



"Vegetarian" Organic Gardening



Abstract



It's hard to beat the natural "high" of seeing one's efforts "playing with dirt" resulting in lovely fruits, vegetables, and/or flowers. Many of us, especially in the vegetarian-friendly community, strongly prefer organic over chemical-based gardening. However, vegetarians, as well as the general public concerned with "Mad Cow" disease, need to be aware that many organic gardening practices advocate the use of items such as blood and bone meal and other slaughterhouse byproducts.

In this presentation, based on an article that I published (available online at www.trianglevegsociety.org/grapevine/v12/vegarden.html), I will discuss approaches to organic gardening that are "veganic", not using any animal byproducts at all, and "vegetarian", avoiding ground-up animals but perhaps using manure. I will conclude with a bit of detail on rose culture, and talk about how I have used "vegetarian" gardening practices to grow award-winning roses (see my rose page at www.dilip.info/roses).

Objectives

- Understand benefits of organic over chemicalbased gardening
- Understand organic gardening issues vegetarians should be aware of
- Describe what NPK means and good veganic sources
- Understand soil amendments, compost, & mulch
- Describe local and other resources and references for more information



Agenda

- Rationale and background
- NPK Nutrition sources
- Soil amendments
- Questions to consider
- (Optional) Roses
- References





Assumptions

- You have done some gardening in the past
- You have an interest in organic methods
- You want to learn how to have a productive garden without exploiting animals



My Gardening Background

- Landscaping hobby
- My garden
 - Roses
 - Peaches, plums, apples
 - Herbs
 - Ornamentals
- All organic, "vegetarian"



Why Organic?

- Sustainability
- Ecology
- Chemicals –production, runoff
- Health yours and the plants'
- Slow release
- "Nourish the soil, not the plant"



Surprises for the Vegetarian

- Organic is good!
- But ... where do you think a lot of organic amendments come from?
- Should we be using slaugherhouse byproducts?
- Should we be using any animal by-products at all? (i.e., "veganic")









Nitrogen-Phosphorus-Potassium

- NPK nutrient labels e.g., 5-1-0
- We'll identify veganic and vegetarian sources – as well as typical nonveg. sources so you know what to substitute
- But note the best thing to do is use compost and mulch
- Can use NPK as deficiency diagnostic



Nitrogen

- Stem and leaf growth
- Veganic sources: alfalfa, cottonseed, or soybean meals; green plant material
- Vegetarian sources: hair, earthworm castings, guano
- Typical non-veg. sources: blood meal, fish emulsion



Phosphorus

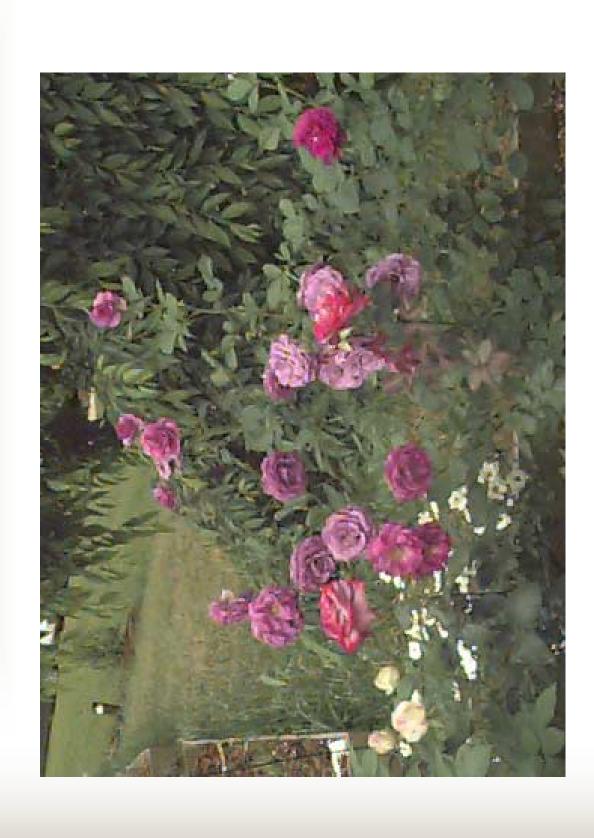
- Root development, big flowers, strong stems, winter hardiness
- Veganic sources: rock phosphate
- Vegetarian sources: bat guano
- Typical non-veg. sources: bone meal



Potassium

- Strong flowers, fruits, general health and pest resistance, strong roots
- Veganic sources:kelp, organic banana peels, greensand, comfry, wood ash (use sparingly)
- Typical non-veg. Sources: ?





Compost

- Critical!
 - Easy
 - Don't fill landfills
 - Get "black gold" even if you don't do much!
- (Vegetarian!) kitchen scraps, coffee grounds
- Just build a pile or buy a composter





- If you insist on diligence ...
 - "Greens": fresh, nitrogen-rich kitchen scraps, grass clippings, tea bags, coffee grounds
 - "Browns": dried, carbon-rich leaves,
 branches, compostable paper towels and bags
 - Avoid weeds and diseased plants
 - Moist like a wrung sponge
 - Thermometer, turning, compost starter, ...

