

A recent Letter to the Editor suggested a gardening class at the local school, and maybe me as the teacher. As I entertain this idea, a variety of thoughts pass through my consciousness. Although it's inevitable that in the future, growing food will be taught again, I am not predicting a personal career change anytime soon.

In old high school textbooks on agriculture, the school gardens are vividly described. Most kids were quite familiar with farm chores, but the opportunity for learning more is always present. Everyone had a garden, and the school was no exception. Here was a place to try new vegetables and fruits, and experiment with different techniques.

Gardening teaches a unique set of values; you reap what you sow; the more you work, the more you get; the abundance of nature when we labor with her; and the rewards of healthful exercise. The possibility of earning an income from gardening rises in conjunction with oil prices. Simply learning to take care of our dietary needs is reason enough to have a gardening class.

But, I'm not a teacher, I'm a gardener.

As a high school dropout with a social dropout attitude, the board of education isn't going to hire me anyways. They're concerned about the loss of revenue from the removal of vending machines. The garden is a better place for me, and we welcome young, and any age people, to come and hang out with us, and learn what they can.

I wanted to be a teacher when I was a youngster, because my dad had been one. He was a mathematics professor at Peabody University in Nashville during the 1940's. His promotion to Northwestern University near Chicago is the reason I grew up in Illinois. Dad left his promotional career to become a farmer, which must have affected me, as did his pleasant recollections of life in Tennessee. Any pretensions of me being a teacher came through heredity, not academics.

In my early musings on how gardening, especially local and organic, could become a profitable career choice, the idea of supplying the school lunch program seemed obvious. The

government funds it, and could change their supplies from agribusiness giants to local farmers. This would not only stimulate the local economy, the resulting proliferation of gardens, would expand gardening knowledge and experience.

Appleton, Wisconsin has an interesting story to tell. They decided to try a local food school lunch program. The food was much healthier. The principal was reluctant at first, because it cost more. After a year, the results were dramatic: every report card went up, and detention dropped almost completely. When kids eat food instead of pop and snacks, grades rise, and behavioral problems disappear.

The grain cartels in our country are way more powerful than the oil companies. The USDA promotes them, which is why we have grain products everywhere. Soda pop, snacks, and much of the institutional grocery products are primarily corn, soy, and wheat products, highly processed, and of questionable nutrition. Monsanto's recent advertisement that they are helping family farming, are an insult to our intelligence.

No, I'm not going to get hired to teach organic gardening, with my goofy dust and woo-woo. But, I'll continue to promote local gardens anyway I can. Every school will someday have a garden, for education, exercise, inspiration, and the fresh food, a healthy diet requires.