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Natural Gardening

The other day one of my Master Gardeners brought an article to the office which I found very interesting. It was on Natural farming, or in some cases also known as Natural gardening. Some say it is more logical, scientific, practical, and more useful to most of the world than typical organic gardening techniques.

For over 50 years a farmer from Japan, named Masanobu Fukuoka, showed that digging, weeding, fertilizing, pest control, and pruning were not necessary to grow food. He wrote several books and taught extensively through the world.

When gardening naturally, we ask what Nature had in mind, not what we had in mind. To determine what should be in your garden, cast as many different types of seeds as possible during all of the planting times with no particular aim in sight. Be careful to find seeds which can still open pollinate themselves, otherwise you may be buying a seed that will not produce viable off-spring.

In Natural gardening the earth is fed like Mother Nature does it, from the top down. There is no tilling at all. With no till, the micro organisms stay at the top of the surface and the ones that are deeper in the soil aren't turned up too eventually die. By no tilling, worms, spiders, beetles, and other beneficial organisms aren't chopped up or buried alive.

In Natural gardening, you can never have too much organic material. The more the merrier, even if you grow "weeds" or a crop to provide generous amounts of organic material.

Natural gardening uses "available resources". Mixing materials like bran and rice together then spreading it over the garden area helps to decompose organic matter which in turn makes the nutrients available to the plants. Some like this approach since they don't have to haul compost to the garden. In one case a farmer put down his own concentration of indigenous microbial organisms (IMO's), and his field turned "white as snow". The white color was the result of the fungi mycelia on the organic matter. It was also found that by inoculating poultry and pork bedding in production facilities with IMOs they could control smell, had better animal health, and turn the bedding into safe organic material for crop plants.

I am going to try to do this in my garden. If you are using this let me know how it works for you.

Source: The natural way of gardening, *Kirby Fry*, Program Coordinator, Cross Timbers Permaculture Institute; October on the Big Island, Puna District near Paho, Terry Hollembach, Winter 2009, International Herb Association.

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