

Organic Land Care *with*

**Man - despite his artistic pretensions,
his sophistication, and his many accomplishments -
owes his existence to a six inch layer of topsoil
and the fact that it rains.**

- Author Unknown -



Organic Land Care with SOUL is published ten times per year by the Society for Organic Urban Land Care.

Our Mission:

"To support our communities in their transition to organic practices"

This newsletter is distributed free of charge to all SOUL members. Please feel free to share this publication.

SOUL

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www.organiclandcare.org.

January, 2008

Welcome to a new year of promoting and participating in organic land care. I hope that the holidays were good to everyone, and that you are refreshed.

I want to extend congratulations to one of our Vancouver Members, Martin Harcourt, who very recently was interviewed by CBC radio. His company manages Granville Island using organic land care practices. Notice of his success in managing a highly visible and important landscape using organic land care practices caught the ear of CBC. With this recognition, it appears that organic land care methods are no longer the purview of people on the fringes; rather, it is now becoming part of conventional practice. Way to go Martin and way to go all SOUL members.

This issue of the newsletter provides some information about one change occurring with food production. I was in the southern Baja Region of Mexico over the holidays and did not see any composting being done nor did I see any replenishment of the soil. I was encouraged, though, to hear about at least one farmer in the area I was in who was engaged in organic land care. The need to engage in organic practice is a concern globally as well as locally and being away confirmed this fact. Therefore I present another facet of the changes that are occurring and this is related to the information presented in the last newsletter.

I hope that you find this information interesting and please send along articles or other materials that could be included in this newsletter.

Thank you,
David

*When I was recently in the Baja Californian region of Mexico,
I read a newspaper article about plant ownership.
The article highlighted that plant ownership is being placed on material
that was significant to Mexico and its culture.
Truly the global community in a different light...*

Apparently Chinese interests have applied to the European Commission to patent the Nopal (Prickly Pear) Cactus as a Chinese product (I will only focus on Nopal, but it appears that the same moves are being made on the Maguey - a type of Agave cactus used in Tequila.) The Mexican Farmers union is opposed to attempt to privatize this plant as it is a food source in

Mexico as well as providing employment for over 400 thousand Mexican farmers and their families. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/7116602.stm> (Wednesday, 28 November 2007, 12:30 GMT). Opponents to this "patenting" have claimed that the Mexican government has not done enough to protect the Nopal industry. The Nopal is grown in 28 out of the 31 states in Mexico. The Chinese want to take 20 tonnes of produce in 2008 and then return it to Mexico as processed products. For the Mexicans, "Nopal is a national symbol which is on their flag. It is an important ingredient in Mexican cuisine and is commonly eaten in tacos, chopped up together with tomatoes, onion, cilantro with a splash of lemon and salsa, rolled up in a tortilla." <http://tvscripts.edt.reuters.com/2008-0101/362d7b2f.html> For the Mexicans (at least the farmers), Nopal is considered to be a national product and as such a foreign patent would place ownership of it in the hands of China.

The plant as well is seen to have an array of medicinal properties that also seems to be fueling interest in this plant from Chinese and Japanese companies. The significance of ownership in this case is the tip of the iceberg as Nopal is a food and employment source for farmers and workers in a "poor" country. Having ownership be in the hands of foreign firms will not only push up the cost for food in a country where many in the rural areas cannot afford such an increase, but it will probably also push more farmers to

abandon their farms.

A recent article "Canadian Grocery Prices Cushioned by Strong Dollar" (Times Colonist, January 5, 2008) reported that a "crippling food catastrophe is looming" and any thing that affects basic food production (such as ownership) will affect people and their families. No longer can we take our food for granted.

2008 may be the year where food production and its origin will come to the forefront of issues affecting all of us. Knowing what is happening to our food and what plant material we are working with will be part of our work in promoting organic land care practices. Therefore, as we journey into the New Year, we will find that the message we are promoting about organic land care practices will have even more significance locally and globally. In 2008, SOUL will have many opportunities to inform and educate people about the use of organic land care methods and its benefits to the environment because as a Chinese proverb exclaims, From Crisis Comes Opportunity. It appears that our opportunity is now.

David Greig

**Holy Mother Earth, the trees
and all nature, are witnesses of
your thoughts and deeds.
- Winnebago Saying -**



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3-Day Organic Soil Management

Burnaby - January 25-27

Victoria - February 1-3

1-Day Organic Turf Management

Burnaby - February 9

Victoria - February 23