

*Conducted by Robert D. Brinsmead, "Down in the Garden" is a new and, we believe, a highly important section of PRESENT TRUTH. It is time that we catch a clear vision of God's plan for the home in these last days. Inspiration is clear that believers in the third angel's message should secure for themselves a home in the country where they can raise their own garden. With this in mind, we believe that our readers will find the gardening section of PRESENT TRUTH to be of vital importance, and we trust that it will be a valuable help for those who are taking a lively interest in learning to grow a good family garden of healthy fruits and vegetables.*

*Their is much religion in a good garden. By following God's plan in this area, a multitude of blessings will surely be reaped. We solicit the enthusiastic support and participation of our readers in "Down in the Garden." This section of PRESENT TRUTH is for the purpose of sharing together the knowledge and experience which have been gained by those who have already taken a vital interest in the soil. More specifically, we invite your contributions, questions, ideas, hints and even photos which relate to the subject of gardening.—EDITOR*

## DOWN IN THE GARDEN

By  
ROBERT D. BRINSMEAD

There are some ascetic religionists who may imagine that a spiritual magazine on present truth would exclude a section on gardening, but we heartily disagree. There is much good religion in a good garden.



When God created man, He placed him in a garden. This was the environment God chose for the Eden school. God talked to man in the garden. Divine wisdom chose a garden as a vital part of man's education.

The soil is still a vital part of God's educational system. Those who believe that the *Testimonies* are the voice of Jesus speaking to His church today, will appreciate the tremendous force of this statement:

"Study in agricultural lines should be the A, B, and C of the education given in our schools. This is the very first work that should be entered upon."—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 179.

Even though I was raised on the land and have earned my living from the soil, I never appreciated its place in the third angel's message until I met Herbert White early in 1961. I was delighted to see Sister White's grandson sitting in one of my meetings in Yucaipa, California, nodding his head approvingly as we went step by step through the meaning of the sanctuary and its service. Afterward, I learned of his great interest in organic gardening. A little later I read one of his books on the subject and also secured a set of tapes containing his lectures on gardening. In these, Herbert White presented an important phase of God's plan for His people. He kindled my enthusiasm and planted in my heart the desire to master the art of growing a good family garden.

Moving about America constantly, it was impossible to put the ideas into practice; but since returning to Australia, the Lord has granted our family this opportunity. I have been able to benefit from my own experiments and from the experience that others have gained in different places of the world.

In Australia, believers in the Awakening message have caught the challenge and inspiration of Herbert White's message. It seems that a good garden is a sort of characteristic and earmark of a good Awakening family.

For many years Sister White urged Adventists to get out of the cities, obtain a piece of land and learn to grow healthy fruits and vegetables. Today the wisdom of this inspired counsel is more apparent than ever. American civilization has become too urbanized, industrialized, organized, centralized and artificialized. Nature has been so ignored and abused that she is beginning to demonstrate that she will no longer tolerate man on this planet unless he lives more in harmony with her laws. Thousands of weary, smog-bound city dwellers are now yearning for the kind of residence that Sister White described as the ideal for the Adventist family.

The Spirit of Prophecy warned that the time would come when many would wish to leave the cities and would not be able. I am wondering if one reason could be financial. The economic and land situation today makes it much harder for a family to move out of the city onto such a piece of land as recommended in the *Testimonies*. Not many years ago these places could be secured for sums of money within the financial range of most families. But in many cases, it now requires a vast amount of money to settle on a nice piece of land outside the city. A doctor friend in a certain city of America tells me that he cannot afford to buy such a place outside of his city today. When I was in Washington State last year, I was shown a nice 20-acre piece of land about 45 miles out of Seattle. This country setting would be an ideal place for a family home, a gar-

den and a little orchard. There was one major problem—the price tag was a fabulous \$40,000. Very few families could afford to locate there. Yet when I first went to America (1961), an average Adventist family could easily have afforded to purchase that same piece of land.

It will not become financially easier to move out of the cities. The trend is bound to make conditions more and more difficult. But the way has not yet been hedged up completely. There are still areas in the United States where it is possible to secure land suitable to establish a home after Heaven's plan, and at reasonable sums of money. The following counsel is certainly applicable now:

"At such a time as this, the people of God who are seeking to keep the commandments of God should look for retired places away from the cities. . . ."—*Country Living*, p. 14.

