Growing Green International
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About VON
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VON is run largely by unpaid volunteers, and overseen by a group of trustees. Please get in touch if you would like to become involved.

Trustees: David Graham, Jane Graham, Graham Cole

Chair: David Graham
Events organiser: Dan Graham
Finance officer: Steve Cunio
GGI magazine editor: Malcolm Horne
Membership secretary: Jessica Wintrip
Website: Tigger MacGregor
Farmers & growers listings: Maggi Taylor
Growing queries: John Curtis
Horticulture advisory panel: Maggi Taylor
Farm visits: John Read
Farming and certification: Jenny Hall, David Graham
Merchandise: John Curtis

Our purpose is to promote and research vegan organic horticulture and agriculture (also known as stockfree organic) and our ethos is non-violence, social justice, respect for all animals and environmental protection. Vegan organic (‘stockfree’) techniques uphold the principle of sustainability, avoiding artificial chemicals, GMOs, animal manures and animal remains from slaughterhouses and other processes.

Advice line (commercial and home growing): 0845 223 5232 (local rate) or email advice@veganorganic.net

Stockfree Organic Standards for commercial growers. See our complementary website www.stockfreeorganic.net or contact David Graham (details above).

Bursary fund for students of stockfree agriculture. Donations to the fund, or enquiries, to David Graham (contact details above).

JOIN US! If you are not already a VON member, please join using the form on page 39 or via our website www.veganorganic.net/join-us (where you can also make donations).
Editorial

Veganic - what’s in a word?

I quite like a little difference of opinion, though always with the proviso that any debate is conducted in a friendly and respectful manner. So when Maggi Taylor showed me the article by One Degree Organics on the distinctions between veganic and vegan (see pages 10−11), my immediate reaction was that we should ask if we could reprint it and then see what the readers of Growing Green International made of it. So please take a look, and we hope some of you will respond with your thoughts.

I’m reminded of an article that Edward J Immel, an American, wrote in Vegan Vistas in 2012. He considered the shifting meaning of the word vegan, now that we’ve entered an era where veganism, although not exactly mainstream, is at least far more in the public eye − and sometimes half-heartedly adopted by celebrities or misrepresented in the news media. The word, and what it stands for, has become a little modified in the process.

So also then, perhaps veganic (which in any case is less well defined) − it may begin to shift a little in directions that vegans might prefer it didn’t. But is this an inevitable concession as we seek wider acceptance and progress? What do you think?

Full colour digital version of GGI

The last issue was the first time that we produced a parallel full colour digital pdf version of this magazine (previous issues have been prepared essentially for the printers and so have been mostly in black and white). Some of you will already have seen the colour pdf of the last issue, and our idea now is to offer this freely to any VON member who would like it, and also to introduce soon a lower membership rate for anyone happy to receive the digital version only (thus saving on a lot of postage).

We know that most people prefer to read a printed magazine, but there are two good reasons to also take a look at the digital version. Firstly the colour photos of course, and secondly it’s far easier to follow up website links from a digital version.

We’re looking into the practicalities of how to make these digital issues freely available to VON members − maybe via a members area on the website. In the meantime, if you’d like a colour pdf version of this and/or the last issue please just email me (address below).

Back issues and index

As a further bonus for VON members we hope to have all the back issues available in pdf form, again perhaps in a members area on the website. This will take a bit of time to sort out as some of the earlier issues first have to be scanned in.

A digital index of all 32 back issues is already available (email me for a copy). This looks rather similar to the contents listing on page 3 of this issue, though with slightly less detail. It is searchable so you can look, for example, for items on compost (which comes up in article titles 20 times) or permaculture (15 times) − or authors (Jenny Hall comes up 43 times).

There is a wealth of content in the back issues − only some of it is now dated, and many pieces deserve a longer life and wider exposure. From seaweed to watercress, from guerrilla gardening to the mollusc menace, from mobile bicycle gardening to ‘draught animals and tractors revisited’ … and a multitude more.

Some back issues are still available in printed form − see panel on left.

VON website

Tigger MacGregor has been working on our website: “The VON website is a rich mine of information, whether you’re after the latest VON news or growing guides, and we’ve been spending some time recently making improvements we hope will make it even more useful. So do check it out if you haven’t taken a look recently − and if you’ve any suggestions for how to make it even more useful do let us know!” Contact Tigger at webmaster@veganorganic.net.

