

Organic Land Care *with*



"There is enough for all.

The earth is a generous mother; she will provide in plentiful abundance food for all her children if they will but cultivate her soil in justice and in peace."

- Bourke Coekran-

"When one tugs at a single thing in nature,

he finds it attached to the rest of the world."-John Muir, Naturalist, Preservationist and Founder of the Sierra Club (1838-1914)-

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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2009, and what a welcome this month and year has brought for us. There are so many tensions pulling at the seams of our lives these days. The news is filled with dire warnings of what is happening and what is to come. If one is affected by these events and situations, then I hope it will not be long lasting for you and wish you good speed to your next step in life and for the best of fortune.

On the other hand, there is hope in the air, inspired not the least by a new person in charge of the most powerful country on our little, fragile planet. Barack Obama has been able to enfranchise many people to believe that things can change and with this change, good can come. He also puts forth the idea that he cannot do things on his own; rather, he extols that everyone must take responsibility for change and that with community effort a rebuilding of a nation can occur. As they rebuild, so too can the rest of us affected by what has occurred financially, environmentally and ethically also rebuild.

Perhaps too much has been implied by what is occurring in the United States. But I do see many signs of changes occurring today. Where ever I seem to look there is information about people who are working to develop knowledge about organic land care practice, food education and production, and ways to live their lives more sustainably. Recently, I was talking to a young man who returned to Victoria with a sense of hope to create sustainable food production at a neighbourhood level through the creation of worker groups. And last week, I met a person who was committed to developing an organic recycling business and was in communication with the "big" players needed to effectively create such a sound business. These people inspired me because they exuded hope and a commitment to change.

In last week's mail, information came about Victoria's Pesticide Use Reduction Bylaw and there with all of the information on the second page was the name of SOUL with website contact information as one of the three outside groups - Gaia College and the Greater Victoria Compost Education Centre being the others - that could provide information about gardening without pesticides. As well, in a recent article in our local paper was information about how a Victoria gardening business was selling more organic products as this was what the public wanted and where there was business growth. Again, hope and possibility rising out of despair from the media's messages that surround us.

In this newsletter I present some information about business promoting organic opportunities and hair as a nutrient source. I trust that you will find this issue interesting and that you may continue to have hope that resonates in the work and learning that you do. For we are all transients on this journey called life, and on this journey, we are riding on a wonderful communication vessel called SOUL that continues to chart a course about how we can nurture the resources left for us.

Happy New Year, and all the best for the coming months. Gung Hay Fat Choy

Respectfully yours,
David Greig

During down time over the Christmas holidays, I was able to catch up on some reading. One of these readings was from a magazine out of California called Entrepreneur. It is a magazine devoted to that most business-like individual (or group) called the "business owner." What was unique about this issue was that it was devoted to business during the economic downturn and some possible business trends for 2009.

This in itself was interesting but more pertinent to the interest of SOUL members was the information about the economic opportunities available to people who work with all things "green." Although not new information for many readers, the fact that this magazine was pronouncing trends for 2009 where "the green sector is still red hot – brimming with opportunities for entrepreneurs." (Meyers, 2008, p. 58). The majority of trends to watch in 2009 were to do with water, clean energy and organics. It was heartening to see that the organic movement or, if preferred natural, was now part of mainstream conversation.

Interestingly, at the end of one piece on organics it talked about "green fatigue." This is where consumers (United States) who have been bombarded by "green advertising" dismiss these claims. In a survey done by Burst Media, 2008, 12.1% said they never believe the green claims and 65.3% said they sometimes do. (Meyers, 2008, p.61). Therefore, to get the message out to consumers, it is important to attract TV, radio or print media attention through a news story as opposed to traditional advertising. In this way, skeptic consumers can be more easily lead to practices, products and materials that benefit the environment.

Meyers, T. (2008, December). Trend: Green. Entrepreneur, 58-61.

Wilson, W. (2008, December). Trend: Economy. Entrepreneur, 62-63.

Meyers, T. (2008, December). Trend: Boomers. Entrepreneur, 66-67.

The second piece of information is from an abstract about a recent experimental study used "to evaluate non-composted hair byproduct as a nutrient source for container-grown crop." (Zheljazkov, V. D et al, 2008). In this experiment, researchers compared the use of commercially used fertilizer with that of non-composted human hair. The premise of this research was that agricultural crops rely on composted waste materials and byproducts and, as such, human hair is a readably available agricultural resource. "The study compared the productivity of four crops: lettuce, wormwood, yellow poppy, and feverfew, grown in commercial growth medium using untreated control, non-composted hair cubes at differing weights, a controlled-release fertilizer and a water-soluble fertilizer. Results showed that, with the addition of hair waste cubes, yields increased relative to the untreated control but were lower than yields in the inorganic treatments, suggesting that hair waste should not be used as a single source for fast-growing plants such as lettuce. (http://www.ashs.org/pressrelease/index.php?view=article&catid=2%3Ahorttechnolgy&id=1000%3Anew-use-for-humanhair&tmpl=component&print=1&page=&option=com_content).

The results suggest that hair could supply sufficient nutrients to container grown plants. The rider to this is that because hair is slow to degrade and requires time to break down, it should not be used for fast growing plants as was mentioned about lettuces. As an addition to compost, untreated human hair is another component to continue to make compost even better! (Editor's note.)

Zheljazkov, V. D., Silva, J. L., Patel, M, Stojanovic, J, Lu, Y., Kim, T., Horgan, T. (2008)

Human hair as a nutrient source for horticultural crops. HortTechnology 18: 592-596.

<http://horttech.ashspublications.org/cgi/content/abstract/18/4/592>



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