Many have looked upon the divine directions as some sort of hardship. God's commands do not really impose hardships. The believing, obedient soul finds them loaded with blessings—often temporal as well as spiritual blessings. Back in 1962 I encouraged a family to move out of a city on the West Coast. They bought an acreage in the country with a home on it for less than \$10,000. Today their property and home have been evaluated at more than \$50,000. Even after allowing for some inflation, they have acquired a real financial asset. Eight years ago their friends looked upon them with a kind of pity reserved for those enduring some hardship. Today these same people sit on their paltry city lots and look upon this family as if they were a sort of landed aristocracy. Sister White's statement is fulfilled again and again to those who obey the Spirit of Prophecy: "Fathers and mothers who possess a piece of land and a comfortable home are kings and queens."—*Ibid*, p. 18.

### **Good Gardens and Believers in the Present Truth**

From time to time I have revisited friends of the Awakening message in the Los Angeles area. Always there are some familiar faces missing. Upon inquiry, I have found that they have moved out of the great metropolitan area. Rather than being gratified to find a large crowd of present-truth believers if and when I return to Los Angeles, it would be wonderful to learn that they had all gone in obedience to the counsel of the Spirit of Prophecy.

While many believers are moving away from the great cities with their families, it would be real progress if just as many were becoming keen gardeners. I found that families who raised a good garden are the exception rather than the rule among Awakening believers. It is high time that we all caught a vision of God's plan for the home in these last days, and that we witness a real reformation on this point among God's people. Let none preach about his health reform program to us unless he has demonstrated that his health reform program starts from the soil up. Let every Awakening family learn what blessings God has in store for him down in the garden, and may the time quickly come when every family in the third angel's message takes a lively interest in the A, B and C of education.

Health reform is indeed the right arm of the third angel's message, but it must be conceded that attempts to develop a strong right arm have often been misdirected. We need to begin from a right foundation.

The Bible teaches us that God formed man from the dust of the ground. The ground upon which man walks is still the basis of life upon this planet. It is literally true that the ground contains all the properties essential for the human body. Man has sought out many inventions. He knows how to get many of these properties out of the earth. Science has also found out much information about the minerals and vitamins essential to the function of the human body. But the physio-chemical features of the human body are so intricate and marvelous that the greatest scientists will freely admit that what they do not know about it is far greater than what they do know about it. The simple fact is that God never intended that man should extract properties from the earth and administer them to the body in precise dosages. No one knows enough about the needs of the body to do it anyway, and it is certain that no one ever will.

God designed that plants should extract the needed elements from the soil, and that man in turn should eat of their products and receive every needed element of life. Only a plant can synthesize all the elements that a man needs for the healthy maintenance of life.

The blood, which is the life of the flesh, is made up of the food of which a man eats. It is impossible to have good health without good blood, and equally impossible to have good blood without good food. This is so self-evident that no demonstration of the obvious is necessary. But many have failed to realize a truth that should be just as apparent: **Food can be no healthier than the soil upon which it is grown.** All food comes from the soil. Blood is made up of food. Therefore, blood draws its elements from the ground. People's blood can be no healthier than the soil which raises its food. Poor soil can only produce poor blood, and poor blood means poor health.

Does not the Spirit of Prophecy tell us that agriculture is the A, B and C of education? Then if we leave out the foundation, what sort of health reform



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### THE BASIS OF HEALTH REFORM

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structure can we expect? Some time ago, an intelligent doctor wrote to *Present Truth* and expressed his doubts that soil and its proper treatment had anything to do with present truth. We have no hesitation in saying that as surely as health reform is the right arm of the body of present truth, just so surely is the matter of proper treatment of the soil a vital part of present truth. If any reader should doubt this, let him take the *Index* of the Spirit of Prophecy and do a little research. He will soon

discover some amazing statements about the importance of agriculture.

Just a few years ago, a certain man with some letters after his name wrote an article in *The Review and Herald*. He contended that the quality of soil made no difference to the quality of food—that a carrot is a carrot no matter what soil it is grown upon. Now it makes no difference if the good gentleman had letters after his name as long as your arm. He was a man deficient in practical experience or observation in the field of his writing. He was the product of those scientific years when men, in the flush of scientific exaltation, thought that they had the wherewithal to manipulate all the forces of nature according to their desires. That thinking is now repudiated, and scientific men are now very much aware that man must live with nature and respect her laws. Otherwise she will not much longer tolerate him upon this planet.

