

GET GARDENING

Once again this article has been inspired from a question a reader has put to me.

This month the question was, did I think **"gardening the organic way was the way forward and the future for gardening"**?



Well, personally, I think it could be one version of a possible future. That is, if we decide to go down that path. Unfortunately, when big business get hold of a popular product, they are motivated by profit. Often they don't hold healthy values, so the essence of the basic product is lost somewhat, before the consumer gets their hands on it.

Organic products can be a way forward in the future, but I feel if those charged with the responsibility of supplying them are to focused on profit, then that organic future may not reach its full potential. Leaving us potentially disappointed, and thinking of what might have been if it wasn't for a handful of greedy individuals. That said, organic approaches are certainly a healthier way forward in the coming years if we can get back to basics.

Gardening and agriculture in general appears to have almost come full circle. Before man-made pesticides and fertilisers were brought in, we relied purely on organic products. Farms seemed to always be a mixture of arable and livestock based, allowing a constant supply of manure to plough back into the land. Often there was enough manure left over for local gardeners to add to their plots. Local manure was a sure way to incorporate a material into the land so as to have a humus rich a soil structure as was possible. Thus allowing enough plant nutrients to provide adequate harvests.

Pest and disease control largely seemed to focus on natural predators and, because these enemies of plant pests were not themselves poisoned by chemicals, a balance was maintained. When the scientists got their hands on the food producing industries, food producers saw huge increases in harvest sizes, with their bank accounts expanding with the growth. All this was induced by the introduction of artificial fertilisers and weed control programmes. The scientists made pest and disease control easier toO, with their new pesticides banishing common pests (and their natural predators) from the fields. Although these pests developed immunities to the chemicals on occasion, there would soon be another chemical product with even more power to defeat them. All this meant that organic growing was from a by-gone age, with food growers seeing the future as profit related.

But now, food growers and scientists alike are beginning to realise the catastrophic effects that happen when you pursue a policy of wanton destruction of Natures balance. What wasn't realised previously was that the soil was already blessed with an inherent fertility arising from hundreds of years of careful husbandry. Since farming and gardening began, we always put into our soils far more than we ever took out. In the last few decades it is clear that the land in this country has seen its fertility decrease rapidly. With chemicals merely draining the soil still further as the nutrient levels are propped up artificially as they are not adding long lasting natural nutrients.

Pests and diseases are also on the increase. Since the introduction of these artificial pesticides, which indiscriminately kill off natural predators as well as the pest, the problems have never been greater. There is little doubt that we can only play around with nature for so long before it bites back.

There is little doubt that our own health and well-being is reliant on food producers returning to old methods that were far more natural. The only draw-back as I see it being that harvest volumes and profit margins will reduce. Even so, we would still produce adequate harvests.

Although we have gone wrong with the way we produce food in recent decades, there is no reason why we can't learn from *April 2007*

these mistakes. It has given us a clearer understanding of how good organic practices are more beneficial in comparison. I accept we must control pests, but we must not control them at the expense of their natural predators as we are laying on a whole heap of trouble for ourselves to.

Enlightened gardeners and farmers are beginning to see the truth and benefits behind organic growing. But as for organics being the future of food production, I'll hold my breath and watch with interest. The disruptive influence that big business has on organic growing is not good for the organic movement. But it is us the consumers who have the last say.

So let's all make a stand and insist that organic growing, in it entirety and running at its full potential, is the future.

Happy gardening. STUART MABBUTT

APRIL CROSSWORD ANSWERS BY ALISA

ACROSS: 3 Ace 6 Rhino 9 She 11 Rainbow 12 Tea 13 Pillar box 15 St Patrick's day 20 Sandleigh 23 Own 25 Eynham 26 Bothy 28 All. DOWN: 1 Castles 2 Rivulet 4 Climb 6 Reap 7 Organic lamb 8 Ibex 13 He 14 Ops 16 Ada 17 Knights 18 Yarmton 19 Field 20 Song 21 Nihil 22 Holy 24 We

MARCHAM CRICKET CLUB

The O.C.A. Season begins on 5th May. 1st XI is away to Witney Swifts in Division 2 and the 2nd XI is at home to Visitors Marsh Gibbon 2nd XI in Division 7.



For information relating to the Club, such as attending Nets or joining as a player, please contact Graham Hill (391415) or Terry Whittaker (391317).

Although historical items relating to cricket tend to be in short supply for early months of the year, our Historian has found the following in the Minutes of a Committee Meeting held on 16th April 1956. Thus, under the heading "Thatching", it is reported that:

"The Secretary was instructed to write and thank Mr. H. Dyer for his work in thatching the small building and enclose £1 10s which it was hoped would cover the cost of the straw and his labour."

The small building mentioned was associated with the original Pavilion that, as many may recall, was positioned near the western boundary of the Cricket Field.

CLIVE BENNETT

MARCHAM PLAYERS www.marchamplayers.co.uk

Having just sampled that most evocative hint of Spring – the redolence of newly cut grass – thoughts turned to our forthcoming fund raising evening to be held in the gardens of Manor Farm.



Like all voluntary organisations, Marcham Players can only survive with the help of its many friends and supporters, particularly as we have lost our long time home of the Institute. Rather unashamedly, our spring event will be in aid our funds.

On the evening of Saturday 26th May, by kind invitation of the Cumber family, Marcham Players will present an ensemble of entertainments which we very much hope will entice you to join us. There will be skits and sketches, perhaps some music and certainly lots of good things to eat and drink. All being well, the sun will shine, the bees buzz and we will enjoy a pleasurable few hours amongst friends, old and new.

More details will be revealed in next month's MADnews but in the meantime pencil the date onto your calendar; your support would be encouraging and appreciated. In fact, why not write it in ink and underline it firmly as an event not to be missed!

For more details of Marcham Players including membership, productions, play readings, theatre visits and much more, contact Joey Maclean on 01865 391242 or Dave Hutchinson on 01865 391964.

TIM OWEN