Very many thanks to Mort

For the last nine years, from issue 14 to 32, Morten Aagren Svendsen has done the layout for this magazine. Mort (who also helped in the past with our website) felt this was long enough, and that’s why the design of this issue is just a little different. Mort and I worked together on the last issue of GGI, and he’s continued to be very helpful indeed in offering advice and answering my many questions about layout and design. So thank you Mort for everything that you’ve done for VON.

Malcolm Horne editor@veganorganic.net
Notice of AGM

VON members are invited to join us at our 2014 AGM, which will be held on Sunday 14th September at 1pm at Anandavan, 58 High Lane, Chorlton cum Hardy, Manchester M21 9DZ, UK.

The AGM gives members the opportunity to ask questions and to get involved with organisational matters. Please contact us at info@veganorganic.net to indicate your intention to attend, give apologies or to find out more.

Next issue of GGI

The Winter issue should be out in January 2015. Deadline for articles etc is the end of October. More details page 7.

Correction: chia not chai

In last issue's editorial "chai and sesame seeds" from Mexico were mentioned. It should have been chia (chai usually means tea) – and thanks to Rod Skinner for pointing this out. Rod added: "This is an interesting crop for vegans because the seeds have a very high content of omega 3 fatty acids. Unfortunately UK summers are not long enough for the seeds to ripen here, so we'll have to stick to linseed!"

VON noticeboard

VON always needs help from enthusiastic and capable volunteers. If you're interested in any of these tasks – general admin work, helping on VON stalls, giving talks, liaising with the press, visiting farms, fundraising, website development, social media, or anything you can think of – please email info@veganorganic.net or ring us on 0845 223 5232. We'd be very happy to hear from you!

VON Membership Secretary changes again

Now that Malcolm Horne is editing GGI, the membership baton has been passed to Jessica Wintrip (who had already been helping with mailing out magazines). Jessica's address is on the bottom of the Join Us form on page 39 (but anything sent to Malcolm will be passed on).

Visits to stockfree farms, allotments and gardens

See page 9 for details.

Email newsletters

These are sent out from time to time to members (and non members) who have email addresses for. If you're not already receiving these, and would like to, please email us at editor@veganorganic.net – there is an option to unsubscribe at any time.

VON on Facebook

Our Facebook group currently has around 3,500 members. If you want to discuss ideas about stockfree organic farming and growing, or ask questions etc, it's the place to go. (It's free to join but you do have to be a Facebook member first.)

www.facebook.com/groups/veganorganicnetwork

VON working group

Meetings take place in Manchester usually every second week of every second month – all members welcome. Agenda and minutes available to members on request. For more information phone 0845 223 5232 or email david.graham330@googlemail.com

End of year VON Accounts & Directors Report

These too are available to members on request.

VON’s stockfree organic handbook

Growing Green: Organic Techniques for a Sustainable Future

by Jenny Hall and Iain Tolhurst

Acclaimed in reviews and by readers

Revised edition

This book is an essential guide about stockfree organic growing and is perfect for absolute beginners as well as experienced professionals. The book introduces the concept of stockfree organic and shows, through case studies, that when growers abandon the use of slaughterhouse by-products and manures they can be rewarded with healthier crops and fewer weeds, pests and diseases.

In an age where dreams of self-sufficiency seem unattainable, Growing Green shows that making a living from growing organic vegetables can be achieved by anyone who is willing to rent land. Until now there have been no comprehensive guidelines on how to follow the organic standards at the different scales of vegetable production using tractors, small machinery and hand tools.

One of Jenny's many illustrations from the handbook

An invaluable guide for the grower, researcher and student, this book has proved to be an important step forward for the organic movement. Home growers too will find the book of great interest. The contents are applicable to all temperate climate zones.

Published with the help of a grant from the Cyril Corden Trust, many VON members were involved in the production of this groundbreaking book. Easy to read, and beautifully printed on quality recycled paper (with 16 colour photos and many line drawings). At 352 pages this is a substantial publication, one that is now regarded as a benchmark for the future.

Special offer to VON members: £11.50

For more details of this and other books see pages 40-41
Farmers and growers  
compiled by Maggi Taylor

VON’s list of stockfree organic farmers and growers continues to increase. Here are a few details of the two latest overseas entries, plus a new grower at Oakcroft Organic Gardens in Cheshire.

