



Sick Soil

*By Marcia Rae
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If you are eating food grown conventionally, you are most likely eating food grown on sick soil. The same scenario that has resulted in the loss of ½ of our topsoil in the U.S. depletes the soil of its nutrients. These nutrients, while not necessary to the plant for gorgeous growth, are necessary to humans for abundant health.

Plants only need the macro nutrients of nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P), potassium (K), water, and air to grown lush. This kind of growth can be accomplished by adding NPK to soil and the result will look like food. But these chemicals added without the addition of organic material eventually means the destruction of the micro-organisms that convert the micro-nutrients in the dirt, including minerals, into a form that the plant can absorb and then make available to us.

Growing fruits and vegetables on soil using NPK fertilizers is very economical, resulting in abundant, cheap food. But our bodies require 59 nutrients daily, including 13 vitamins and 22 minerals. As each successive crop is grown using NPK methods, the soil is slowly depleted, resulting in food severely lacking in, well, food. A good example is spinach. In 1948, at the beginning of the push for NPK fertilizers, a bowl of spinach had 150 mg of iron. Now it has 2 mg. Recent studies spanning 50 years show this depletion in nutrients across the board; look around and see a nation of overweight and under-nourished people.

At our farmers market each Saturday, a steady stream of people head to George Weppler's booth. They are after his greens. These greens are grown on ground that has been amended for 30 years with organic material, making the dirt so friable that he can till and harvest year round. These greens are rich in micro-nutrients. You can feel the richness in the robust texture of the leaves, and taste it in each flavorful mouthful.

Each Saturday, when I see George show up, I am grateful. His greens form the backbone of the farmers market. They personify the reason for the market's existence. His land and his knowledge of the dirt are priceless. When we pay our piddling two or three dollars for a fresh-washed bag, we are purchasing a miracle – of growth and life. And we, sooooo, take it for granted.

Munch on This – Have you had your daily dose of micro-nutrients today? What is the value of a healthy body? Eat local.

PS – See you at the Farmers Market this Saturday, 9 a.m. to noon, for real local food. Music by the Coast Fork Bluegrass Band.

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