

## *“Doctorate in Organic Gardening”*

Recommendations of Organic Gardening books,  
presented in a humorous format

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This article was originally written for the YahooGroups Gardening Organically as an introduction for newcomers to organic gardening. The abbreviation GO refers to the name of the group.

A recent post on GO revealed the contents of the textbook for the Arizona Master Gardening program. In my disappointment over how little this mainstream book had to offer in areas such as organic vegetable gardening, soil building, waterwise irrigation, seed selection, I decided that a "Doctorate in Organic Gardening" designation should be made available for GO readers.

### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:

The Doctor In organic Gardening program (acronym DIG) would

- \* Expand your Organic knowledge and skills
- \* Improve your harvest of delicious and healthy fruits, vegetables, herbs and flowers
- \* Increase your understanding of your community ecosystems and world environmentalism

### ADMISSIONS INFORMATION:

- 1) Application: Complete our "online application" by subscribing to the Gardening Organically elist
- 2) Field Experience: The DIG program is not a theory-based program. Practical application is necessary. Dirt under your fingernails is necessary.
- 3) Transfer Students: If you are transferring from another program, for instance the Deadly Gardens Programs sponsored by Monsanto and Kellogg, realize that you will have some un-learning to do. Life patterns in your garden will undergo significant change. Transfer credits are NOT available.

### COURSE MATERIALS:

- \* You will need to have ongoing access to any combination of the following - a garden plot, a community allotment, a flowerpot, a farm ... You will need it in order to experiment with the course materials, but you will come to need it as an addiction, a soul necessity.
- \* You will need access to a public haz-mat disposal site, to responsibly dispose of all the toxic wastes from your pre-organic days ... chemical sprays, petroleum based fertilizers, GMO seeds, weedkillers, general neurotoxins ...
- \* A Scavenger Attitude is useful. This will avail you of opportunities you never believed possible - free mulch, harvested rainwater, recycled and re-purposed tools and containers. Possibilities Thinking, and Bartering, are elective courses, not required but recommended, under the DIG program.
- \* An open mind is indispensable. In entering the organic world your perception of the everyday will be incrementally changed. You will never again see a SUV in the same light, particularly after exposure to professor fraggle's series on Current Events in World

Environmentalism. "Dirt" will become "soil" in your hands, following Professor Gloria's comments on sheet composting. Your views of food and medicine will likely change for the healthier. Ornamental hybrids in your garden may be eclipsed by open pollinated Edibles, and Beneficials and Herbs. Each incremental attitude adjustment brings you (and our planet) one mini-step closer to the idea of sustainable living.

\* Internet access is a plus, for regular connection to fellow students in the DIG program, and connection to DIG-related websites, organic materials suppliers, etc.

#### BOOK LIST FOR SPECIFIC COURSES:

The following "textbooks" may be utilized in the DIG program. Several may be available in your local public library. Many are available through Amazon.com in either their new or used book sales. You may find better prices on used books via other online services such as BookFinder.com, which also sells many out-of-print books, and those published overseas. The online books are free, but giving a donation to each site would be a good thing, to support their noble cause.

Course name: Gardening 101 - Introduction to Organic Gardening

Rodale's Successful Organic Gardening Vegetables

A basic overview of most areas of organic gardening, from soil building and composting, to integrated pest management, rotational and companion planting, plus a brief encyclopedia of cultivation for most of the typical garden veggies. There are also Herbs and Fruits & Berries titles available in the same series.

How to Grow More Vegetables Than You Ever Thought Possible on Less Land Than You Can Imagine, by John Jeavons

This slim book is so all-encompassing it's hard to describe it. It covers intensive plant spacing, soil building, composting, yield calculations, seed starting, seed temperatures, crop rotation, compost cropping, and much much more. Fully organic and sustainability focussed.

