

# Organic Land Care *with*



**"To search for solutions to hunger  
means to act within the principle that the status of a citizen  
surpasses that of a mere consumer."  
CITY OF BELO HORIZONTE, BRAZIL**

**Light tomorrow with today!  
-Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806-1851)**

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### **Our Mission:**

"To support our  
communities in their  
transition to  
organic practices"

This newsletter is distributed  
free of charge to all SOUL  
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### **SOUL**

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To find an organic land care  
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visit the SOUL website at:  
**www.organiclandcare.org.**

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Welcome to the end of April and the beginning of May. I hope that this newsletter finds everyone well. For us on the west coast the weather has turned and spring has come. Everything is bursting with life as we change from one season to the next! So, this issue of the newsletter is about change as it is occurring today.

Recently, National Geographic did an article about the Oil Sands and the degradation this work has had on the landscape. But interestingly, the name Oil Sands, a much gentler reference, somehow replaced the older term "Tar Sands." It was interesting how I came to be using it without remembering how I moved from calling it one thing to another. The media certainly had something to do with this, but I also chose to be part of this change as I accepted this term and its use. The second idea of change was at a recent presentation I attended about "nature deficit disorder." Richard Louv presented his thesis from his recent book "The Last Child in the Woods - Nature Deficit Disorder." His premise is that our technological society is creating environments where children have lost their connection with nature and as such a host of problems such as ADD, obesity, diabetes, and the like are occurring because children today would much rather stay inside rather than go outside. He relates research to his thesis and calls for a systemic change in how we build and live in "community." This presentation was part of a larger conference that was promoting a Canada wide initiative to get children outside, be it in parks, playgrounds, gardens and the like.

These ideas of change suggested that we have to reframe in a positive manner what is transpiring around us. The interesting aspect about these ideas of change were that they pointed to what people can do when they understand what is happening to them. This is not new information. An important reminder, though, was that change can happen and that this change can come from the bottom up, the grassroots, the "trickle-up theory." As we are being bombarded by misinformation through the media, advertising, propaganda and the like, it seems that there is a rising consciousness that we can all make a difference if we speak with one voice and when we work together.

In this month's newsletter, one article is about the positive changes that are taking place in a large urban setting through the public's use of composts and mulches while moving away from pesticides. The second article relates how a well-known herbicide maybe forcing its supporters to move away from its use because of the problems it is creating. It appears that the time is right for changes to take place as our awareness of what we have done to our earth is taking hold.

I hope that this newsletter finds you all well, and that the change of seasons brings forth abundance in its many forms.

David Greig

## Green Gardening: 'Feed the Soil, Not the Plants'

by Kathy Renwald

In the April 25, 2009, edition of the Toronto Star there was an article about "Green Gardening: 'Feed the soil, not the plants'". The article reported on the need for gardeners to reconnect with nature and to get away from the use of chemicals because of people's interest in controlling what comes into their environments as well growing food for their consumption. Furthermore, "on April 22, Earth Day, 250 pesticides and herbicides were banned for use on lawns and gardens, parks, schools and sports fields."

The article talked about the same ideas promoted by SOUL and referred to the need to create diverse environments and to work with the soil. Getting away from monocultures, such as lawns, is a way to "plant for habitat and diversity" as well as to promote balance in the garden. If a lawn was to be grown, it was suggested that one could top dress it with organic matter and then seed it. The idea was to get away from the "medicine chest" approach to gardening.

It was encouraging to read an article from a mainstream paper about ideas that were once considered the "purview of those on the fringes." "Feed the soil, not the plants, it's the building block of a great garden" was a quote from the article to encourage the public that adding organic material was a method that could easily improve the soils fertility and ability to hold moisture. Not new information but now mainstream thinking! By using design and proper plant selection, a person could transition to gardens that were chemical free. Quoted by the author, a local designer referenced a number of plants that could grow well without the need for interventions. Added to this aforementioned information was the increasing interest in growing food around Toronto without chemicals. The article pointed to the changes that are taking place in Toronto and that by "using a diverse group of plants, choosing types that are insect- and disease-resistant and relaxing our standards just a bit, more gardens will turn from battlegrounds to hallowed ground."

Renwald, Kathy. (April 25, 2009). Toronto Star  
<http://www.thestar.com/printArticle/622020>

For additional information about products that are banned and those that are not please go to the City of Toronto website at:  
<http://www.toronto.ca/health/pesticides/>

## Monsanto's Crops Spawning Superweed Epidemic in U.S.

'Superweed' explosion threatens Monsanto heartlands  
"Superweeds" are plaguing high-tech Monsanto crops in southern US states, driving farmers to use more herbicides, return to conventional crops or even abandon their farms."

This article is about superweeds that are resistant to "Monsanto's iconic "Roundup" herbicide." One such weed, Pigweed, is being considered a superweed, because it is not affected by glyphosphate, the active ingredient in "Roundup", which is the most widely used herbicide in the USA (<http://mulch.cropsoil.uga.edu/weedsci/>). This over reliance on glyphosphate and glyphosphate resistant seeds (GMO seeds) have created a situation where superweeds now grow freely in fields of soybeans and cotton. Apparently, in the southern US, farmers have abandoned their fields

(<http://deltafarmpress.com/cotton/palmer-amaranth-1226/> ) or have resorted to the expensive alternative of the non-sustainable hand weeding. This particular weed "Palmer Pigweed" can produce 10,000 seeds, is drought resistant, grows 3 feet tall and is able to dominate young cotton plants. As stated in the article, if Monsanto wanted to make a perfect weed that was resistant to glyphosphate, then this would be it. What is frightening about this situation is that it is being suggested that to combat the superweed, Monsanto company representatives are suggesting mixing Roundup with 2-4-D "a herbicide which was banned in Sweden, Denmark and Norway over its links to cancer, reproductive harm and mental impairment. 2,4-D is also well-known for being a component of Agent Orange, a toxic herbicide which was used in chemical warfare in Vietnam in the 1960s." To add to this situation is the fact that Monsanto took out patents on "mixes of glyphosate and herbicide targeting glyphosate-resistant weeds." Through this patenting the company is able to profit from the problem it created!

This information is both frightening and heartening at the same time. This information is disturbing because of the reasons stated above. Also contained in the article is heartening information because some farmers are now rethinking their use of GMO seeds and maybe returning to conventional seeds and crops. If this is the outcome of the situation mentioned above, then a positive change will have taken place.

Caulcutt, Clea. (April 19, 2009). France 24 International News.  
<http://www.france24.com/en/20090418-superweed-explosion-threatens-monsanto-heartlands-genetically-modified-US-crops>



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<http://www.organiclandcare.org/home/calendar.php>