

I'm often asked questions about gardening, and enjoy responding as best I can. Many of my students have far surpassed me in their knowledge and gardens, thank goodness. Through the years I've gradually developed a curriculum and am ready to share it with a wider audience.

Gardening tips from a biodynamic/organic perspective will consist of four classes, two hours each. This will by no means be exhaustive, but simply a beginning. The goal is to shorten the learning curve that I underwent in learning how to grow high quality produce in Middle-Tennessee. You can learn from my mistakes.

On the second Saturday of the next four months, between 10:00 and 12:00 in the morning, I'll describe what I've been up to in the gardens. Resources can be provided with handouts about books, seeds, tools, and sources for tractor work, minerals and compost. Gardening is easy and fun if you know what to do, when to do it, and where to get what you need. I can supply books and video, too.

The first class in March covers biology, minerals and tillage. Successful gardens start long before we plant seeds. Compost is the key to establishing a live soil humus. Microbiology in very simple terms can help explain how plants like to grow. Various microbes will be given to propagate in your garden.

We'll have to delve into a little chemistry and learn how nitrogen lives and works. Phosphorus, potassium and calcium play key roles, and need to be present in the soil. Trace elements are also necessary for catalyzing many life processes.

Tillage is how we get the garden ready to plant. From plows, tillers, and cultivators, to forks, rakes and hoes, we'll figure out ways to prepare garden soils to maximize production and minimize compaction.

(It's now way past our two hours.)

In April the spring garden gets planted. Potatoes, peas, onions, beets, carrots, lettuce and other greens need to go in. We'll discuss methods, varieties, timing and companion planting. We might build a cold frame.

The summer garden goes in the ground during May. Now we are planting beans, corn, cucumbers, melons, squash, peppers and everybody's favorite, tomatoes. We'll go through the various varieties of each and mulching and staking. I'm planning on this class and the next being held in a garden so we can experience planting, hoeing and stirring a biodynamic preparation. We can talk about herbs and flowers, too.

By June we'll be laying the garden by and planning our fall crops. These will include late

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summer vegetables, all sorts of greens, turnips and garlic. A discussion of storing vegetables, cover crops and planting by the signs will round out this class, if they haven't come up yet. Question and answer sessions will follow each class.

In an effort to get folks to pay more attention, I'll ask them to pay \$25.00 per class, although no one will be turned away if they can't pay. Tennessee grew all its own food plus extra to sell for many generations. This created jobs and wealth throughout the cared for countryside, and better health for the consumers of the fresh produce. Let's fill our hills and hollers up with organic gardens rather than CAFO's and agricultural chemicals.