

## News in Natural



Ben Martin-Horst

What we now call organic farming had no name prior to the 1930's - it was simply thought of as farming. In 1936 the introduction of catalytic cracking of crude oil provided the starting point for the production of agricultural chemicals—what we commonly call fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides. These newly developed chemicals were used widely during WWII to defoliate large areas of land in order to facilitate easier combat, or to encourage rapid growth of plants in selected other areas.

After the war, farmers were introduced to these same petrochemicals, slightly modified, which they were told (via a very strong marketing campaign) would dramatically enhance their production and profitability. This was the big switch from an organic and natural method of farming that valued soil health and sustainable practices that could be used generation after generation.

Across the United States and Europe there were groups that favored keeping—or returning to—the sustainable methods of organic farming. In the Pacific Northwest it could be said that the organic

movement started at a symposium in Spokane, Washington in July 1974, where the ground was prepared for the growth of an important organization that would help define and promote organic farming in our region. One of the panelists was Kentucky farmer, poet and writer Wendell Berry. He spoke forcefully about the decline of small farms and the damage this did to both rural and urban communities.

Berry wrote a letter to Gigi Coe, whom he had met at the symposium, describing his vision for a conference bringing together diverse groups including urban consumers, food co-ops, university researchers, farm workers, land reform advocates, organic gardeners, and conservation organizations. The common thread being interest in an alternative form of agriculture. Gigi shared this letter with friends and they were inspired to create the Northwest Conference on Alternative Agriculture. More than 800 people attended and the seeds of the organic farming movement in the Northwest were planted.

Tilth was the name given to the organization that sponsored this important conference. Tilth,

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On those warm sunny days when the spring clouds have vanished (at least for a little while), I sit on my deck and listen to the bees buzzing among the blossoms. I feel a deep satisfaction watching the bees crawling over the entrance of the hive I built for them a year ago. My sense of satisfaction does not, however, extend to my appetite for honey. Before last year's meager nectar flow, I had visions of jars full of honey and gallons of homemade mead. When I harvested last September, I had but a couple combs: enough honey to share a nibble with a few friends, and enough wax for a couple of small candles. So while I wait for this year's nectar to come in, I'm enjoying the fruits of other beekeepers' labors.

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Tomatoes are one of the all-time favorites of most gardeners, but unfortunately we live in a region that does not necessarily provide us with the best climate for growing tomatoes. That is not to say it is hard to grow tomatoes in the Willamette valley, but it is not always easy to get an abundant harvest of fully ripe tomatoes in our shorter growing season.

Because of this, Teal Creek Farm, who supplies us with a wide variety of tomato plants, will be offering a larger than ever selection of short season tomatoes this year. They still need some warm sunny weather to ripen, just not as many days of it!

Here are a few of the early ripening varieties we will be offering this year.

### **Heirlooms:**

**Oxheart** averages about 70 days to maturity, is indeterminate and produces large meaty deep pink (sometimes heart shaped) fruits. Their smooth delicious flavor can be used fresh or for sauces.

**Pantano** 75 days, indeterminate and produces sweet, juicy somewhat flattened fruit

**Peron Sprayless** 70 days, determinate and has 2 ½ times more vitamin C than most tomatoes. This tomato is considered a heavy producer. You might consider this one for container gardening.

**Tigerella** 75 days, indeterminate and heavily produces meaty 3"-4" orange striped fruits even during cool summers.

**Silvery Fir Tree** 60 days, determinate and 3"-4" flattened red/orange fruits with acidic flavor.

### **Small Fruit Varieties:**

**Koralik** 65 days, indeterminate, deliciously productive with 1" fruits in large trusses.

**Stupice** (stoo-PEACH-ka) 55 days, indeterminate, cold tolerant, with 2" sweet juicy fruits.

**Sungold** 60 days, indeterminate. The ¾" sweet orange fruits crack easily, so many pick them at the golden yellow stage.

**Isis Candy** will be available late May (not ready for food fair). 73 days, indeterminate, has large 1 ½" fruits of orange marbled with red.

### **Modern:**

**Early Girl** 57 days, indeterminate, produces medium sized meaty fruits on strong vines.

**Siletz** 55 days, determinate. Medium/large great

tasting fruits even in cool summers. Great for container gardening.

