

Growing Highly Nutritious Food* Workshop Series

Contributed by Tad Montgomery
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Increasing the Nutrients in the Food We Grow

The United States Department of Agriculture has been measuring the nutrient content in foods since the 1940's -- vitamins, minerals, and more recently phyto-nutrients. What their studies show is a gradual and persistent decrease in these nutrients by up to 60%.

Starting this Sunday at Enterprise Farm in Whately, MA (between Deerfield and Northampton on the Connecticut River), a workshop series organized by the Real Food Campaign will teach farmers and gardeners how to build their soil in such a way as to increase the yields and nutrient levels of the food they grow. Techniques to be taught will include soil remineralization, addition of trace elements, and soil inoculation with beneficial micro-organisms. Participants will learn how to monitor vegetables, fruit and the soil to determine what deficiencies are present during the growing season so that adjustments can be made.

Workshop leader Dan Kittredge grew up in the organic farming movement and is now working to bring sustainable agriculture to the next level. "Organic is great as far as it goes," says Kittredge, "but the organic standards are about prohibiting synthetic chemicals. They have nothing to say about how nutritious any particular food is."

These workshops draw on cutting-edge research and long-proven techniques to build the ideal soil environment for crop growth and production. This series will take farmers and gardeners step-by-step through the principles, practices and materials to optimize crop health and growth.

"The essential premise of the Nutrient Dense Food movement is that if all environmental factors are ideal for a growing crop, it will perform to its fullest DNA potential" says Kittredge. "An ideal environment gives plants the resources and opportunity to thrive. Thus, nutrients will be at their peak, yields optimum, pests and disease will be minimal, and the food will taste and store better."

"We start with soil. Mineral deficiencies will be delineated and corrections suggested. We work primarily with rock minerals and biological inoculants, such as bacteria, fungi, natural fertilizers such as fish emulsion and kelp, humates, and sugars. Then we move to seed and transplant inoculation, and soil energy monitoring. Plant and soil monitoring, nutrient drenches and foliar sprays are also detailed. We cover rarely discussed subjects, such as plant physiology, plant-microbial symbiosis, timing of growth and fruiting cycles, and how to maximize all of these. The use of foliar sprays to affect leaf or fruit growth will be explained. Resources will be provided. The course uses a daily schedule of half principle, half practice. Starting in winter, we meet one day every two months to detail practices to maximize biological vitality for crops over the next two months and learn the principles of why these practices make sense."

The Pioneer Valley workshop series will start this Sunday, January 17, from 9 AM to 4 PM at Enterprise Farm: 72 River Road, Whately, MA. Contact: David Paysnick, 413-475-3392, email: davepays@gmail.com. Other workshop series are taking place throughout New England, including Montpelier, VT and Temple, NH. For more info on these see: <http://realfoodcampaign.org/content/events>.

The cost of each day-long workshop is \$50, or \$45 each if a person signs up for the entire series of six. Farm partners can attend for half-price. To register for the workshop, visit the web site or contact Dan Kittredge, 978-257-2627, dan@realfoodcampaign.org, North Brookfield, MA.

For information on nutrient dense food, visit: <http://www.realfoodcampaign.org>. The Nutrient Dense Food Project and the Real Food Campaign are projects of Remineralize the Earth, a non-profit 501(C)(3) organization based in Northampton, MA.

The local contact for this movement is Tad Montgomery.

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