Organic Gardening: A Guide to Resources

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Introduction
Background

The term “organic gardening” is of fairly recent origin. J.I. Rodale is credited with first using the word “organic” to describe the “natural method of gardening and farming” by his son Robert Rodale. The senior Rodale used it in founding his publication, Organic Gardening and Farming, in 1942. The term “organic farming” was first printed in the 1940 publication, Look to the Land, by Lord Northbourne.¹ Not just a technique, but a philosophy as well, the components of what we now call organic gardening and farming have been practiced for centuries. Practice of good husbandry of the land was of significant importance to ancient writers such as Cato, Virgil, Pliny and Columella.² The rotation of crops was recommended by Thomas Tusser in his classic and often reprinted work of 1580, Five Hundred Points of Good Husbandry³ In this country “green manuring and manures” was discussed in depth by John Wolfinger in the 1864 Report of the U.S. Commissioner of Agriculture⁴ two years after President Abraham Lincoln established the Department of Agriculture.

Pioneers of organic practices in the United States have acknowledged their debt to these men and to others whose written works continue to influence us. J.I. Rodale, believed by many to be the father of organic practices in the U.S., called Sir Albert Howard of England the “father of the movement.” Howard's classic study on soil fertility, An Agricultural Testament⁵ includes a chapter on the “Agriculture of the Nations Which Have Passed Away” as well as observations of agricultural techniques practiced worldwide.

Today, due to the influence of those pioneers, knowledge of organic practices has spread among the public, especially gardeners. Carole Ottesen, an editor of The American Gardener, writes about the renewed interest of U.S. gardeners in the organic movement in her article, “America’s Second Green Revolution.”⁶ She suggests that an increasing interest in organic gardening is mirrored in the circulation of J.I. Rodale’s magazine, Organic Gardening (split into two publications, OG and Organic Style in 2001), which was over 1 million⁷ in 2003. Additionally, there is a growing body of information about organic gardening, and it is available across formats (print and electronic) and across disciplines.

Some of this interest in organic gardening may also have been stimulated by the recent public comment period for and implementation of the National Organic Program⁸ Final Rule of the Organic Foods Production Act (OFPA), defining and regulating “organic” production and handling of agricultural products. Currently, agricultural products that meet the standards governed by this act may be labeled with a “USDA Organic” seal. Consumers who see or choose these products may also wish to grow them in home gardens. Additionally, as farmers adopt organic production methods to meet consumer demand, information about organic production is ever more widely sought and distributed.

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About this publication

There has always been a wide range of variation in organic gardening practices. From the purist view of followers of Masanobu Fukuoka of Japan, who advocates “no tillage, no fertilizer, no pesticides, no weeding, and no pruning,”⁹ to the perspective of those gardeners who seek to combine conventional and organic procedures, the field of opportunity for choice in organic gardening practice is fertile indeed. With this in mind, we have organized this publication into topical areas. It begins with a general section that covers organic gardening techniques, plant varieties, geographic locations, and philosophies. The succeeding sections address garden/yard design and landscaping; specific techniques such as permaculture, companion planting and biodynamic growing; soil fertility; edible plants; ornamental plants; pest control; and various aspects of living an “organic lifestyle.” Each section includes many publication types, but books intended to guide the organic grower in the care of her/his garden are emphasized. Many of these items could fit in multiple sections, but we have tried to put each in the most appropriate place.

This guide is intended for organic gardeners and those who want to be organic gardeners. It may also be useful for small-scale organic farmers and those interested in the organic movement in general. Several research databases and online references have been used to collect the information for this publication. Most of the materials listed in this
publication are available through libraries, bookstores, and online booksellers; but some of the items may be limited
in distribution or included as part of specialized technical publications. We hope that this publication will assist you
in making the choices appropriate to your situation and philosophy. Whether you are landscaping a small city
backyard, planning a community garden, protecting the environment, or just endeavoring to grow fruits and
vegetables for home or market, we wish each of you, “Good Gardening!”

Notes:

9. The Natural Way of Farming: the Theory and Practice of Green Philosophy, by Masanobu Fukuoka. Tokyo,


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- Organic Lifestyle: Recipes, Memories, and Inspiration

[See the Organic Gardening October 1989 edition for resources on this topic published prior to that date.]

General Organic Gardening Resources

The material listed in this section broadly address organic gardening. Some entries may cover only organic methods
while others may include only a chapter or section dealing with organic topics.


   [NAL Call Number: SB1.A3]

   Company, 1993. [NAL Call Number: SB453.5.S65 1993]


24. Eco-Farm & Garden. Ottawa, Ontario: Eco-Farm & Garden, 1998-. [NAL Call Number: SB605.5.E264]


57. Hill Country Almanac. Austin, TX: Barton Creek Properties, 1991-. [NAL Call Number: SB450.965.H54]


   Online information/reviews: http://www.loc.gov/catdir/toc/fy031/2001005501.html


77. Mice Don't Like Spearmint: New Ideas for Gardening, by Margaret Knight. Port Melbourne, Australia: William Heinemann Australia, 1990. [NAL Call Number: SB453.5.K64]


News & Notes. Siler City, NC: Janus Farms Institute, 1993-. [NAL Call Number: S494.5.S86N38]


Planning is likely to be the first step in any organic yard or garden. The materials in this section provide inspiration and directions for establishing and maintaining your organic land.


Full-text online: http://www.beyondpesticides.org/infoservices/pesticidesandyou/Spring%2001/Planning%20for%20Planting.pdf 


Organic Production Techniques

These materials present systems and practices applicable to organic gardens and generally developed through agricultural experimentation or historic utilization by farmers.


   Full-text online: http://www.attra.org/attra-pub/complant.html


Soil Fertility and Composting
This section includes items related to soil and soil fertility including fertilization and composting.


254. “Yield and Quality of Leek in Response to Compost Applied As a Mulch or Incorporated into the Soil,” by U. Reeh and M. B. Jensen. *Compost Science and Utilization* 10, no. 3 (2002): 244-48. [NAL Call Number: TD796.5 C58]

Publications found in this section address the cultivation of fruits, vegetables, and culinary herbs. Titles may indicate the specific techniques, climates, or plant varieties covered by each item.


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Ornamental Plants and Flowers

Flowers, shrubs, vines, trees and, houseplants - this section is filled with a potpourri of those plants that are grown for use as something other than dinner.


Pest, Weed, and Disease Identification and Control

This section covers the range of pests that challenge organic gardeners, including weeds, insects, nematodes, and diseases, and some suggestions for dealing with them.


“Wish You Weren't Here: There Is Nothing More Demoralising Than Seeing a Healthy Plant Reduced to a Twig by Peckish Slugs. Keep Up the War on Garden Nasties With Some Sly but Deadly Tactics - and That Doesn't Have to Mean Chemicals,” by Paul Thompson. The Guardian, June 23, 2001 (Manchester, UK), Weekend Pages Section, 94.


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Organic Lifestyle: Recipes, Memories, and Inspiration
Publications related to organic gardening such as memoirs, cookbooks, inspirational works, natural home/health care guides, and collections of essays, compose this group of items.


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*Our resources focus on the biological aspects, rather than the pharmacological properties, of plants, and plant culture and marketing. Medical information should always be evaluated in consultation with your health care provider.*

See also: *Organic Gardening* by Jane Potter Gates. Agri-Topics Series, 1063-262X. (AFSIC, 1989)

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