**Brightside Blueberries & Such**  
**Duncan, British Columbia, Canada**

“Welcome to the Brightside! Our specialties range from herbs to veggies to fruits to open-pollinated seeds ... most importantly, we believe in sustainability through an approach known as ‘veganic’ gardening. No animal products are incorporated into any of our organic fertilisers so that our produce is always guaranteed hormone and antibiotic free. No cruelty or unwanted surprises here! Only pure, plant-based, organic goodness.”

“Veganic farming is the way of the future and Brightside Blueberries is paving (figuratively only!) the way. Vegan organic gardening and farming is the organic cultivation and production of food crops and other crops using stockfree farming methods. Veganic farming uses no animal products or by-products, such as blood meal, fish products, bone meal, manure, or other matter of animal origin, because the production of these materials is viewed as either harming animals directly, or being associated with the exploitation and consequent suffering of animals. Veganic produce will always be antibiotic and faeces free.”

“Ever since we moved to this farm in December 2011, we have felt that this piece of paradise keeps us looking on the Brightside. ... Eventually we will have a multi-acre blueberry farm with a U-Pick option. For now we have produce, seeds, fruits, nuts, and such. We grow a dozen different varieties of mint, and we have half-a-dozen types of mature apple trees, all veganic and grown here with love.”

Facebook page (where there are some beautiful photos):  
www.facebook.com/BrightsideBlueberries

**Rivara Farm**  
**Alberti, Argentina**

When the Rivara family left their village near Florence early last century to emigrate to Argentina, they brought with them what they regarded as one of the great treasures of Italy – red flint corn. This is a rose-hued maize that originated in the Alps, which they now grow vegan organically for One Degree Organic Foods in Canada. The farm in Alberti, not far from Buenos Aires, is run by the latest generations of the Rivara family: Fernando Adolfo, together with his sons Diego and Fernando Jr.

Fernando Jr. explained:

“We grow our crops without pesticides, herbicides or animal-based fertiliser. Instead of adding chemicals to the corn, we manually pull out the weeds and spend extra time ploughing the land. We take care to nurture the soil, making sure it is full of nutrients and free of contaminants.

Crop rotation is an important way that we enrich our soil. We rotate with sesame seeds, soybeans, and wheat and grape seeds. In a cycle of four to five years, we alternate plant varieties in the fields, and also give the land time to rest before sowing a new corn crop.

Conventional farming methods deplete the soil, but we work hard to build nutrients in our soil the organic and veganic way. Sometimes what we use when we rotate the crops, such as soybeans, we will also use as a natural fertiliser to prepare the land for the corn, and we lay it as a bed for the next crop.”

A longer version of this, with more about the Rivara family farm (and a short video), is available on the One Degree Organics website at  
www.onedegreeorganics.com/rivara

Your magazine

Some readers keep each issue as a reference. If you do not wish to keep your copy please pass it on to a friend, library, or wherever you think it may do some good.

We can usually provide digital or printed copies of any article from previous issues if needed.
Oakcroft Organic Gardens
Malpas, Cheshire

Oakcroft Organics has been growing organically since 1962. All vegetables are grown from seed using permaculture design, stockfree organic techniques and no chemical inputs. “We work with nature, not against it.”

Oakcroft was bought for Mehr Fardoonji and her mother by her brother. Mehr initially grew vegetables on her own, but after a year she employed a local 15-year-old boy, Peter, straight from school − who stayed working at Oakcroft until 2005. Over those years many people volunteered to work, usually for a year or even more, and learnt all about organic market gardening at Oakcroft. A large variety of crops have been grown outside and also in the two large mobile greenhouses, single polytunnel, Dutch lights and cloches.

The garden has been registered with the Soil Association, carrying the Soil Association symbol, from the beginning. The land at Oakcroft is precious to Mehr and she wants it to remain organic, and growing vegetables and fruit for a growing market. The land will eventually be given to the Soil Association Land Trust, which has recently been formed, so as to remain organic in perpetuity.

In February 2013 Lisa Payne (see photo below) took over the running of the gardens and, under the mentorship of Mehr, is reinvigorating this historic organic market garden. Produce is available to buy at local markets and direct from the garden. (The gardens had previously been run for a while by Tim Carey and Lloyd English, who had both studied organic and stockfree organics at Glyndwr University in North Wales.)

Lisa recently appealed for volunteer help on Oakcroft’s Facebook page: “Do you have a few hours to spare each week? I’m looking for some local volunteers to help me out in the market garden. I’d love some help with physical work in the garden, with the market stalls, and I’m also looking for some administrative support from someone who might be willing to set up and run a volunteer programme here at Oakcroft. If you’re interested then please do get in touch!”