Why, any intelligent man who has reared horses or cattle, knows that the beast can only be as good as the soil upon which it gets its grass. Does the learned gentleman mean to say that grass is grass, no matter upon what kind of soil it is raised? Every grazier knows that grass well grown is high in protein and will grow a larger beast than grass of the same variety grown on poor soil. On the coastal regions of Australia, the grass is more green and lush than the country further inland, because the rainfall is higher on the coast. But it is well known after generations of breeding that cattlemen cannot raise a beast on the coast with the same quality bone formation as the inland beast. Why? Because the soil on the coast is more depleted of minerals through the heavier rainfall. Although the cattle get far more to eat on the coast, they are always much smaller than cattle from the tablelands. The simple fact is that the grass is only as good as the soil upon which it is grown.

In New Zealand it was found that much of the soil was deficient in the trace element called molybdenum. And it was also demonstrated that children who eat food grown on such soil have poor teeth.

I have been a banana grower. In our area there are two main types of soil. The poor forest land grows a clean-skinned banana. It will carry to

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the ends of the earth without spoiling. It consequently sells for a better price because it looks much nicer. But it tends to be tough and rubbery to eat (like the bananas sold on the West Coast of the U.S.A.). Bananas grown upon the richer soil will not carry nearly as well. They ripen and spoil more easily. Hence they are not as good for market; but they are much better to eat.

Is a carrot a carrot, irrespective of where or how it is grown? In our country, if one is buying carrots to juice, he must be very discerning to buy carrots which come from certain districts. Some carrots are bitter, and none but the very determined will drink juice made from them. Other carrots, even of the same variety, grown on a different soil, are very sweet and beautiful for juice.

Here is a simple experiment that may be tried by anyone in any part of the world: Take produce grown on good soil, and feed it to livestock. Then take the same produce grown on poor soil, and feed it to the same kind of livestock. Soon will be seen the living proof that a beast can be no better than the soil from which it derives its food. In his book, **Healthy Soil, Healthy People** Dr.

W. E. Shewell-Cooper (M.B.E., N.D.H., Dip. Hort., F.R.S.L., D.Litt.) cites findings from tests made on certain vegetables grown on good soil and poor soil. Some of the differences are astounding. Food grown on healthy soil contains much greater quantities of essential elements.

**The conclusion is this:** Only healthy soil can produce healthy people. A proper health reform program must commence from the soil and build upon that as the only true foundation. Proper treatment of the body must include proper treatment of the soil. This is the missing ingredient in the right arm of the third angel's message. When God created man, He placed him in a garden. He was told to dress it and keep it. Since that time, man has sought out many inventions. He has imprisoned himself and polluted his environment with great cities of steel and concrete. But in the last remnant of time, God is calling His people out of the cities and into the garden. Every Adventist home should be in a retired spot. That home should be in itself a church where the father is the priest, a school where the parents are the teachers, and a medical missionary outpost where the inmates know the simple remedies which God has provided. Such homes must have some ground where, as the Spirit of Prophecy says, God's people will **learn** to raise fruits and vegetables free from disease.

**T**here is a lot of religion in a good garden. True health reform begins from the soil up. Every awakened Adventist family should make it their duty to plan to leave the cities, get a piece of land and learn to grow healthy fruits and vegetables. Yes, learn to grow! It takes learning. A Christian cannot become a Christian by reading books about it. That is only part of the story. Each one needs an experimental knowledge of Christ. So with gardening. There are many fine books about gardening, but you cannot prove the worth of the information until you have tried it.

### Humus

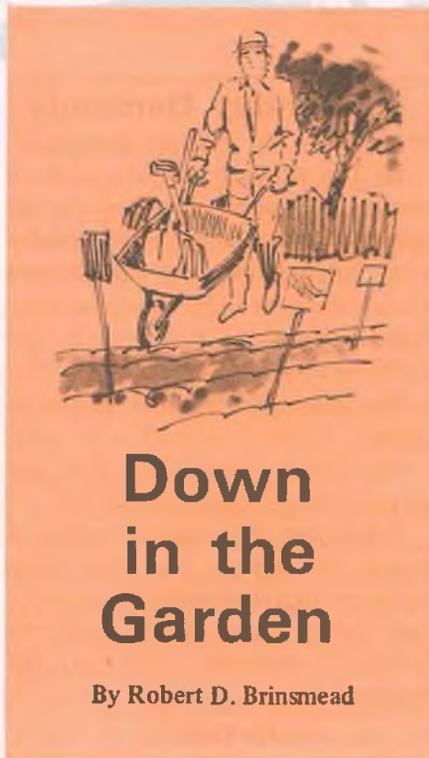
Humus has been called the mother of soil fertility. It is the product that comes from the breaking down of organic matter — material that was formerly living, whether animal or vegetable.

