

Healthy Food making Healthy Folks: The Benefits of Organic Gardening

The word "organic" is all over the media these days, and you may even be lucky enough to have an organic farmer living near you. Organic food promotes health, be it in the soil or in the bodies of folks who eat it. Hunger Action Network Community Food staff is working on linking organic food with communities through gardens, connecting local farmers and low income people, and farmers' markets. Since we're making an effort into encouraging organic food along with like-minded communities throughout the state, we thought we would share with you the reasons why organic food is so nourishing.

For contrast, take a look at how most food is grown in the United States today. Nearly all the fruits and vegetables purchasable in grocery stores and supermarkets are grown by "conventional" methods. Unfortunately, the "conventional" way of growing today means with the use of pesticides (pest-killing chemicals) and synthetic fertilizers. Many of these chemicals persist in the environment long enough to cause negative health impacts to water ways or to the air, harming wildlife and people who live or work nearby. In addition, the fertilizers make the plant grow, but they do not feed the soil. When plants are grown year after year with no trace elements (i.e. calcium, iron, magnesium...) or organic matter added, such as compost or decomposed manure, the fruits and vegetables grown from that land lack vitamins and minerals.

The difference between organic and conventional grown nutrients in food is remarkable. One study found that organically grown apples, potatoes, pears, wheat, and sweet corn on average had "averaged 63% higher in calcium, 78% higher in chromium, 73% higher in iron, 118% higher in magnesium, 178% higher in molybdenum, 91% higher in phosphorus, 125% higher in potassium and 60% higher in zinc" than the same grown conventionally.

What do you get in conventional foods that you *don't* get in organic food? In the same study, conventionally grown foods had 29% more mercury content! Pesticide residues are another common problem. Once applied, some of the pesticides remain on many common foods, such as apples, spinach, potatoes, strawberries and peaches. Having these foods grown organically from local farmers and gardens will result in lower incidence of cancers, and a healthier environment and community. For more information on this, visit a website called "Foods You'll Want to Buy Organic" at <http://www.foodnews.org/highpesticidefoods.php>

Organic food production helps strives to nourish soil, and as a byproduct, healthful foods. Hunger Action Network is available to help you connect with organic food resources in your community. Crunch on an organic apple and support your health!

