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JOHN'S CORNER:

NEWS FROM THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF SOIL AND PLANTS

by John Ferguson

A study from the University of Maryland has found that bees are now dying in the summer as well as the winter. The study covered April 2015 through April 2016 polling beekeepers; they found that they lost 44% of their bees. Many factors are contributing to this loss from malnutrition (many modern hybrid flowers have poor quality pollen), exposure to pesticides and other environmental factors that weaken the bee's immune system. This makes a bee colony much more susceptible to varroa mites that infect colonies. This is another reason a gardener should plant native plants and heirloom flowers whenever possible and only use the modern organic methods.

In previous issues, I have talked about how fluoride in our public water systems hurts many plants and weakens their immune system leading to more insect and disease problems. The California Environmental Protection Agency released a document called "Evidence on the Carcinogenicity of Fluoride and its Salts". The report states that "multiple lines of evidence (show) that fluoride is incorporated into the bones where it can stimulate cell division of osteoblasts (bone forming cells), an admission that recognizes fluoride as a cause of bone cancer." Other papers from multiple universities states that fluoride induces genetic changes leading to malignant transformation. Fluoride has been linked to other various cancers including liver and oral cancers, and thyroid follicular cell tumors.

A study published in the Journal of Environmental Research (Volume 146, April 2016, pp. 207-217) has found that pre-birth exposure to organophosphate pesticides and persistent organic pollutants (chemical) may be linked to the development of obesity and metabolic disorders, particularly in girls.

A study in the Journal Chemosphere (Vol. 144, February 2016, pp. 1365-1371) found that eating beef from cattle is a source of organochlorine pesticides that are a known source of carcinogens. Another reason to eat organic grass fed beef.



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A new organic product made from natural oils called NMX from the company EcoSeal has been found to be effective in killing bacterial and fungal infections on plants. It is in the final stages of testing and approval.

A study from Wake Forest University has found that Tiger Moths produce ultrasonic signals to warn bats that they do not taste good as part of their defense strategy. The more we learn, the more we realize that God's nature is amazing.

A study from Texas A&M published in the Journal Hortscience (March 2016) has found that several plants are salt tolerant. This is very important if one uses high salt products made from chicken or cow manure in their garden. They are orange peel jessamine, mexican hummingbird bush, flame acanthus, rock rose, and 'Dark Knight' bluebeard in decreasing tolerance. Plants found to be extremely salt sensitive are Eastern red columbine, butterfly blue false heather, and cardinal flower.