**Parks Whopper** 68 days, indeterminate, produces large 4" tasty fruits that are crack resistant.

**Paste/Sauce:** Most of these varieties of tomatoes average around 75 days to maturity.

Selecting the right tomato varieties can be a little more difficult due to the fact that Teal Creek Farms supplies us with such a wide variety of options! This year they will be providing us with 60 different varieties of tomato plants. The first thing that needs to be taken into account is which growing style, indeterminate or determinate, will work best in your garden area. Indeterminate varieties will grow large and take over an area, needing to be staked or trellised. Where as determinate varieties will grow to a compact size of around 3 feet tall—they will grow to a specific size and no larger. Both varieties can be grown in container, although the determinate varieties tend to be easier.

The next step is selecting the style of tomato you want to grow. Tomatoes are broken up into 4 major varieties: Heirlooms, Modern, Small Fruited, and Paste/Sauce. Modern varieties of tomatoes are essentially the standard slicing tomato that you see all year long. For the most part they are uniform in shape and size, and tend to be red the majority of the time. The paste/sauce tomatoes are more of an elongated tomato that is an excellent choice for cooking. The small fruited tomatoes come in a variety of shapes, colors, and sizes. The smallest of these are about one-quarter of an inch in size, where as the largest are around 2 to 3 inches in size.

Heirloom tomatoes are the unique varieties out of the bunch. Heirlooms can get quite large, are odd shaped at times, and can be red, yellow, green, or purple. Sometimes heirloom tomatoes will have a combination of colors. The flavor of these tomatoes tends to differ a lot among varieties, but overall most people would say their flavor is far superior to the standard slicer, paste/sauce, and small fruited varieties.

Tomatoes are definitely one of the more satisfying backyard gardening crops to plant. Even with the climate in the Willamette valley, it is still pretty easy to get a good harvest of tomatoes in the short window we have. Let's hope for a good growing season, and have fun in your gardens!



according to Webster, is the state of aggregation of a soil, especially in relation to its suitability for crop growth. From 1974 to 1977 Tilth was a small informal group that slowly developed the momentum to spring forth as a vibrant leader in the emerging 'alternative' agriculture movement. Over the next few years local chapters of the Tilth Association were formed in Washington, Oregon, California and Idaho.

In the fall of 1984 the Tilth Association disbanded. The regional network of local chapters divided into a Washington Tilth network and an Oregon Tilth network. Several of the Tilth chapters formed in these early years are still very active today. Seattle Tilth is known for starting the Master Composter program that is now offered across the country.

The Willamette Valley Chapter of Tilth was started in 1979. In its early years it was a network of local organic farmers working together to develop the best ways to grow and sell their products. In 1982, a decision was made to start certification of member organic farms. Certification cost \$5.00 and the farmers certified each other. There were six farms at this time and the organic certification standards were written on just one page of paper. Over the next several years more and more farmers got involved and certification standards continued to be developed. A separation between certifiers and farmers was created to bring more integrity to the process.

In 1986 The Willamette Valley Chapter of Tilth got its own 501-C-3 non-profit status and changed its name to Oregon Tilth, Inc. By this time the certification standards for organic farms had grown to be a one-quarter

inch thick booklet. Tilth offered many workshops and seminars to educate farmers and interested parties in the certification process. They developed operating procedures to be followed as well as standards to be met for certification.

As more organic foods were becoming available a new need became apparent. Certification standards were needed for food processors. Oregon Tilth was one of the first organizations to develop food processing certification standards and offer organic certification for food processors. Cascadian Farms, then an Oregon based company, Organic Valley, Sucanat, and a number of smaller organic processors were the first to get certified.

Oregon Tilth has grown to become one of the best known and respected organic certifiers in the world. They are one of the top four largest in the U.S., certifying hundreds of farms, totaling thousands of acres across the U.S, Mexico, Canada, Europe, Asia and South America. There are similar figures for food processors that are certified by Oregon Tilth

At about the same time that the Tilth Association was forming, another organization called the Tilth Producers' Cooperative (TPC) was formed. TPC was a non-profit alliance of commercial organic farmers from all across Washington State. TPC administered the organic certification program of its member farms for many years. Their primary focus was on cooperative production, marketing and distribution efforts.

