

Dear Friend and Neighbor,

Dallas Organic Garden Club (DOGC) encourages you to investigate using methods that are better for your landscape, your family, and your pets.

Information to help you make the move to a more natural, non-synthetic, organic yard program is available at [www.dogc.org](http://www.dogc.org). You may also attend a free monthly educational meeting at Fretz Recreation Center located at Beltline and Hillcrest. Additional information may be obtained by calling

---

Happy Gardening!

---

### Seven Organic Gardening Basics

#### 1) LEAVE MOWN GRASS CLIPPINGS ON THE LAWN

Let lawn grow 2.5" or taller. Tall grass shades out weeds, requires less water, and builds a deeper root system. To remove weeds use full-strength 10% vinegar and 2oz of citrus oil per gallon directly on the weed, but not on surrounding plants. Works best if done on a warm sunny day.

#### 2) START USING COMPOST AND NATURAL FERTILIZERS

Synthetic fertilizers make the grass green, but don't help the soil. Compost can be purchased or made at home using leaves, grass clippings, and non-greasy, non-dairy kitchen waste. Have your soil tested to determine what nutrients it needs. Fertilize 3 times a year (Feb, June, Oct) with a 100% organic fertilizer; there are many commercially available choices. Foliar feed with seaweed, fish emulsion, or compost tea as often as once a week and as little as 5 times a year.

#### 3) SELECT NATIVE AND WELL-ADAPTED PLANTS AND PLANT AT THE CORRECT TIME OF YEAR

For this area, fall and winter are great times to plant trees, shrubs, and a variety of other plants. Lists of plants are available at nurseries and in various organic publications.

#### 4) MULCH BARE SOIL Use 3-4 inches of shredded hardwood

#### 5) WATER THOROUGHLY, DEEPLY, AND LESS FREQUENTLY

Quick and frequent watering develops shallow roots, leaving grass and plants unable to withstand drought conditions. If there has been no rain, water one inch once a week, except for new plants which will need water more often.

#### 6) USE NATURAL PESTICIDES WHEN NEEDED FOR SPECIFIC PROBLEMS

Remember that natural pesticides can also kill beneficial insects. Release beneficial insects such as green lacewings, ladybugs, and trichogramma wasps. A healthy, diverse garden will eliminate the need for pesticides.

#### 7) CHOOSE BIODIVERSITY IN THE GARDEN

Healthy gardens need a balanced mix of organisms, insects, plant types, and animals.

---

Good advice can be gotten from: [WWW.DOGC.ORG](http://WWW.DOGC.ORG)

**Howard Garrett, The Dirt Doctor** [WWW.DIRTDOKTOR.COM](http://WWW.DIRTDOKTOR.COM)

Also find The Dirt Doctor on 820 WBAP Radio, WFAA Channel 8 TV, and in The Dallas Morning News

**Redenta's Garden Shops** (Dallas, Arlington, & Colleyville) 214-823-9421

**North Haven Gardens** (Dallas) 214-363-5316

**Rohde's Nursery** (Garland) 972-864-1934

**Organic Dynamics** (Mesquite) 972-329-4769

**Shades of Green** (Frisco) 972-335-9095

**Green Mama's** (North Richland Hills) 817-514-7336

# It's Time to Go Organic

---

Right now – Today! The many reasons to do so are compelling and the excuses not to do so are unfounded.

**The number one reason to be organic is that this is the most important thing you can do to protect your health and the health of your loved ones.** Nothing is more important than your health. Going organic means more than using compost in your garden. It includes modifying your diet and general household management.

Organic foods are important both for what they contain and what they don't. They have been proven to be more nutritious. They contain the food value, vitamins, and trace minerals that are critical to the optimal physical and mental development of growing children. The natural vitamins and minerals in organic foods help all people function better. Grass fed organic meats and dairy products contain essential fatty acids that have been proven to reduce the risk of cancer. Not only do they help you avoid illnesses, but you just plain feel better, too. It's like putting premium grade fuel in your car.

