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We at Lancaster Ag are stocking our Retail Store with a full line of organic garden seeds for this spring season. Our selection includes varieties of beets, cabbage, soybeans, carrots, corn, cucumbers, greens, lettuce, cantaloupe, watermelon, onions, peas, radishes, spinach, zucchini, tomatoes, dill, parsley, lima beans, and green, yellow, and purple beans. Stop by our store at 60 North Ronks Road and pick up your seed packages early for the best selection.



GARDEN NEWSLETTER

*Naturally Interested
in Your Future*



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SPRING 2011

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picked up at
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Road.**

Over the Garden Gate A Spring Conversation With Gardeners

By Reuben Stoltzfus

This Spring Garden Newsletter is all about bringing human health and gardening together. My letter to you this season talks about these two topics and their relationship to each other. At the end of my letter, I have a very special invitation for you to join us on Saturday, February 12, for Lancaster Ag's Real Health Conference.

Human Health

As we begin a new year, I realize more and more the need to focus on human health. Recently I was talking to John Keim, a respected friend of mine, and he made reference to the fact that we as a community need to pull together to understand human health on a deeper level. I took special notice of that comment because John has 70+ years of experience and as he looks over his lifespan here on earth, he must be seeing more than I have seen. John went on to explain if we want our children to have the privilege and opportunity to live normal lives in the future, we have to start making better choices today.

I was asked this summer to give a two-hour speech in Indiana, based on the topic of health and life before conception. We understand this topic as it

relates to livestock. In order for us to have great offspring, we must have healthy stock before conception. This is also true for humans. If we wait till after conception to bring health to our offspring, we have missed it. We will have paid the ultimate price and will need to live with our decisions for the rest of our lives.

Again this winter I have been asked to give several presentations about health before conception. I believe the reason why there is so much interest in this subject is that there are children being born with abnormalities. We have had this in the past. I realize people are shaking their heads and saying, "What's new? It is an age-old

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Spring Conversation

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dilemma. We have had this many times before. Why is it any different today?" I am, however, aware that it is happening more frequently today.

John Keim in his Northern Nutrition Seminar pleaded with 400 people to take care of our health before conception so that our children, our offspring, our next generation, can lead normal, happy, and free lives. Last evening a group of men held a meeting to plan a fundraiser in order to raise money to help cover medical bills for a couple in the community who had a baby born prematurely. We hope that spirit of helping will always be here. But John Keim, with tears in his eyes, was pleading with the people in Indiana to do everything they can to prevent these unhealthy situations from happening.

That would be the biggest fundraiser ever, if we would all look within ourselves and evaluate our diets and our lifestyle. How are we treating our bodies? How are we getting ready for conception - spiritually, mentally, physically, emotionally, and financially, along with learning about forgiveness? All of these elements need to be a part of the discussion before conception.

Because I was asked to prepare for these speeches this winter, it is fresh in my mind how important it is that we understand health. If we neglect to improve health today, our next generation will be weaker. And if they ignore looking at health, their next generation will also be weaker. Dr. Arden Andersen references this fact in his book, *Real Medicine, Real Health*, explaining how the generations will regress if something is not done to improve quality and life in general. There are more and more infectious diseases occurring. In our 2010 Summer Farmer Newsletter, I mentioned merca (staph infection) in an article I wrote. I explained how merca is increasing and taking over. The U.S. Government and even the White House have great concerns about how we as the general public can stop merca from being rampant today.

I think we all can see what Representative Jan Schakowsky from Illinois was explaining; if farmers would clean up their hygiene and not use antibiotics in feed as a normal dose to cover up their mistakes and sloppy management, we would be better off. Just like the merca and infectious diseases that are running rampant, there are other illnesses, influenzas, and colds

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1. **Till the cover crop:** late winter or early spring when soil is dry. Then let the soil rest.
2. **Prepare the soil:** work the garden into a finished seedbed.
3. **Apply SeedGro:** and then lightly till one last time.
4. **Apply Garden Top Dress:** either before or after seeds are planted to boost energy.
5. **Plant seeds or transplants:** when soil is ready and weather permits.
6. **Control weeds:** after seeds sprout, lightly till garden.
7. **Feed the crop:** apply SeedGro every 2 weeks during growing season. Foliar-feed with F-1 or Fruit Mix.
8. **Observe the plants:** look for proper general appearance, structure, color, growth, and reproduction. Watch for insects.
9. **Continue to control weeds:** use preferred method and lots of perseverance.
10. **Harvest the fruit:** give thanks for fresh food.