Contact Lisa Payne via the Oakcroft website: www.oakcroft.org.uk

Lisa wrote about her life at Oakcroft for the Winter 2013 issue of UK Handmade Magazine (pages 80-85), which can be read online at www.ukhandmade.co.uk/magazine

Articles, letters, news always welcome ...

We’re always happy to receive contributions to the magazine, and rely mostly on VON members and supporters to provide the content. If you’d like to submit something, you can send it to editor@veganorganic.net (or see panel on page 3 for a postal address).

The magazine reflects a broad range of information and opinions, covering the ‘why’ and the ‘how’ of vegan organic growing. We try to feature a mixture of articles that cover practical, technical and ethical issues, as well as more humorous items, hints and tips, letters, and illustrations/cartoons. We like receiving reports and accounts of personal experiences, and are interested too in broader ideas of ecology, social justice and human and animal rights.

A one-page article is around 800 words and a two-page article around 1,600 words. We usually limit articles to two pages but will accept longer articles, especially if particularly relevant.

Good quality photos to illustrate articles are very welcome. One image per page is ideal, but a selection means we have greater choice and some can be featured on the colour contents page or even the front cover.

The deadline for articles for the winter magazine is the end of October. However, smaller items (letters, news, reports, etc) can be fitted in up to the end of November and maybe a little beyond – and the magazine should be out in January 2015.

Feel free to contact us about articles. We’ll be happy to discuss and shape ideas if you’re not sure where to go with a piece.

● We’re looking for someone who would enjoy reading magazines, email newsletters and online blogs, and then compiling a page of vegan organic related news for each issue. If this sounds like you please get in touch!

Vegan Organic information sheets
Our information sheets provide wide advice on vegan organic methods for home growers

#1 Propagation and fertilisers
#2 Growing beans for drying
#3 Growing on clay soils
#4 Growing – the basics
#5 Fungi – FAQ
#6 Gardening for wildlife
#7 Growers’ guide to beetles
#8 Green manures
#9 Chipped branch-wood
#10 Composting

All the information sheets are free to read or download on VON’s website www.veganorganic.net/information-for-growers/factsheets
They are also available in printed form in return for a donation to cover printing and postage.
It is the 18th of January 2014, and I am still harvesting vegan organic crops from my hillside garden plot. It is a cold and wet day, with the mist pressing down on the hill, flattening the smoke from the chimney of my wood burner. The last of my broccoli now picked, there are some cauliflower to come and the leeks are growing well still.

A variety of lettuces in the greenhouse are not doing too badly either.

I had just read Growing Green International which arrived this morning, and a picture on page 12 of my old cottage in mid Wales caught my eye. Tony Martin had picked three shelves of fungi from a roadside tree, which he identified as ‘chicken of the woods’ and I took the photo. Unfortunately, I discovered later, he was mistaken as it was ‘Dryad’s saddle’ which when old and hard like these can cause stomach problems, but luckily he suffered no ill effects. If you are intent on eating wild fungi, you really need to know what you are doing for your own safety.

In 2008 I had taken apart and then put back together this mid-Victorian worker’s cottage, while living in a caravan in the garden. Attached to my cottage was a small plot of black loam which I made into a forest garden. I was soon growing broad and runner beans, turnips, parsnips, potatoes, peas, leeks, Jerusalem artichokes, spinach and kale among other things. I had made raised beds with slates left over from when the cottage was re-roofed.

Outdoor bush tomatoes did very well and I made an arch for runner beans with bamboo canes, effective for easy harvesting.

The young apple and pear trees, that I had bought only the year before, were so laden with fruit that I had to support the branches to stop them breaking, and my tiny lawn was now quite bumpy due to being home to some very active moles.

I had a small pond and a shed, with the most important area being a little patio for my wooden swing hammock. I am a great believer in taking time to stop and think and appreciate this abundant beautiful planet we live on.

The cottage was next to the Montgomery Canal, just outside a village, and I welcomed goldfinches, nuthatches, greater spotted woodpeckers, long tailed tits, and squirrels, and even saw two healthy young brown athletic rats reaching up for food on a bird table.

What a good summer we had, and a very long autumn, allowing such late harvesting. In the main, pest damage came from white cabbage butterfly caterpillars – and the number and variety of slugs picked up at night by torch, and removed to a nearby woodland, was legendary. Easily up to and over 200 per night. Apart from that we were lucky, and hibernating ladybirds are everywhere in the garden, so that bodes well for 2014.