Mulch

- Many types bark, stone, cocoa shell (beware for dogs!), newspaper, ...
- Important
 - Moderate soil temperature
 - Conserve moisture
 - Keep weeds down
 - Feed the soil
 - Aesthetics



Bio-Organic Approach

(Contact Bio/Organics Supply, 800-604-0444)

- Light, fast-draining soil; if not loose, blend 4-6" clean sand into top 6-8"
- 2-3" compost
- At half recommended rates, work in dry organic fertilizers and trace minerals
- Top with 3-5" of mulch
- Microbial inoculant water uptake, disease resist.
- No more fertilizing! (may want to occasionally, say monthly, foliar fertilize)
- Minimal work after first year

Other Amendments

- Lava sand, green sand
- Cottonseed meal but be sure it's organic!
- Green cover crops like nitrogen-fixing legumes
- Sul-Po-Mg (instead of Epsom Salts)
- Enzymes, humate



What about Manure?

- Not veganic
- Bagged manure almost certainly comes from slaughterhouses, feedlots
- Horses?
- **Earthworms?**
- Undisturbed animals in the wild?
- Your pet rabbit?



Other Tips

- Organic (only, please!
 "normal" peels have high
 amounts of pesticides)
 uncomposted banana
 peels buried in mulch
- If possible, avoid monoculture
- Beneficial insects like ladybugs (aphids, eggs), green lacewing (aphids, spider mites), praying mantids (most pests, eggs), beneficial nematodes (Jap. beetles)



- Consider grass alternatives for lawns
 - Wildflowers
 - Low-maintenance ground covers
 - Mulched natural areas
- Spread the word in the neighborhood about organic gardening
- Drip irrigation
- Raised beds plastic lumber, other natural products (don't use pressure treated lumber!)
- Companion planting0
- Endomycorrhizal (microbial) inoculants
- Compost, mulch, & native plants go a long way!





Some Questions to Consider

- How can we get community education and support for composting and minimizing garbage? (Coffee grounds, organic "waste", ...)
- Is it okay to prune (fruit trees, roses, ...)? Is it "compassionate" to introduce "beneficial" insects? What's "natural"?
- Is it a good organic practice to introduce non-local supplements?
- Is perhaps the best sustainable and organic practice simply to grow what's suited to the microclimate, cultivating what's left after others (birds, insects, rabbits, deer, ...) enjoy?

Interesting Related Issues

- Environmental politics, water rights, xeriscaping
- Growing organically in a chemical neighborhood
- Intentional communities
- Community-Supported Agriculture
- Edible gardening –
 functional vs. (or in addition to) ornamental
- "Mad Cow" disease, prions





Roses

- Reputation as being difficult
- Very rewarding
- Grown organically, you can eat the petals
- www.dilip.info/ roses



Why Roses?

- Queen of flowers
- Fragrance, form
- Rich history
- Fun!
 - Garden roses
 - Informal and formal arrangements
 - Rose shows
 - Giving people roses



Picking the Best Variety

- "Combined Rose List" tens of thousands cultivated
- Hips or not, almost any color but blue, shape, remonance, fragrance, ...
- Own root vs. grafted
- Rugosas, OGRs
- Check with your local rose society
- Beware of chemical orientation show roses



(Very) General Care

- Cornell mix of oil, soap, and baking soda
- Kelp, seaweed
- Neem, all-season oil
- Mulch
- Drip irrigation
- Hygiene
- Pruning
- See my detailed presentations and web pages about roses





Mail Order Suppliers

(in the US – check locally)



- Peaceful Valley Farm Supply, California, 530-272-4769, www.groworganic.com. The best source I know of – quite comprehensive annual catalog
- Gardener's Supply, Vermont, 800-863-1700, www.gardeners.com. Great source, good prices, lots of vegan products, friendly and able staff
- Gardens Alive!, Indiana, 812-537-8650
- Rohde's, Texas, 800-864-4445, www.beorganic.com
- Nitron, Arkansas, 800-835-0123, www.nitron.com

Book References

- Rodale's All-New Encyclopedia of Organic Gardening, 1992
- The Best of Organic Gardening, 1996
- Peter Harper, The Natural Garden Book, 1994
- Pauline Pears, All About Compost: Recycling Household and Garden Waste, 1999
- Helen Nearing, Loving and Leaving the Good Life, 1993
- Rachel Carson, Silent Spring, 1962
- Also NAVS' Vegetarian Voice v.26#1 (spring 2002)

Internet Resources



- www.trianglevegsociety.org lots of pointers
- www.trianglevegsociety.org/presentations/veggardening
- www.dilip.info/plants.html
- Organic Gardening discussion; email to LISTSERV@LSV.UKY.EDU w/ 2-line message
 - SUBSCRIBE OGL <Your Name>
 - SET OGL DIGESTS
- Newsgroups: rec.gardens.edible, rec.gardens. roses, local gardening newsgroups,... (www.deja.com/usenet is good for searching and browsing)

Local Resources



- In United States, local Agricultural Extension Office
- Your local vegetarian society—www.ivu.org
- Your local rose, camellia, orchard...society
- Master Gardeners, Master Composters, etc.
- Environmental festivals composters
- Bookstores, libraries

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Thank You