The Frugal Gardener, by Catriona Tudor Erier

Rodale Press ISBN: 0-87596-801-5

Most likely the finest primer to those just learning about organic gardening. Not only an introduction to organic ways and effective practice, but gives fine overview of reasons for same. Covers everything from propagation, to scavenging free stuff, to garden design, to companion planting, to recipes for soil/plant food; and Beyond. Even us old hands will find good info in it. Easy read, clear and fun. Has the "Earth Safe Gardening" Seal.

Square Foot Gardening by Mel Bartholomew

In terms of beginner gardens, and possibilities with small garden areas, this book is priceless. Bartholomew uses intensive plant spacing to maximize yield per squarefoot of garden space. Recommended for beginners because the squarefoot grid makes gardening so accessible - great things can be accomplished, one square foot at a time. Note: Bartholomew is not organic, but his layout works well in conjunction with organic techniques.

McGee & Stuckey's The Bountiful Container, by Rose Marie Nichols McGee and Maggie Stuckey

This is a great guide to edibles-in-containers. The authors assert that nearly everything can be grown in a container of some sort. While they do not use fully organic methods, their book is useful in realizing the possibilities and cultivation needs for growing veggies in pots, which information is not typically covered elsewhere.

Course name: Soils 101

Chapter 3 "Soil: The Most Important Crop"  
Gardening for the Future of the Earth, by Howard-Yana Shapiro

'The Fundamental Reality that Underlies Fukuoka's Principles'  
By Emilia Hazelip  
<http://www.fukuokafarmingol.net/foverfound.html>  
online article about soils

Soil Biological Communities Just for Kids  
<http://www.blm.gov/nstc/soil/Kids/index.html>  
Don't be put off by the cartoons and casual language - there's important stuff here! This website written for kids gives a really great brief overview of soil microorganisms. Be sure to click on "Incredible Journey" and each oval along the pathway there.

The Plowman's Folly, by Edward Faulkner, 1943  
available as an online book via [soilandhealth.org](http://soilandhealth.org)  
A ground breaking text on soil management. (pun intended, because Faulkner's whole point is a no-till approach!) This is a book to be read over and over throughout your gardening career.

Course name: Landscape Design 110

'Companion planting' by Professor Stuart B. Hill  
<http://gardening.about.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?site=http://eap.mcgill.ca/Publications/EAP55.htm>

How to Make a Forest Garden, by Patrick Whitefield  
garden design imitating a natural woodland with layers of plantings - a tree layer of fruit and nut trees, a shrub layer of soft fruits and nuts, and ground layer of perennial veggies and herbs

The Permaculture Home Garden, by Linda Woodrow  
Contains among other things the most detailed description of Guild Planting, where plant species are selected for grouping based upon what they do for each other: Legumes with high nitrogen users, climbing vines with upright structural plants, etc.

The Art of French Vegetable Gardening, by Louisa Jones  
Imagine a "coffee table book" of breathtaking photos of vegetable, fruit and herb gardens. Here it is, and quite an inspiration.

Gaia's Garden: A Guide to Home-Scale Permaculture, by Toby Hemenway

The Ecological Garden - details on everything from basic layout, to water resources, beneficial critters, food forest and garden guilds and more.

Course name: Seeds and Seedlings 101

The New Seed-Starters Handbook, by Nancy Bubel, from Rodale Press

Seed to Seed, by Suzanne Ashworth

Perhaps the premier book on edible plant seedsaving, this book also contains deeply informative material on cultivation. Ashworth covers the typical garden vegetables plus more esoteric ethnic plants, so the book can also broaden your horizons as far as what plants to grow.

Course name: Entomology 115

Insects and Gardens, by Eric Grissell, Timber Press.

Bugs, slugs & other thugs : controlling garden pests organically, by Rhonda Massingham Hart  
Serious pest control info conveyed with a delightful dose of humor

Subscription to GardensAlive catalog (gardensalive.com)

They publish catalogs perhaps every month, but about once or twice a year they send a really thick one that includes photos of many common garden bugs and diseases and what the damage looks like. These photos are quite valuable for identification purposes. Of course, being a catalog, they propose which of their pre-formulated products you "need" to deal with that pest. Take that part with a grain of salt; some of their items do not appear to be organic.

