Organic farming is how folks have grown food throughout history, up until about a hundred years ago. After a few decades of chemicals, a new organic farming movement arose, along with much confusion. I'm still trying to figure it out and sort the myths from reality. Weeds are soil builders. It's true that the wild plants that sprout in our gardens can be beneficial, breaking up hardpan and bringing up nutrients. But one weed is the garden while we're growing vegetables is one too many. Gardening is weeding, and nothing is more detrimental to crop production than weeds. Weeds are only valuable if you are letting the land lay fallow)not trying to grow something), and should not be allowed to go to seed.

Monoculture is bad. I grew up in monoculture corn and soybean land, and it is bad. We don't hundreds of acres of one crop. But many vegetables like to grow in patches. The specific soil microbes that can benefit a particular species wake up and temporarily dominate the patch. I like a field of nothing but potatoes, corn, squash, carrots or tomatoes. It's usually less than an acre, and will be in a different crop within a few months. Nothing but the one crop, monoculture, is a beautiful sight, as long as a rotation of crops follows.

Don't use a mold board plow. By the way, I've tried all these wrong ideas personally, and this one really slowed me down. In the spring soil life wakes up, and flipping it over buries and suffocates biological activity, which is not good. But in a heavy soil, fall plowing can be very beneficial. Incorporating compost and organic matter in the fall gives it time to become part of the soil, and the freezing and thawing of the lifted up chunks of soil help to pulverize it. We only use the mold board on sod in fall, and then leave it rough plowed for the winter to work on it.

Vegetable scraps are compost. No, they can become compost. But until then they are in a smelly bucket under the sink. Yes they should be composted, but get them outside daily, and covered with dirt, hay, or leaves.

Rocks and bugs are bad. I used to pull rocks out of the garden and squish all bug eggs. Then I noticed an increase of yields in the rockiest part of some of the garden. The best looking soil wasn't the best. Some of our best gardens look like they're mulched with rocks. The cottony looking eggs I'd been squishing were from beneficial insects. The point is to observe carefully, nothing is all bad.

Plant all cover crops like rye and vetch. By all means, if you don't need to plant the field early the next season. They are great soil builders if left until early May, then mown down and worked into the soil. In a few weeks you are ready to plant a late May crop like corn, sweet potatoes or tomatoes. It takes rye and other grain cover crops two or three weeks to rot. For early crops it's better to leave the land open and roughed up with a chisel plow, because it will dry out quicker in the spring and you'll get a head start.

Farmers need to wash and market vegetables. First of all, vegetables keep better unwashed. I washed potatoes for years, with the need to sort through them way too often. We are now much better off storing them unwashed. Secondly, other folks should market produce. There are not enough farmers and we are (or should be) too busy to run around to stores and markets. Our skills are on the farm working with nature. Let someone from the other 99% of the population deal with the food once it's harvested.

Other myths prevail. I use way more composted cow manure than most organic farmers, following advice from a hundred years ago. I till the soil more frequently, which is also old wisdom. Yes, the tillage destroys soil life, but large quantities of compost reinvigorate it. A rototiller is the most damaging garden tool there is, beating the soil to death. The cultivators our ancestors used are much better. The more I farm, the more I appreciate the old time methods.