Spring Conversation

Continued from page 3

possible. If you are having difficulties raising healthy vegetables, greens, root crops, and tomatoes, please do not give up. Seek help by calling Lancaster Ag's Call Center at 717-687-9222. We are experts at solving your garden problems and are determined to help you enrich your soil and your plants. In the end, that will mean a healthy, bountiful harvest in your garden.

Our gardening advice will help you to focus on minerals. Vegetables alone will not bring sustainable health. We have to understand that the vitamins and minerals are the essentials that we are seeking when we consume vegetables. For example, we do not get our energy from the potato itself. We get our energy from the vitamins and the minerals that the potato has. When these potatoes, tomatoes, and eggplants are undernourished, they will attract insects and diseases to wipe out the plant so that it is not fit for human consumption. If you are having problems, find out what your deficiency is and replace that mineral in the soil.

Vitamins and minerals supply our bodies with energy. We metabolize these minerals and turn them into enzymes. The enzymes then go ahead and make proteins and sugars and that is what our bodies feed off of. It is not the potato or the tomato itself that we feed off of. We get our food for a healthy body from the minerals and the energy that are created in the potato, tomato, and eggplant. That is why I believe the best way to improve our quality of life is by gardening.

Our Retail Store on Ronks Road will be open each Saturday from 7:30 am – noon in March through May to accommodate the gardeners. This year we are stocking a full line of organic garden seeds to ensure that you have pesticide- and herbicide-free seeds to plant in your garden. If you find that you have other gardening needs that you cannot locate, please call us at 717-687-9222. Remember, by paying cash at our store, you receive a 4% discount.



Real Health Conference

I want to personally invite you to our February 12 Real Health Conference. This conference started several years ago when Mervin and Sylvia Allgyer were on the staff here at Lancaster Ag. Their passion was to educate people and to bring awareness about health to the community. At the first conference (Health Awareness Seminar) held at Lancaster Mennonite High School, we had Sally Fallon from the Weston A. Price Foundation speaking on the importance of animal food, proteins, and true proteins. There were 650 people present. That number told us that we needed to plan more conferences in the future.

The next conference was held at our newly purchased Lancaster Ag facility with 450 people present.



There were 20 farmers and local vendors present who raise, make, and sell these products locally – grass-fed beef, grass-fed milk and butter and cheese. This conference was called Love Your Health Day because it was on Valentine's Day, February 14.

This year we are naming our conference the Real Health Conference. It is the same campaign as before, that of promoting real foods. We want to make people aware that even though health is failing all around us, there are healthy local solutions. There will be vendors here for you to personally talk to and make connections for grass-fed lamb, pork, beef, eggs, and dairy products. There will be fermented foods for purchase. There will also be educational information available on how to prepare such foods. Five seminars will be offered throughout the day. For more details, please find the brochure in the middle of this newsletter.

In closing, I invite you to come out for the day and bring the whole family. Men and women will be here to teach about gardening – berries and fruits and vegetables – and how to choose and raise a family cow. There will be something for both young and old to enjoy.

I wish you a very happy, healthy, and prosperous New Year! We look forward to serving you with garden products this spring. ■

- Reuben C. Stoltzfus

7. What type of cold frame is the least labor intensive?

Cold frames are infinitely variable from the homemade to the bought system. It is worth buying one that does not need to be tended. Purchase one that can be set and that you can then walk away from. For example, a slightly ventilated cold frame only needs to be checked once a week. Take a panel off, cut some greens, put it back together and stay away for another week. If you do want to make your own, look at plans and designs. Use untreated, unpainted lumber. Attach a sacrifice strip to the bottom that can be replaced as it rots on contact with the soil. There is white plastic that is made for cold frame use, PVC, and some clear plastic ones. Usually glass is not used in the panels because it breaks.

It is possible to build one for around \$100. Bought cold frames run between \$200-\$400. The bought cold frames are very good and last a long time.

One model has a tempered glass panel that does not break. It lends itself to venting because it is very heavy and does not blow away. There are three other panes that have Plexiglas in them. It is advisable to use a cord over the panels so that they do not blow off. Even if you hinge them, they must still be locked in place because of strong winter winds. If a cold frame panel launches (flies off), it has potential to do damage.

8. How often do the vegetables need to be watered?

In the spring as it warms up and in the fall when you first put the cold frame on, you need to do serious watering. In the fall and spring when there are several warm days, then you need to open it up and water with a hose. But in the winter you need very little water. In the winter water once or twice with a sprinkling can.

9. Where is the best location to place a cold frame?

Although it depends on the use, if you can, face the cold frame toward the south. It is best to move the cold frame every year or rotate what goes in it every year. You need to work with crop rotation. It works best in a garden plot because you can simply move it around and set it somewhere else. For example, you can start your 4'x8' section of greens in the fall and then a month or two later bring the cold frame over and put it on another section of greens for later use.