Course name: Herbs 120

The Herbalist's Garden, by Shatoiya de la Tour

Gorgeous photographs to accompany solid text. De la Tour tours (pun intended) "10 exceptional herb gardens" and includes garden layout, culture and use info on many favorite herbs, culinary and medicinal.

Mrs Grieve's A Modern Herbal

<http://www.botanical.com/botanical/mgmh/comindx.html>

This is the online version of a book published in 1931. While there are disclaimers all over the place, the site still contains exceptional in-depth information about common herbs, culinary and medicinal. Includes history, culture, quotes from traditional herbal texts. Information about usage is brief and cryptic.

Plants for a Future database

[http://www.scs.leeds.ac.uk/pfaf/D\\_search.html](http://www.scs.leeds.ac.uk/pfaf/D_search.html)

Information on over 7,000 plants, including culture, use, habitat. Includes herbs and edibles, familiar and obscure.

Herbal Tea Gardens, by Marietta Marshall Marcin  
"22 plans for your enjoyment and well being". In addition to many herb garden layout suggestions, it includes brief information on close to 90 different herb plants, culinary and medicinal.

The Herb Garden CookBook, by Lucinda Hutson. Gulf Publishing Co.  
Each section about individual herbs tells all about the herb and then at the end gives several recipes to use it. Included also are herb vinegars, etc. The recipes are by some well known chefs.

Herbs, Lesley Bremness. Eyewitness Handbooks / DK Publishing  
Great photos...in depth photos even in some cases of the various parts. The descriptions aren't long....but they are to the point.

Course name: Home Ec 120

Recipes from a Kitchen Garden, by Renee Shepherd  
Delicious recipes, all the more tempting because they are designed in garden-to-table fashion. Forget Bon Appetit magazine's fancy exotic ingredients; Shepherd uses fresh homegrown produce in-season to produce fresh tasting dishes.

Twelve Months of Monastery Soups, by Victor-Antoine D'Avila-Latourrette  
Coming from a tradition where vows of poverty limited his choice of ingredients, D'Avila-Latourrette produced gourmet caliber hearty soups using pretty much just that which he grew in his garden. The great thing about these recipes is, they don't call for out-of-season ingredients; one can go into the garden and come back with an armful, and that's dinner.

Keeping Food Fresh: Old World Techniques and Recipes, by The Gardeners & Farmers of Terre Vivante  
Information about old fashioned food preservation, from root cellaring to drying to lacto-fermentation, vinegar pickling and sugar preserving. Definitely written for garden-to-kitchen cooks. (note there are two books in publication with similar titles, be sure to seek the Terre Vivante one, not the Janet Bailey one!)

Clean and Green: The Complete Guide to Nontoxic and Environmentally Safe Housekeeping by Annie Berthold-Bond  
a "how to clean anything" guide, yet it sidesteps all the hideous chemicals we usually see recommended in such guides.

Course name: Gardening 199 - In depth Methodology

'Synergistic Gardening' by Emilia Hazelip  
<http://www.seedballs.com/hazelip.html>  
online article describing how Emilia pulled it all together: soils, rotational plantings, layout, and more.

One Straw Revolution, or  
Natural Farming or  
The Road Back to Nature, all by Masanobu Fukuoka  
hard to find...but worth the effort...and available somewhat online.  
Excerpts from One Straw Revolution are available free online at  
<http://www.soilandhealth.org/copyform.asp?bookcode=010140>

Test Your Soil With Plants, by John Beeby  
booklet available through Bountiful Gardens <http://www.bountifulgardens.org/bountiful-gardens.html>  
By observing which plants (including weeds) thrive in your garden patches, you can discover what your soil needs, in each particular corner of your property.

Weeds, Guardians of the Soil, by Joseph Cocannouer  
online at the Journey to Forever website  
[http://www.journeytoforever.org/farm\\_library/weeds/WeedsToC.html](http://www.journeytoforever.org/farm_library/weeds/WeedsToC.html)  
If one wants good information about what weeds do for the soil, and how different weeds act to improve the soil, plus other great stuff, this is a must-read. It also has the side benefit of helping us simply pay more attention- always a good thing.

