

## Keeping On and Keeping Up

As you come in covered with those little seeds that have to be plucked off one by one, you may wonder if there is something to make weeding easier? One way is to stuff the garden with plants, leaving no room for weeds. Spiderwort is just the ticket as it returns every year and not merely where you put it. Tradescantias may start out a deep blue but you may find pale blue, white, even a fuchsia as they wander from edge of woods to flower bed over the years. They have a cluster of one-day flowers at the top of a long stem and each has three petals, 3 sepals. When they stop blooming the daffodil-like foliage may be cut back and it will return refreshed to reflower.

They were one of the native plants taken from Colonial America to England to be named in honor of 17<sup>th</sup> century gardeners, Tradescant, father and son.

This is from the "I've heard it before" file, but the world produces 25% more food calories than are needed yet one billion people are hungry or starving. The International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements says the solution is decentralized organic farming because small farms produce higher yields locally than conventional and industrial agriculture. Dramatic results have followed the implementation of such policies in Egypt and Ethiopia.

And this IS new! Something called an 'air spade' eases young trees out of a gravel bed, where under hydrogel culture they have grown huge roots. They are said to be successfully transplanted bare root. This Missouri Gravel Bed (MGB) system is said to be a great improvement over the cumbersome ball and burlap technique.

One escape from the weeds is a fascinating book. "Life Without Oil" by Steve Hallett and John Wright is a book about everything. It is a marvelous romp through history and pre-history with a nod to ancient Rome and the Maya and Dine, as well as a focus on our potential future with an overview of hydrogen technology, city planning, and the dismantling of the planet's climate ecology. It also has great footnotes, although they are at the back, no longer really footnotes?

One fact that goes a long way in explaining how we got into the environmental fix we are in is population growth. World population was one billion in 1800; it is projected to be nine billion by 2050 but the revealing figure is that the figure in 2000 was six billion. Half the annual increase is in six countries, one of them ours.

There are so many books about the coming energy shortages written by scientists qualified to make an educated guess as well as those self-appointed prophets telling us we can be transported to another planet by our technological know-how. Odd.

This book is a good primer for thinking about the future we want our community to enjoy. Our community leaders need to plan for a time when cheap energy has become expensive. For example, in public buildings planners must drop assumptions that made sense

when energy was cheap. In building for long term, materials must be used that may cost more initially but will save money in the long run.

This book was published in 2011, but probably prior to the disaster in Japan as in the discussion of the need for investing in nuclear energy, there is no mention of the damage done to the nuclear plant by the tsunami. The authors do mention the necessity of limiting the environmental disaster of uranium mining as well as solving the nuclear waste problem.

Hydrogen is a more efficient fuel than gasoline or natural gas but it can't be pumped out of the ground. It is a 'carrier' of energy, not a source of energy itself and therefore has to be manufactured. Eventually the research on hydrogen will pay off but meantime, as demand for gas and oil rises and supplies shrink, conservation is essential.

In this book, as in other recent ones, we read again of Virginia's Polyface Farm where Joel Salatin has a wonderfully sustainable productive farm relying on the energy of 'hard work and deep thinking' rather than fossil fuels.

One of the correctives the authors suggest in the development of a healthy economy would be to remove personhood from corporations. Unlike ordinary persons who are liable for the harm they do, corporations have the best of both worlds – all the privileges, none of the responsibilities.