Since the fall of man, God has arranged that life can continue only where there is death. Every living thing must die and be returned to the ground. The trees cast off their leaves. Plants and animals, through death, pass back to the soil. When these dead plants and animals decay, they build up the humus content of the soil.

Where there is no death, there is no life. It is the same in the spiritual life. "Unless a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone." Soil which is rich in humus is a living soil. We do not usually think of soil as the wonderful thing it is. We irreverently call it "dirt." But a handful of healthy soil contains more soil organisms than there are people in the entire world. It contains plant bacteria, fungi, and little animals so small that they cannot be seen with the naked eye. Then there are earthworms too. Healthy soil teems with life. An experienced gardener only has to pick up some earth in his hand, and he can tell by feeling it whether it is full of life. Some soils feel powdery and dead. When examined under a microscope, they are found to be seriously deficient in life — there are few soil organisms present.

If you want to raise the vital soil

population, you must feed the organisms in your soil. How is this done? By putting dead matter into the soil! It may be vegetable matter or animal matter. A mixture of the two is best. So, in the wonderful cycle of nature, dead matter feeds the living matter. When these little soil organisms die, they in turn enrich the soil, and the



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cycle goes on. Never forget that there can be no life without death.

Herein lies the greatest single objection to artificial fertilizer. I would not contend that artificial fertilizer should never be used anymore than I would reject the use of medicine, artificial vitamins, crutches, etc. But it must be clearly understood that artificial fertilizer will provide no humus for the soil. Plants are stimulated to greater yields, but when organic matter is removed from the land year after year, and no organic matter is returned to the soil, the humus content becomes depleted. The soil finally becomes like a sick man. It cannot produce healthy fruits and vegetables. Plants grown on such soil are very susceptible to disease, and under these conditions farmers must use all sorts of the most powerful

poisons to combat disease in the plants.

The earth has been robbed of its treasure by selfish man. The principle behind artificial fertilizer generally is to take as much as possible out of the soil in return for as little as possible. But plants can only be as healthy as the soil upon which they are grown, and people can only be as healthy as the plants which they eat.

### Weeds

"Cursed be the ground for thy sake." My children have asked me why it is that in our garden the weeds will grow faster than the vegetables. They have observed that it takes effort to grow good fruit, but none at all to grow weeds. What an excellent chance to talk about the soil of our hearts, and the tendencies that are in us for evil. "A son left to himself bringeth his mother to shame."

There are many ideas that can be put into practice to overcome weeds. One method is to preoccupy the ground with good seed. A well-grown garden tends to keep the weeds down.

Some of the best soils bring forth the most prolific weed crops. If you have a weedy soil, here is one suggestion for planting small seeds such as onion, lettuce, carrot, parsnip, celery or parsley: Make a drill about an inch deep as usual. Place seeds in the drill. Cover with about one-fourth to one-half inch of fine sand or rock dust. A bucketful of sand or rock dust goes a long way. Keep moist until seeds have struck. It will be found that few weeds appear among the little seedlings.

Mulching is a very good method of weed control. Cover the ground in between plants or around fruit trees with hay, lawn clippings, leaves or some other organic residue. If weeds begin to show through, increase the coverage. You will not only overcome weeds, but the soil will retain its moisture content. The little plant roots will come to the surface beneath the mulch where the soil is the richest and sweetest. Worms and other soil organisms will be encouraged. Henry White used to say that soil organisms are like us in that

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they require food and shelter. The mulch will also be a source of humus after it rots away. But make allowances in damp clay soils. Keep mulch from direct contact with the bark of fruit trees. It may encourage too much fungi development and rotting around the bark at the base of the tree.

### **Digging**

Soil needs to be permeable — that is,

water and air must be able to penetrate the soil. One method is to plow the soil. If the top soil is very shallow, one must be careful not to bring the clay to the surface. Also, it takes time to sweeten up soil that has been plowed up from underneath.

With the help of powerful machinery, it is possible to aerate the soil by means of chisel plowing or deep rooting. This leaves the top soil on top of the ground.

There is yet another method. If the gardener will encourage a great amount of worm activity in the soil, it can be aerated by worms and soil organisms. This is the method followed by the “no digging” enthusiasts. Actually, they have their soil dug. They simply use another method. Some varieties of fruit trees will produce better, more disease-free fruit if the soil around the trees is not disturbed. In such cases, good mulching is the secret of good gardening.