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NEWS FROM THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF SOIL AND PLANTS

By John Ferguson

Subject: fluoride Frogfruit ginger edible fungi and books diet and dementia

We have discussed on numerous occasions the harm fluoride in our public water systems does to soils and plants. A new study has found that hydroxyapatite works as good or better than fluoride in preventing cavities. Hydroxyapatite is a calcium phosphate mineral found in our bones and is beneficial to our health. *Frontiers in Public Health* (2023).

There is no need to continue poisoning our soil and hurting our plants using water with fluoride in it. I was in Austin last week and saw on their local news another town in the area has voted to remove fluoride from the water system.

This past summer has been brutal on our plants, especially our lawns. However, I have noticed that one of our native plants has been thriving. It is known as Frogfruit (*Phyla nodiflora*) which is a groundcover species in the verbena family.

This perennial plant can tolerate drought, floods, scorching heat, hard freezes, and other abuse and grows in part shade to full sun. It has small white flowers often with leaves turning orange, yellow, or even purple. It typically grows only 4-6 inches tall so very little maintenance is required.

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It blooms from mid-spring into fall hence the flowers provide pollen almost all season for our pollinators and other insects.

It is also the host plant for the phoon cresecent, white peacock, and buckeye butterflies.

Additionally, this plant will grow in compacted degraded soils and help them recover by supporting the beneficial microbes the soil needs.

Ginger root has been used medicinally for thousands of years as it stimulates our immune system and promotes health.

Researchers at the Technical University of Munich have discovered one of the reasons why ginger works. They discovered that a component found in pungent ginger, stimulates white blood cells, putting them into a more active mode ready to protect the body against invading bacteria. Molecular Nutrition & Food Research (2022)

We often talk about the importance of fungi to plants and soils. Over the last few years there has been a lot of research on the culinary and health benefits of eating fungi.

Many species of fungi produce fruiting spores that we call mushrooms which not only taste good (I love a good steak covered in mushrooms or deep fried with salt) but are highly nutritious.

A study from the University of Queensland have discovered an active compound in “Lion’s Mane” mushrooms that has a significant effect on stimulating the growth of human brain cells and improving one’s memory. Journal of Neurochemistry (2023)

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For those whom want to learn more about fungi and how they effect our lives a couple good books are:

"Mycorrhizal Planet - How Symbiotic Fungi Work with Roots to Support Plant Health and Build Soil Fertility", Michael Phillips, 2017, Chelsea Publishing, ISBN: 978-1603586580

Michael has written this book in a down-to-earth format that is practical, warm, and often humorous. All gardeners need to understand the information in this book. It is extremely up to date on the fungi-plant relationship and how critical it is, **IF** we want to grow beautiful flowers, delicious fruits, magnificent shrubs, or trees.

Mycelium Running, How Mushrooms Can Help Save the World, by Paul Stamets, Ten Speed Press, ISBN 978-1-58008-579-3

This book is a deeper look at fungus and how it affects the world around us from plants to humans. It is divided into three parts; the first is how we experience fungal mycelium in nature, the second part is how we use fungi and the third is on the culinary and nutrition aspects of fungi.

The Orthomolecular New Service (February 2023) had an article summarizing many research papers. They found that most dementia is driven by diet NOT genes.

It was the environment (air, water, food, etc.) that we are exposed to that determines if dementia occurs. "Those with a healthy diet were about seven times less likely to have age-related cognitive decline or dementia than those with an 'average diet' and nine times less likely to develop dementia than those with an unfavorable diet."

The reasons to eat foods grown and produced using organic methods continues to grow.

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