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JOHN'S CORNER: NEWS FROM THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF SOIL AND PLANTS

by John Ferguson

A study published in *Frontiers of Nutrition* (2018), looking at the diets of 34,000 people has found that a diet high in fruits and vegetables with less meat is healthier. They also found that plant based food grown organically, provides significant additional benefits from climate due to reduced greenhouse emissions and far less energy consumption as compared with meat based diets.

A recent investigation by the Bureau of Investigative Journalism and the Guardian found that 14.7 % of the U.S. population suffer from food borne illnesses, 128,000 are hospitalized and over 3,000 die each year. Compared to the U.K. where raw milk and other unprocessed foods are allowed, only 1.5% suffer illnesses. The extremely poor condition of animals on our factory farms whom are then fed massive amounts of antibiotics which is used to keep them alive or make them grow faster and then it creates antibiotic resistance which are the major cause of these numbers. I find it interesting (alarming?) that the media talks about the small number of deaths from other causes but fails to mention the huge number of deaths by our agricultural system.

Gardeners know that they feel better after having their hands in the soil. Microbes in the soil produce scents that make us feel better and stimulate our brain function. We are learning that regular contact with **healthy soil**, especially through gardening AND consuming produce that contains trace amounts of soil is a great way to strengthen our immune systems as it introduces healthy soil microbes to our bodies.

On a related topic, research at the University of California (published in *Environmental Health Perspectives*, 2018) has found that children raised in homes surrounded by more greenspace tend to have more white and grey matter in their brains which leads to better cognitive function



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from better memories to better attention. These beneficial changes to their brains persist into adulthood.

A recent article in Dr. Mercola's newsletter stresses that infectious diseases continue to skyrocket as drug resistant super bugs abound. According to the CDC, 2 million Americans are diagnosed annually with disease resistant infections, that result in the deaths of 23,000 people annually (700,000 worldwide). This many more than car accidents, sharks, lightning, guns and other causes combined, and the media does not tell us about it. The good news is that researchers from Rockefeller and Rutgers universities have discovered a new class of antibiotics from the soil microbes called malacidins, which appears to work on many resistant diseases. Another reason to get our hands dirty.

A study in the Journal Structure, 2018 has found that an alkaloid extract from the common Daffodil (*Amaryllidaceae Narcissus*) has anti-cancer properties. Daffodils' have been used for centuries in folk medicine and this research gives an molecular explanation of why it works.

Science News has an interesting article on the human sense of smell that was published in the Journal Human Biology (January 18, 2018). Our ancestors used smell to determine if something was safe to eat, to hunt, and to sense danger. The research show that the more we use our sense of smell, the better it gets. I suspect most gardeners intuitively know this, as we sniff the fragrance of our favorite flower or herb.

Natural News had a great article last week on growing your own food called "8 reasons why you should grow your own food". One can read the details at www.naturalnews.com

- 1) You avoid toxic chemicals
- 2) You are in control of what you eat
- 3) You eat clean food
- 4) You save money



- 5) You become healthier
- 6) You teach your children correct eating habits
- 7) You protect the environment
- 8) You are happier