

There 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

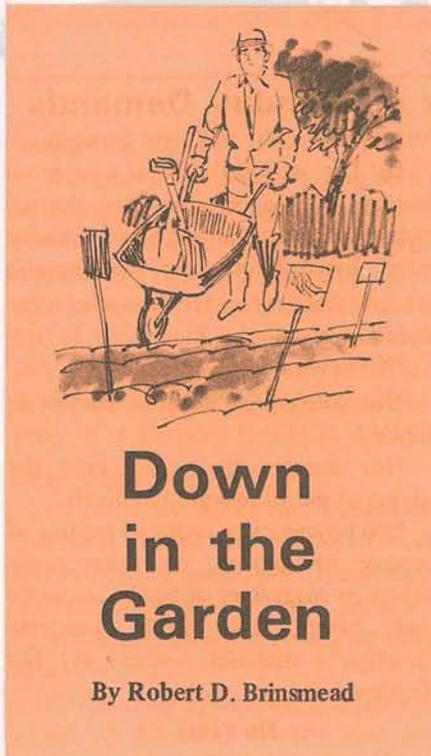
Humus has been called the mother of soil fertility. It is the product that comes from the breaking down of organic matter — material that was formerly living, whether animal or vegetable.

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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By Robert D. Brinsmead

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.