10. What about shade?

There is not much need for shade over a cold frame unless it is used for specialty plants in the summer. The cold frame should generally be in as much sun as possible.

11. What about insulation?

Typically in our region here in Lancaster County, insulation is not a big help. Most plants usually grow well, although there is a slight possibility that it will get cold enough that some will die. However, it is the overheating that is the issue, not the freezing. This is opposite of what one would expect. Overheating, not freezing, is the problem and causes crop failures.

12. What about crop rotation?

Treat a cold frame like you treat a garden. For example, use crop rotations of three to four years. When your salad is done and you want your tomatoes to get a good start in the spring, put your cold frame over the tomatoes. Speed up your tomatoes in the spring because your greens no longer need the heat and can take the cold nights. Move it around to places according to what needs more heat or less heat.

13. How long does it take to learn about growing things in cold frames?

Going through one growing season will teach you what you need to know about the plants you choose to grow. You will find out what a cold frame's limitations are at that point. The first season will do well for you if you start with something simple such as loose-leaf salad greens.

14. Do you have a recipe to share? Yes, enjoy! ■

Cut off fresh loose-leaf greens from the mixes in your cold frame. Add some radicchio (a mildly bitter tasting Italian leafy vegetable) and sweet grated carrots.

Mix up a basic vinaigrette salad dressing using 3/4 cup olive oil, 1/4 cup raw or balsamic vinegar, minced fresh garlic, sea salt, ground white pepper or freshly ground black pepper, and dried basil, oregano, and thyme leaves or other spices of your choosing.

Stir lightly and let set for 30 minutes for the flavors to blend. Whisk just before serving over the greens.

that are almost uncontrollable today. That means we need stronger immune systems. The immune system is vital to warding off these diseases. But more than that, we need a body that will be able to reproduce and bring the next generation into fruition and life.

What are we doing to make that happen? Are we doing it haphazardly? Our children are born with deficiencies and we have to struggle the rest of our lives in order to counterbalance that. Or the community needs to circle together and have fundraisers for us or the expenses need to come out of the community's fund or be covered by insurance. Please understand that I am not against community functions. My wife Mary, our children, and I are heavily involved in the community's fundraisers. We like to serve others and help out. But it is time to work on minimizing serious deficiencies at birth.

A good place to start is to look at the immune system, the digestive system, the endocrine system, and the cardiovascular system. All of these systems are running full speed day after day. Every minute that our heart beats, every time that we take a breath, every time that we digest food, all of these systems are required to function in full capacity. It makes sense that, in order for us to keep these systems running smoothly, we need to turn to food and use food as our medicine.

Mary and I have experienced this in the last ten years with our family. Yes, we have illnesses such as bellyaches, colds and flu going through our family just as other families do. But we can minimize the visits to the doctor's office or the hospital stays. I am pleading with my own family that we will make the proper food choices and take our supplements so that the next generation can be fruitful.



Gardening

In order to do our part to improve human health, I encourage everyone across the country to have a garden. Plant a large or small garden, whatever your space, circumstances, and lifestyle allows. Gardens help provide nutritious foods to nourish our bodies properly.

Look at greens first. If nothing else, grow some greens for salad. In our 2010 Fall Garden Newsletter I talked about salad greens and eating your color. This is important because it gives us energy, stable sugar and glucose, proteins, and electrolytes to help our bodies function normally. It does not take much space – not more than a large, oversized flowerbed - to have a small garden for greens. Greens can be started in late fall and be grown all throughout the winter. See the article on page 4 about how gardeners are successfully growing greens in cold frames all winter long. Amazingly, cold frames do not require much ground heat. In Connecticut I visited one of our customers who has two large greenhouses in which he grows dozens of different kinds of salad greens all year long without the input or use of heat.

Next are root vegetables. Root vegetables can be grown in a small plot of 25 square feet or in an acre field. Families can grow root vegetables such as carrots, turnips, brassicas, potatoes, and beets in small or large areas alike. I encourage you to plant variety because variety brings a mound of trace minerals and vitamins into plants. If you want to study this topic deeper, know that every plant brings its own mineral profile to the body. My father always said, "Variety is the spice of life." He was right in that we need to consume variety on a regular basis.

Other green vegetables to consider growing in your garden are peas and beans. Steaming and lightly cooking are great ways to prepare these vegetables. Another option is eating raw vegetables. Eating raw in combination with slightly cooked or steamed vegetables is a variety from which we can choose.