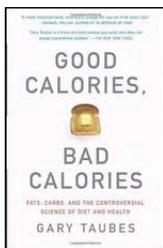
In the mid 1980s TPC was losing its energy. Fortunately, in 1987 Washington State Dept. of Agriculture assumed the administration of TPC's organic certification program. At

first this program had only one part-time staff person. Today Washington State has over 750 certified farms, representing over 100,000 acres, and a dedicated staff of state inspectors. Over the years TPC's role has evolved and today it is known as Tilth Producers, a Chapter of Washington Tilth Association.

Oregon was the first state to have an Organic Labeling law which our legislature passed in 1984. Oregon Tilth was a major player in getting this law passed. With this law in place the organic industry had a firm footing to grow on. In 1989 a more comprehensive organics law was passed in Oregon. In 1990 The Organic Foods Protection Act was passed by the U.S. Congress. This act mandated that a federal program would be set-up to define and regulate organic foods. The standards set forth by the USDA are constantly under attack by those who would benefit from weakening the laws. It is only through our continued vigilance that these standards remain strong.

Today, organic farming continues to grow, both in the Pacific Northwest and worldwide. Oregon has nearly 200,000 acres of organically farmed land, out of a total of 12.8 million acres. We've come a long way and we've got a lot of potential available! Organic foods now have a small, but significant and growing share of the U.S. market.

No longer the fringe movement it was once considered, the organics movement has grown and matured. There has been an abundant and healthy harvest from those seeds planted nearly forty years ago. Each time you buy organic, you choose cleaner air, water and healthier soil, for us and our children. 



If we just eat more fat-free foods and work out more, we'll all be better off, right? It ain't necessarily so. For many years, the prevailing wisdom has been that "fat = bad, carbs = better," and "eat less + exercise more = healthy weight." So why do we have unprecedented epidemics of

obesity and diabetes? Called a "relentless researcher" by *The Washington Post*, science journalist Gary Taubes tackles the subjects of diet and health in *Good Calories, Bad Calories - Fats, Carbs, and the Controversial Science of Diet and Health*. Dr. Andrew Weil, noted health expert, states that "this is a very important book; I have been recommending it to my medical colleagues and students. He raises big questions and I think there are some very big ideas in this book. I think he's done a meticulous job showing that many of the assumptions that are held by the conventional medical community simply rest on nothing." Respected author and activist Michael Pollan praises *Good Calories, Bad Calories* as "vitaly important...destined to change the way we think about food."

It does seem as if we need to re-evaluate our approach to food. Taubes argues that genes, hormones and chemistry play as much of a role in weight gain as behavior does, and that the key to good health is the quality of calories we ingest, not the quantity. Sections of the book include "The Fat-Cholesterol Hypothesis," "The Carbohydrate Hypothesis," and "Obesity and the Regulation of Weight," featuring powerful chapters on fiber, cholesterol, insulin and diabetes, sugar, dementia, cancer, aging, the mythology of obesity, hunger, conservation of energy, diets, and

fat metabolism. The book offers a meticulously-referenced 24-page index, a 66-page bibliography, and an epilogue containing 10 profound conclusions, among them that "dietary fat (whether saturated or not) is not a cause of obesity, heart disease, or any other chronic disease of civilization," and that "the problem is the carbohydrates in the diet, their effect on insulin secretion, and thus the hormonal regulation of homeostasis (the entire harmonic ensemble of the human body)." Additional conclusions about obesity, sugars, insulin, and other subjects are both sobering and encouraging.

All of Taubes's books have dealt with scientific controversies. Educated at Harvard, Stanford, and Columbia Universities, Taubes wrote for *Discover* magazine, *Science* magazine, and other periodicals, and spent five years on the research and writing of this book. "I followed the facts wherever they led. I tried to let the science and evidence speak for themselves," he states, adding that he has "paid attention to the skeptics" and that he interviewed "literally hundreds of researchers, clinicians, and public health authorities who took the time to speak with me at length."