The Living Soil, by Balfour  
online from Soil and Health Library  
<http://www.soilandhealth.org/01aglibrary/010138balfour/010138ch1.html>  
Great for in-depth learning about what constitutes the best in our soil, and exactly how this benefits our plants.

#### UPPER DIVISION COURSEWORK

After a short time of gardening using organic methods, the DIG student's outlook naturally broadens from simple chemical-free gardening to more sustainable ways of growing food and living in general.

Course name: Gardening 201 - Broadening Horizons and Sustainability

'Permaculture, a Beginners Guide' <http://www.gburnett.unisonplus.net/Perma/>  
A short online booklet by Graham Burnett of the U.K., which opens your eyes to the interconnectedness of organic life.

Gardening for the Future of the Earth, by Howard-Yana Shapiro

Path to Freedom  
<http://pathtofreedom.com/>  
an urban homesteading project of amazing proportions: what one family has achieved on a small city lot. lots of links.

The Permaculture Home Garden, by Linda Woodrow

Great plant rotations plus egg laying chickens as an integral part of the design. This book covers quite a range of subject matter for small urban/suburban gardens.  
see also The City Chicken <http://home.comcast.net/~kkskinner/chickens.html>

How to Grow More Vegetables Than You Ever Thought Possible on Less Land Than You Can Imagine by John Jeavons  
Return to this classic to review the sections on growing your own compost crops; even composting can now become a sustainable practice

Permaculture: A Designer's Manual by Bill Mollison  
This is excellent technical material, but reads like an engineering text. The main points are explained a bit more accessibly in Hemenway's and Woodrow's books (referenced above and under Soils).

Course name: Environmental Studies 202 - Water in an age of Climate Change

Chapter 5 from Gaia's Garden by Toby Hemenway  
catching, conserving and using water

Oasis Design's Greywater Site  
<http://www.oasisdesign.net/greywater/misinfo/index.htm>  
perhaps the most comprehensive and practical greywater information to be had for free.

Gardening Without Irrigation, by Steve Solomon  
online book  
<http://www.soilandhealth.org/03sov/0302hsted/030201/03020100frame.html>

Course name: Political Science 215 - Current Events in World Environmentalism

Restoring the Earth: Visionary Solutions from the Bioneers, by Kenny Ausubel  
Entry into organic awareness quickly leads you into awareness of the larger environmental problems our world currently faces. And reading about world environmentalism can rapidly get deeply depressing. Ausubel's book is a bright glimmer of hope - each chapter highlights a person who is working on new approaches and technological solutions, from sewage treatment via bog plants to green money in economics.

## THESIS AND FINAL DEFENSE

After advancement to candidacy, the culminating step of the DIG doctoral program begins: the Thesis. While DIG studies to this point have been in-depth reading and practical application, the final defense consists of sharing your knowledge with others. Gardeners everywhere are yearning for this knowledge, and are experiencing great difficulty in finding it. There is much mis-information out there, and the media campaigns of the chemical companies aim to keep it

that way. Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to wear your Organic Gardener's heart on your sleeve, to proudly share this information wherever possible, to help gardeners large and small reach for more sustainable practices.

#### CONFERRING OF DEGREE

Under the DIG program, no conferring of degree seems necessary. By the time a DIG student attains this advanced level of study, he or she realizes that refining sustainability is an ongoing, lifelong process. A bountiful cornucopia of healthy produce, a deep soul satisfaction of living wisely upon this earth, and the rich rewards of sharing this essential knowledge with others - these are the real DIG degree. May they be yours for for a lifetime, and seven generations beyond.

An attempt to update this "book list" became the novel *Legacy: A Story of Hope for a Time of Environmental Crisis*, by Joanne Poyourow. Published October 2005 by VBW Publishing. ISBN 1-58939-789-0