Do you have an organic vegetable garden, but treat the rest of your yard differently? The ornamental plants in your yard are important. They provide play areas for your children and pets, habitat for wildlife, protect soil, and affect the health of our planet at large.

Think about this:

- Anything you dump on the ground, eventually reaches our waterways.
- Certain insecticides are associated with Bee Colony Collapse Disorder, and systemic pesticides often linger in the ground and plant tissues for years.
- One of every 3 bites of food we eat exist because of pollinators (that is 1/3 of all food we eat!).
- Pesticides and habitat loss are having a major impact on our pollinators.
- Are you ready to give up CHOCOLATE, apples, blueberries, strawberries, peaches, melons, and almonds? They all require pollination.

Learn more about protecting pollinators, and creating a pollinator-friendly habitat in your yard. Join Organic Growers School for on Wednesday, July 17 from 7-9 p.m. at the Woodfin YMCA. Click the image for more information.
Organic Living Corner

Ask Meredith

Dear Meredith,

Can you give me some tips on organic flea and tick control for my dog?

Thanks,
Ellen

Dear Ellen,

In the humidity and dampness of an Appalachian summer, nearly every pet owner has to deal with fleas. Ticks are another special treat for us here, and both deer and dog ticks are commonly found on household animals. In addition to being a nuisance, these pests can create other problems for your animals. For example, fleas can lead to internal parasites in dogs, deer ticks are vectors for Lyme's Disease, and dog ticks carry Rocky Mountain spotted fever.

While many chemical repellants and insecticides can be found on the market, your concern about the safety and efficacy of these chemicals is spot on. Common flea and tick control methods for dogs and cats, including tablets, flea collars, and liquid pour on treatments contain organophosphates, neonicotinoids, and carbamates. These chemicals

Farmer's Corner

Ask Tom

Tom:

Should I mulch tomatoes and peppers at this time of the year? I know that they both love warm soil and am worried that mulching them might cause the soil to be colder even though I like to preserve the moisture in my raised beds with mulch.

Thanks,

J. Lee
Lake Toxaway, N.C.

Dear Lee –

The conventional wisdom is to wait until the soil warms to apply organic mulch. You can monitor that temperature with a soil thermometer. Sixty degrees is good for peppers. Synthetic mulch is widely used in commercial vegetable production. A thin single-use plastic is available at most feed and seed stores. We use a version of this material in our greenhouses under tomatoes and cucumbers which has a white and a black side. The white side up reflects light up under tomato leaves and increases yield. It does slow the heating of the soil but that's
are nervous system disruptors, and can also act as endocrine disruptors. Familiar products containing these chemicals include "Frontline", "Advantage", "Vectra" and "Capstar". The toxicity of these compounds to invertebrates is undisputed. What is commonly misunderstood is their toxicity to humans, specifically children, and also to the very pets carrying them around. To top it off, neonicotinoids have recently come under fire for their involvement in the decline of bee populations worldwide.

Got a question for Meredith? Email it to us at
enews@organicgrowersschool.org

Hi Ruth,

It looks like we have some sort of orange fungus growing on our apple trees. What is the best way to fight this while keeping our apple trees organic?

Thank you,
Beth

Dear Beth,
The orange spots on your apple trees are a type of rust. Apples are susceptible to three kinds of rust: cedar apple rust, quince rust, and hawthorn rust. All three rusts are caused by spores that overwinter as galls on trees in the juniper family – especially the Eastern red cedar, *Juniperus virginiana*. Spring rains cause the galls to swell and produce gelatinous "horns" that start producing spores. Only ONE large gall can produce billions of spores. The spores are quickly released during wet periods in spring, and are carried on air currents infecting apples, crabapples, quince, pear, hawthorne, serviceberry, and mountain ash. Cedar apple rust galls resemble something from outer space, and their spores can travel over 2 miles. Hawthorne rust spores have been known to travel almost 14 miles. What? Yes...14 miles. In late summer the apple (or host tree) produces spores that can, in turn, infect the cedar tree. Here is a chart about all three rusts.

The primary infection period on apple trees is between the pink stage and three weeks after bloom. Once the spores have been released for that year, there is no secondary infection period. Most of us won't even notice that our trees have rust initially, but by early summer the orange spots on leaves and fruit are easily visible. Once the trees have been infected, there is not much you can do for that year.

Read more at our Blog

Gardeners: Got a question for Ruth? Email it to us at enews@organicgrowersschool.org

CRAFT TOUR: Ivy Creek Family Farm

Soil Science 101!

Despite rainy weather on May 18th, our CRAFT members made the trek to Barnardsville for a Soil Science Workshop at Ivy Creek Family Farm. Our hosts Paul & Anna Littman teamed up with Alex Hessler their former intern (and CRAFT apprentice!) and a current graduate student the University of Kentucky to give us a crash course in the basics of soil science and its influences farm production and choices. Thank you to the Littmans, Alex and farm crew for putting together such a great, informative, and fun tour!

Luck was on our side, and the rain let up right as the tour began. Coming from non-farming backgrounds, Anna explained that it has taken every skill they learned in their previous careers to build their farm. They started growing for themselves and then began to sell the excess at a road side stand. They saw firsthand how local agriculture builds community as their neighbors visited the stand and then began to visit with one another, and their dream to grow their own food expanded to full out farming. So a four year land search began.

Read More at Our Blog

Want to learn more about CRAFT? Email your questions to us at cameron@organicgrowersschool.org
Questions? Thoughts? Comments?

We want to hear from you!
Email them to us at

enews@organicgrowersschool.org

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