

How to Improve Topsoil

OceanGrown of South Florida - Nebraska farmer Don Jansen

In 1981, Maynard Murray, now retired to southwest Florida where he had constructed a 12-acre hydroponics farm. Dr. Murray met Don Jansen, son of a Mennonite farmer in western Nebraska. Don had spread sea solids on his wheat field, and was so surprised at the results, he contacted his fertilizer supplier, Dr. Murray.

After high school, Don Jansen had left his parents Mennonite farm to pursue a college degree and professional career. His elderly parents passed the wheat and buffalo farm on to Don's brother. But when this brother had multiple sclerosis and a crippling heart attack, Don left his urban career to return to the farm.

Wheat grew unevenly on the farm's rolling Nebraska hills. Fertilizer and topsoil washed off high spots and steep slopes to puddle in hollows. Wheat on upper slopes was thin, weak, while bottom soils grew sturdy stands.

Don spread Murray's sea solids on wheat fields, uncertain what would happen. All his wheat grew stronger, stouter, fuller heads, and matured earlier. Differences between upland and bottomland was gone, and former bare patches filled in and flourished.

The Jansen farm included a small herd of 35 buffalo. Don noticed right away the buffalo preferred sea solids to regular salt blocks, and chose sea-solid-fertilized crops over conventionally chemical fertilized.

Buffalo were a tourist attraction, and significant source of extra income. They drew steady streams of guests to observe indigenous American herbivore.

But visitors were usually disappointed, because the herd stayed far from the fence, and were hard to see. Tourists found it unrewarding to admire tiny brown specks half a mile away. Remembering Murray's cattle experiences, Don devised a solution for his bovine voyeurs. He fertilized along the fence with sea solids. Soon the herd hung out along the fence to munch the dark green, vigorous grass growing there. They would graze that area first in preference to all other pasture grass. This made the herd happy, and tourists, too.

Ocean-Grown Foods

In 1982, Dr. Murray invited Don to buy his 11 acre seaponic farm in Ft. Myers, Florida. Don's acceptance was timely, for the doctor died in 1983. In that last year, he paid Don steady visits to offer his information and insight gathered in 45 years of research and medical practice.

Don found sea solid dilutions gave the highest yields, and made fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides unnecessary, since the nutrients are complete and the plants resist disease and insects. Nutrients were measurably higher in sea solid grown foods, and blind taste tests proved them favorites. Fruit trees responded enthusiastically to sea solid feedings. Since it grows without synthetic chemicals, Don's produce is Certified Organic, and his few intensive acres supply international organic wholesalers. However, Don believes seaponics is beyond organic, since organic methods alone do not ensure the will have all the essential elements. Seaponics is ideal for areas where soils are rain-leached and depleted, such as south Florida.

America Doesn't Get It

Don tried to tell others the tremendous success of sea solids gave him, but found no one cared to listen. One grower asked for help with his dying citrus orchard. Don delivered a series of sea solid soil treatments over the next year, and the citrus decline vanished. But Don heard nothing further from any farmers.

Dominance of agriculture petrochemical industries. Extension service, farm supply, bank loan requirements, federal support policies all favor the chemical paradigm. inability to introduce new or different thinking. Severe restriction on the ability of farming-which is to say, farmers-to change. "America just doesn't get it" lamented Don Jansen. "I've tried for 25 years to make the case for sea solid fertilizers and more natural, balanced methods.

But Americans aren't ready to hear the truth. Furthermore America isn't going to get it anytime soon, because the chemical-pharmaceutical-petroleum industry has too tight a grip on all the markets and everyone's thinking."

Hydroponics in Haiti

Last year, now in his 70's, but still stubbornly pursuing his work with sea solids, Don decided to look elsewhere for collaborators in research. He decided to go where the need is greatest, and began negotiations with Haiti to transfer his sea solid hydroponics to this poverty riddled Caribbean island nation. With over-population, widespread poverty and unemployment, limited arable farmland, and significant hunger and malnutrition, Haiti was in desperate need of an intensive food growing system. Don was able to negotiate with Gulf Coast University to collaborate on his Haiti hydroponics project. The university will provide technical support, training, scientific design, research protocols, and documentation and publishing support.

Imagine if...

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