the last few years. They not only look beautiful, good for butterflies, hummingbirds, and other pollinators, as well as birds and wildlife, they are also heat, drought, flood, and cold tough. A question we often get asked “Is there any restrictions on removing lawns and wild scaping using native plants?”

Often the customer tells us, their HOA prevents them from practicing environmentally friendly landscaping like xeriscaping or wildscaping.

If one hears this from a HOA representative, they are either ignorant of the law or not telling you the truth. As a result of the benefits of environmentally friendly landscaping, the State of Texas passed a law a few years ago preventing HOA’s from keeping folks from practicing conservation, rainwater harvesting, and recycling.

Texas is considered a drought prone state and we are also running out of cheap water from our aquifers. To protect our future, we need to conserve water and use other environmentally friendly options. That is why just a few years ago the State of Texas passed a law that gives homeowners living in an HOA community more control over landscaping their yard with water-saving alternatives.

Below are a few links to the statutes itself and a few articles on the subject one might find interesting:

<https://statutes.capitol.texas.gov/Docs/PR/htm/PR.202.htm>

<https://spectrumam.com/xeriscaping-and-your-texas-hoa/>

<https://communityimpact.com/austin/news/2013/07/15/xeriscaping-can-no-longer-be->

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[prohibited-by-homeowners-associations/](#)

<http://barleypfeiffer.com/xeriscaping-no-longer-prohibited-by-homeowners-associations-in-central-texas/>

**Senate Bill 198 (2013) – Protection of Drought-Resistant Landscaping and Water-Conserving Natural Turf (also HB 449 – 2013)**

“SB 198 modifies Section 202.007 of the Texas Property Code. Section 202.007 restricts HOAs from enforcing a provision of a Dedicatory Instrument that would prohibit or restrict a Homeowner from using drought-resistant landscaping or water-conserving natural turf on his or her property. A HOA may still require a Homeowner to obtain pre-approval of such landscaping or turf from the HOA to ensure, to the extent practicable, maximum aesthetic compatibility of such landscaping or turf with other landscaping in the subdivision, but a HOA’s approval may not be unreasonably denied or withheld.”

It amazes me how many of our local politicians, beaurcrates and HOA boards are so ignorant of these issues. For example, I read the other day that the state of Minnesota is now paying homeowners up to \$500 per home to remove their lawn grass and plant Urban Meadows (native grasses, forbs, and wildflowers).

San Antonio has been promoting water conservation landscaping for years with rebates. The Woodlands Water agency offer 50% of the cost of the plants up to \$300 per year in rebates to purchase drought tolerant native plants. For additional information see: <https://woodlandswater.org/services/rebates>

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I remember when I was a boy my dad would grow sugarcane in the back yard. The biggest problem he had was his son cutting the stalks down and eating them before he could get to them.

Most children today have never had the wonderful experience of having fresh cut sugarcane to chew on. So this year may be a good time to plant some especially if you have a damp or wet area of your yard.

There are three types of sugarcane:

- 1) Chewing canes - these have a soft fibrous center which makes them good for chewing and a softer outer layer that is easier to peel off. A few of the best chewing canes are 'White Transparent', 'Georgia Red', 'Home Green', 'LSU290', 'Blue Ribbon', and 'Yellow Gal'. To find other varieties, search for "heirloom sugarcanes."
- 2) Syrup canes – these canes have sugar in different chemical forms which can be extracted and used to make sugar syrup. 'Louisiana Ribbon', 'Louisiana Stripped', and 'Green German' are often used for making syrup.
- 3) Crystal canes – these are varieties of cane that have lots of sucrose that can be crystallized for making sugar. These types are grown commercially to make sugar.

Sugar canes can make a very attractive ornamental grass in our gardens and there are several varieties where the leaves have colors and patterns but generally not as good for eating.

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