



June 2008 "The Dirt Worth Printing"



# Douglas County Dirt



Douglas County Master Gardener Association Newsletter

Volume 11, Issue 6

## Watering: Douglas County: Operating under Sept. 28, 2007 Level 4 restrictions

Greetings, Master Gardeners,

For the next two weeks, think *Hydrangea Festival, Hydrangea Festival, Hydrangea Festival* and what you can do to help with it. Many of you have already signed up to help. Thank You! If you haven't yet volunteered, call Kathy Henry, Flo Frey, Michelle Kirk, Jan Thomas or me and we will direct you to the right person and activity. The Master Gardeners will have a display/informational table in the room with the Flower Show. We will also be outside in a tent with the County Extension office to answer questions.

Please be thinking about a topic for a program at Woodie Fite. It only takes an hour and that can include questions. The people that have done it are enthusiastic about the response they get. September, October, November and December months are needed.

June 5<sup>th</sup> is our next meeting. Maybe something from your vegetable garden will be on the table that night. Don't you just love summer with all the fresh vegetables!?! We will be having the program right after dinner at 7:00 and then the business meeting. The focus of the Nature Trail and Greenhouse will be discussed.

Thanks for your help with all our many projects.

Pat



### Next Meeting:

**June 5, 2008**

Douglasville, GA

6:30 for pot-luck  
dinner

7:00 meeting  
begins

**How to get to  
the meeting  
site:**

St. Julian's  
Episcopal  
Church

**5400 Stewart Mill  
Rd**

**Take Chapel Hill Road  
to Stewart Mill Road  
(Intersection at Tar-  
get and Shell gas sta-  
tion)**

**From I-20 turn right  
on Stewart Mill Road.  
Church is about 1 ½  
miles on the right.**

**June 5, 2008**



# Organic Foods and Organic Gardening



Why should you eat organic foods?

- To reduce your intake of chemicals and additives.

The national standards for organic foods prohibit the use of synthetic pesticides, hormones, steroids and antibiotics.

- To sidestep artificial ingredients.

The new USDA regulations prohibit synthetic colors and flavors, as well as ingredients that are irradiated or genetically engineered in organic foods.

- To protect and nurture the environment.

Organic farmers use time-tested natural methods including soil building and crop rotation to reduce the negative impact of farming on the environment.

## Organic Gardening

Organic gardening uses different agricultural methods to improve soil fertility and organic farmers replace toxic chemical pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers with different agricultural methods that improve soil fertility and biological diversity. They control weeds and insects with time-proven techniques such as crop rotation, cultivation, mulching, manure spreading, and encourage predator insects that help control pests. These methods radically change the gardening environment, producing a dramatic drop in poisonous run-off and equally dramatic improvement in the soil ecology. The results of organic gardening routinely see less soil erosion and more variety of animal species and micro-organisms in their fields. The organic gardener uses no genetically engineered plants.

When a food processor claims to be certified organic, it means the food processor avoids many techniques of conventional processors. The food processor uses no preservatives or additives that would degrade the quality of the organic crop. Organic and conventional ingredients are not mixed. Organic raw materials must be specially handled to prevent contamination from bacteria, toxins, and industrial chemicals. No genetically engineered or irradiated ingredients are allowed.

## Is organic food healthier?

Organic food is based on an agricultural growing method and was never intended to be a health claim. But since organic farmers don't use agri-toxins, many credible studies have pointed to health and quality implications. In a landmark 1999 study of USDA pesticide residue data in produce, Consumers Reports found "organic foods had consistently minimal or non-existent pesticide residue" when compared to conventional produce. Recently, the United Nation's Food and Health Organization reported that "organically produced foods have lower levels of pesticide and veterinary drug residues and, in many cases, lower nitrate contents...In addition, the 'organic' label provides assurance to consumers that no food ingredient has been subject to irradiation and that GMOs (genetically modified organism) have been excluded.