Equally important is what organic foods don't contain – the residue of toxic pesticides and herbicides, synthetic growth hormones, antibiotics and other dangerous materials. These substances have been linked to degenerative diseases like cancer and arthritis. All of them have a negative impact on the human immune system, leaving people more vulnerable to any illness or disease. While washing fruits and vegetables thoroughly is a good idea, it doesn't eliminate the problem. Toxins are absorbed into the tissue of the plants and animals.

Organic household management involves using common sense when it comes to cleaning and pest control. If you dump a toxic chemical drain cleaner down your drain, where does it go? It goes into the sewer system and eventually into our water system. If you use an aerosol poison bug spray, it floats through the air onto your skin and into your lungs. There are non-toxic alternatives. Dumping baking soda down the drain followed by vinegar will clean most drains. Most inside insect problems can be solved with one of the many citrus sprays that are now on the market. Vinegar and water is a fine window washing solution. There is a non-toxic solution for every household management task.

When it comes to landscaping, the use of organic materials and methods is safe and pleasant. **Try this test. Slip a peeled clove of garlic into your sock. Within 10 to 15 minutes you'll start to taste garlic in your mouth. The essence of the garlic has passed through your skin into your system and migrated all the way to your mouth.** If the guy in the truck sprays herbicides or pesticides on your lawn where your children and pets play, these similarly, are absorbed through their skin and into their bodies. It is no accident that the rate of childhood cancer has escalated in sync with the growth of the chemical industry.

Organophosphates and carbamates like Dursban, Diazinon, and Sevin are being dumped on our land at alarming rates. Sadly, they are not needed. There are perfectly safe alternatives. For example, the widely used fire ant baits are toxic pesticides. The organic alternative is a citrus oil based product. Which one sounds safer to you?

**Going organic is the best thing you can do to protect the health of your family. That should be enough. But it's also the best way to protect our environment and our society.**

Our waterways are clogged with weeds due to runoff from application of high nitrogen synthetic fertilizers. Our water supply is tainted with pesticides and herbicides. Birds and other wildlife are threatened by toxic chemicals. There are dead zones in the Gulf of Mexico where the chemicals flow out from the Mighty Mississippi.

So called "conventional" farming releases carbon dioxide and other gases that pollute our air. Feed lots and chicken factories pollute their local environs and increase the risk of *E.coli* and *salmonella*. These unhealthy practices stress the animals' immune systems requiring that they be fed "supplemental" antibiotics.

**So let's take a look at the excuses.**

**Organics are too expensive.** The food is. That will change as demand increases. But, what value do you place on your health? There are savings, too. Vinegar and baking soda are much less expensive than toxic drain cleaners. A bag of organic fertilizer does cost more than a bag of the

synthetic stuff. But look at what you get. You get 100% fertilizer. Every once of an organic fertilizer is beneficial to your property.

The bag of synthetic 10-15-5 is 10% Nitrogen, 15% Phosphate, and 5% K-potassium. That's 30%. What's the other 70%? Who knows? At best it's useless filler. At worst, it can actually be toxic industrial waste. Yes that's legal.

The best thing is that everything you do organically builds the health of your soil – forever. The synthetic approach hurts the soil and has no lasting effects.

**Being organic takes too much time.** It can if you mix all your own solutions. But as more people convert to organics, the supply of commercially prepared products has increased dramatically. Eventually it takes less time, for example, you will fertilize less often on an organic program.

**I don't want my yard to look all wild and weedy.** This is a common misconception. Under an organic program your landscape can look as natural or as tailored as you choose.

**Organic means dealing with manure and it stinks.** Manure is an essential part of the overall organic program. If you have the animals, you have to deal with it somehow. Whether it's cleaning out a stable or picking up after your pet, it has to go someplace. The compost pile is the best place for it. But to be organic, you need not deal with fresh manure. You can buy manure-based compost in bags. After it has been composted it is relatively odor-free and there are several brands that smell quite earthy and pleasant.

**My friends and neighbors will think I'm a tree-hugging environmental wacko nut.** There is some overlap between environmental extremists and the organic population, but you need not be one to be the other. And you don't *have* to tell your friends. But I predict that once you've realized the benefits of organics, you'll be anxious to spread the word. That's exactly what the person who gave you this has chosen to do.

---

Howard Garrett, The Dirt Doctor