This provocative, in-depth publication is not light reading, but according to Pulitzer Prize-winning author Richard Rhodes, it is "clear, fast-paced and exciting to read, rigorous, authoritative, and a beacon of hope for all those who struggle with problems of weight regulation and general health." *Good Calories, Bad Calories* can be found at LifeSource for \$17.00 in paperback. 🌱



CINCO DE MAYO  
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You'll notice the recent addition to LifeSource's shelves of two of Heavenly Honey's offerings, a Northeast Oregon Snowberry Honey and a Willamette Valley Meadowfoam Honey. Snowberries are a common Oregonian native shrub, bearing a small berry reminiscent of a white blueberry. Indeed, some indigenous peoples referred to them as "ghost huckleberry" and regarded them as inedible. While snowberries certainly aren't palatable, the honey made from snowberry nectar is a different story altogether—light and sweet with delicate citrus notes.

HeavenlyHoney'sMeadowfoam Honey is another unique varietal honey from hives in the Albany area. Our distributor, Hummingbird Wholesale, notes that it "has a light flavor reminiscent of toasted marshmallows or vanilla," and that it is of limited availability, so you may want to get it while you can. Both snowberry and meadowfoam honeys are raw and unfiltered.

Also new to LifeSource is a raw, unfiltered, non-varietal honey from My Local Honey, from hives right here in Marion County. Unlike varietal honeys (such as the snowberry, meadowfoam, clover or blackberry), My Local Honey's hives have access to a wide range of blossoms, bringing in nectar and pollen from multiple species—you're getting honey made to the bees' own recipe. Honey has long been regarded as medicine, and anecdotal evidence from allergy sufferers suggests that local honeys may be useful in management of pollen allergy symptoms. For us here in Salem, you can't get much more local than My Local Honey.

While on the topic of sweet stuff, you'll want to take a look at another new introduction to LifeSource: Kallari Chocolate. Kallari is grown by small-scale farmers in the Ecuadorean lowlands and made into bars in Quito. It is certified organic, Rainforest Alliance Certified, and winner of Slow Food International's Presidium Award. The Kallari cooperative is made up of over 850 families from Ecuador's Kichwa indigenous group, helping them to stay on the land and providing sustainable income without cutting valuable rainforest trees. When I initially passed a bar around to LifeSource staff for sampling, I heard, "Mmm, that's smooth!" It's good chocolate—one of the best I've tasted, in fact. Kallari comes in 70%, 75%, and 85% cacao bars.

Chocolate has a certain richness to it that I was surprised to find in an unrelated beverage a few years ago. My dad is a self-confessed tea geek of sorts, and on a visit to my parents' house, Dad pulled out a hard brick of dark leaves that he referred to as pu-erh. The flavor—rich and dark and pleasantly musty (not unlike a good chocolate)—was a surprise.

Green tea and black tea come from the same plant, the difference being that black tea is allowed to oxidize. Pu-erh also comes from the same plant, and is fermented in addition to being oxidized, and often pressed into bricks. I was pleased at Christmas to get a package from my brother and sister-in-law, who currently reside in China, containing several small bricks of pu-erh tea. Remarkably, it has become the tea of choice for my five-year-old.

Pu-erh bricks haven't really caught on yet in the American

market, but pu-erh has been getting a lot of buzz recently from mainstream health gurus like Dr. Oz, citing possible health benefits. While I think the research is too preliminary to make any health claims, I still think it's a very nice tea, and LifeSource sells it in teabag form from Numi. Numi recently expanded their line of pu-erh teas, which includes the Emperor's Pu-erh (a rich, malty tea) and several flavored versions, including Jasmine, Chocolate, Cardamom, and Coconut Pu-erh.

Back in early April, we were pleased to be able to expand our chip offerings. You'll still find all your old favorites, but we've got some new ones, too. Lundberg is now making an organic version of their rice chips in two flavors, Cracked Black Pepper and Spicy Black Bean. Late July has expanded their line of tortilla chips to include Multigrain and Summertime Blues flavors. Food Should Taste Good has made a Sweet Potato Tortilla Chip for some time, but we now carry their Sweet Potato Kettle Chip as well. And we're happy to introduce Falafel Chips and Good Health's Veggie Stix.

I'd also like to introduce a new brand in our household department: GreenShield Organic. LifeSource now carries GreenShield's Automatic Dishwasher Liquid and two scents of their concentrated Laundry Liquid. GreenShield is the first company (at least to my knowledge) to produce certified organic versions of these products. Made primarily from organic coconut oil and organic soap nuts, I'm hoping organic-certified household products is a trend that catches on.





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