## What's good about certified organic?

Good food	No preservatives or additives
No synthetic pesticides	No GMO ingredients
No synthetic herbicides	No irradiation

## What's good about certified organic? (Continued)

Better ecology

Enriched, drought resistant soil

Less soil erosion

Less groundwater pollution

## What about conventional agriculture?

In the late 40s, farming changed radically in North America. Toxic chemicals aimed at killing pests (pesticides) and weeds (herbicides) became widely available to farmers as did synthetic chemical fertilizers. This new chemical farming technology was revolutionary.

Pests and weeds were virtually eradicated. Crop yields soared – per acre corn yields rose from 26 bushels in 1926 to 127 bushels in 1996. Millions of pounds of toxic chemicals were subsequently poured onto North American fields. But no long term testing had ever been conducted on this new technology.

Both insects and weeds developed resistance to the chemicals. Ever more powerful toxins were needed. Many of these new agri-toxins were indiscriminate, killing everything they touched including the soil. By the late 80s, chemical farming was being seen in a different light.

Despite the fact that pesticide use in the United States increased 1000% between 1945 and 1989, crop loss almost doubled from 7% to 13%. Data from over 68,000 groundwater wells in 45 U.S. states indicated pesticides in more than 16,000 of them. U.S. Geological Survey data released in 1998 revealed nearly all streams they studied contained at least one pesticide, the result of agricultural run-off from far fields. Testing of foods eaten by consumers routinely shows pesticide residues. Even the U. S. Congress is now concerned about the impact of the 9,700 approved agricultural toxins on the nation's children after the National Research Council concluded in 1993 that "some children were ingesting enough pesticides to harm them, even though their food was within Federal limits." The Food Quality Protection Act was passed in 1996 to reassess the standards for pesticides in food.

## Summary

The interest in organic fruits and vegetables has never been greater. People have grown more concerned about the use of chemicals in their food and food products. More and more people are eager to steer away from synthetic insecticides and pesticides.

Until recently, people bought their groceries at their favorite supermarket and didn't think much about it. Now, people are seeking out organic food – and with good reason. Environmental pollution puts more stress on our bodies than ever before in history. And chemicals never meant for human consumption may be found in every step of the food chain. These chemicals kill the micro-organisms that would normally break the soil down and release plant nutrients so this is one reason that we may not be getting the same nutrition from our food that we did twenty years ago.

To enjoy optimal health we need to seek out the most nutritious, natural, chemical-free foods we can find – and this means growing or buying as much organic food as possible.

Think organic gardening. The information in this article is not original. I would like to thank the many organic gardeners, producers, and others that provide information about organic produce and products to protect our health and our families.

Article by Peggy Sorrells





## Photographs

These blooms are from Master Gardener Elaine Davis' yard.

Above ~ maple tree and cotoneaster

Below right ~ buckeye bottlebrush

Right top ~ Tall verbena

Right ~ "Miss Huff" lantana & butterfly



# Douglas County Master Gardener Association

[www.dcdirt.org](http://www.dcdirt.org)

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## Your input is needed.

For newsletter articles, tips, hints, anecdotes, recipes, book reviews, website reviews, gardening and/or shops or online sources, and ideas: Email: [MJ\\_Cardell@yahoo.com](mailto:MJ_Cardell@yahoo.com)  
Newsletter deadline is the 20th of each month.

Did you know this newsletter is also posted at our web site in full color, so you can get your dirt online?

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## GMGA Mission Statement:



To stimulate the love for and increase the knowledge of gardening, and to voluntarily and enthusiastically share this knowledge with others.

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## NATIVE PLANTS SPECIALIST FEATURED AS SPEAKER FOR DCMG JUNE MEETING

We are very fortunate to have as our June speaker **Mr. Jim Rodgers of the Nearly Native Plants Nursery in Fayetteville, Georgia.** Mr. Rodgers will entertain us with a Power Point presentation of plants native to this area, and he will also bring some plants for us to purchase, should we wish to do so.

Nearly Native Nursery is a specialty nursery that promotes, sells and propagates southeastern native plants for all types of landscapes. These plants offer versatile and beautiful alternatives to more exotic general nursery stock. They can tough out drought and water restrictions that other plants are unable to tolerate. and also serve as food for beautiful songbirds as well as hosts for many species of butterflies and moths.

Native azaleas are a particular specialty of this nursery.