If our vitamins or minerals are not coming from the soil, or our vegetables are not healthy, we need to supplement the soil with minerals. That is why following Lancaster Ag's Garden Program (see page 2) helps gardeners grow the best nutrient-dense vegetables

Extending the Seasons with Cold Frame Gardening

An interview with Steve Hartzler, Sales Rep for Produce

A cold frame can be a simple structure with four sides and a clear plastic or glass top. It provides a favorable environment for growing cool-weather crops beyond the regular seasons. A cold frame relies on the sun for its source of heat. Even in a 4'x8' cold frame you can grow an unbelievable amount of fresh garden salads. It is a joy to step outside your back door in the wintertime and find fresh greens readily available for dinner!

1. What are the benefits of cold frame gardening?

The benefits are that a gardener can grow cool weather crops early or late into a season. You can gain several weeks at the beginning of the season and several weeks at the end. Otherwise the weather would be too cold. This is true in any of the USDA Plant Hardiness Zones. The growing zones are expanded.

2. Which vegetables grow best?

In general, the vegetables that work the best are greens. Salad greens in particular work really well. You can choose to grow small root crops like carrots, radishes, some small beets, and turnips. They must be vegetable varieties that mature in 30–50 days. Do not choose long-season varieties. For example, it is possible to plant the seed and get a fully developed turnip in 40 days. In more severely cold weather, it will take a bit longer. Small carrots are particularly good to grow.

3. What types of greens can be grown?

The cold-hardy loose-leaf varieties grow very well.

The hardier they are, the better they will do. Spinach, loose-leaf lettuce, land cress, and miner's lettuce are the best choices for a cold frame. In a small space you can get a lot of leaves. You want to cut salad greens and have them grow back again. You can grow head lettuce in a cold frame, but when you cut it, it does not grow back again. Arugula and mesclun mixes are perfect for the cold frame. Mesclun means small salad greens cut at 2-3." There are different types of mixes - spicy ones and mild ones. Swiss chard is rather large for a cold frame, but plant thickly and then shear small. In a cold frame, plant it for the leaves, not the ribs.



4. Who are the gardeners who might want to try cold frame gardening?

It is wonderful to have one or two cold frames to use in conjunction with any size of home garden that supplies a family. In general, commercial produce growers will use high tunnels instead of cold frames. Old-time market gardeners used the cold frames, but today it is no longer done. On a large scale it is too time- and labor-consuming.

An unheated high tunnel is essentially a large cold frame, which can work when raising fresh greens for a large family. This allows a person to walk in and harvest greens comfortably.

5. Specifically how can a cold frame be used?

You plant your seeds, such as carrots, so that they come up. In the fall you put the cold frame over the carrots and then you can dig them whenever you want to use them. It is more than just storage. The cold frame makes a difference because it keeps the carrots sweet right into the fall. And it does give more time for them to develop into the fall so that they are younger and sweeter as opposed to being a batch of old carrots that are in storage. The vegetables that you pull out of your cold frame in December and January are not really growing anymore. They were grown in October and November and now the cold frame keeps cold winds and freezing temperatures from damaging the food value. It keeps the quality of the food high.

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It's Good for You!

Contributed by a Staff Writer

A sure sign of spring is children playing outside in the mud. A springtime cartoon of the Family Circus shows the family's young daughter Dolly kneeling in the dirt making a mud pie for her father. Her clothes are splattered with mud as she offers the pie to her dad and says, "It's good for you. It has no sugars and is all natural ingredients."

Apparently the family in this cartoon is adopting healthy eating patterns and making their children aware that less sugar is good for you. And this young girl already knows that soil has all natural ingredients!

In Genesis chapter one we read the story of how God formed the earth for us. On the third day of creation God said, "...Let dry ground appear...Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it." At the end of Day Three God took time to step back and look at what he had created. A very special assurance from God is... **that God saw that it was good.**

What God has created is good in its own right and is good for us. Creation is ours to use and care for. The soil, the dry land, the seed-bearing plants and trees that God created are all good in His sight and good for us. We need to accept our responsibility as God's caretakers and make sure that soil, plants, and trees are good for the next generations, full of natural ingredients. ■



Cold Frame Gardening Continued from page 4

6. How is the temperature regulated?

Permanently vent the cold frame by cracking it just a little bit. This prevents rapid rises and drops in temperature. Venting is important as your temperature control. You must have a modern cold frame that vents itself (automatic) or you have to permanently vent it just a little bit. Venting is key. You never have to check the temperature of the cold frame if you keep it constantly vented by cracking it slightly. If your model automatically ventilates itself, you never

have to check it. Either way works. The actual rule of thumb is never to close the cold frame. What destroys the plants is a wide range of temperatures, such as going from 5° at night to 90° on a bright sunny winter morning if the cold frame is not vented.

Remember: if the sun comes up, and the cold frame stays closed, everything will be ruined. You can permanently vent it just a little bit, and then you will be ok. Venting prevents overheating.

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