Several frogs moved in behind the little shed where I made a pool with an old bowl, and a stone slope for easy access. The Russian comfrey gave them shade and protection through the summer and became my liquid plant food.

I do look forward to next season, and the joy of letting nature help me to provide vegan organic food for the table, and further enhance a good home for wildlife.
Mind your language, and know your terminology

David Graham summarises the terms used to describe different organic farming and growing systems

ORGANIC: SOIL ASSOCIATION CERTIFIED In horticulture, the word ‘organic’ means: composted animal manure and green manure that is used to fertilise the soil. Hoof and horn, dried blood and bone meal may be used as an ingredient in propagating compost, ie in the small block used to transplant brassicas, leeks and some salad crops.

Other sources of nutrients cannot come from battery systems, intensive systems, and non organic farms or sewage sludge without a GM free declaration. Peat cannot be used as a soil conditioner. Synthetic fertilisers and herbicides are not allowed. Pesticides are avoided. If the product carries the Soil Association symbol, then you can be sure that it has met these conditions.

Aftersilage/hay is cut, manure is often used to replace nutrients. This can only be applied when nutrient uptake is actively taking place and is not within 10m of a watercourse and 50m of boreholes.

Newly manured land is kept free of stock for at least two weeks, because the animals will not touch newly manured land. Rotational grazing is a key element of organic farming.

More information: www.soilassociation.org

VEGANIC This term is now commonly used in America to describe a specific method of cultivation developed by the O’Brien family (Guide to Veganic Gardening, Kenneth Dalziel O’Brien). The name is not derived from the word ‘vegan’ but from vegetable organic. No animal by-products or manures are used, fertility being maintained by vegetable compost and sometimes naturally occurring minerals. Compost ingredients are clearly defined and certain materials are not acceptable, such as vegan humanure, vacuum cleaner dust, hair and nail clippings etc. However, more about ‘veganic’ in the article on the next page.

VEGAN ORGANIC is the term we use in the Vegan Organic Network (VON). It means any system of cultivation that does not use synthetic chemicals and sprays, livestock manures and slaughterhouse by-products. Fertility is maintained using vegetable compost, green manures, mulches, and any other available method that is ecologically viable and is not dependent on animal exploitation. Humanure (efficiently composted) and urine from vegan humans, and other detritus from the vegan household, may or may not be used, but is not permitted in commercial growing (see below). Naturally occurring minerals, and material such as wood ash, soot and lime, are generally considered acceptable.

STOCKFREE ORGANIC SERVICES has an advisory panel consisting of experienced farmers and growers who can offer help from field scale agriculture and horticulture to home growing, as well as to those considering converting to stockfree organic or starting from scratch. VON can carry out on site inspections, provide guidance and give ongoing support. VON has produced three DVDs covering commercial, protected and home growing methods.

Stockfree Organic Services: www.stockfreeorganic.net

CERTIFIED STOCKFREE ORGANIC The Stockfree Organic Standards (SOS), primarily for commercial growers, were agreed in 2004 and revised in 2007. The SOS are the first comprehensive description of an organic method of growing food without the use of animal inputs. Stockfree is considered by VON to be a more positive, life enhancing term, rather than the negative ‘stockless’ which is often used by arable farmers. In horticulture ‘stockfree’ is now commonly used. In order to discuss methodology with farmers VON agreed that ‘stockfree organic’ was more conducive to objective communication than ‘vegan organic’, as this term appeared to imply that being vegan, although desirable, was a prior condition.

The only exception to the vegan organic system is that humanure is prohibited for commercial crops under the Stockfree Organic Standards. The term organic can only be used by an organisation with sufficient resources, such as the Soil Association, in order to comply with European Organic Regulations EC 834/2007 and EC 889/2008.

The Soil Association (SA Cert) carries out inspections on...
behalf of VON, the SOS being an extension to their own regulations. The SOS are elaborated in the book Growing Green – Organic Techniques for a Sustainable Future by Jenny Hall and Iain Tolhurst. Farmers passing inspection can display the SA Cert and VON’s symbol. VON’s DVD Growing Green shows Iain Tolhurst demonstrating the stockfree vegan organic method on his farm.

STOCKFREE ORGANIC STANDARDS AND MARKET GARDEN AWARDS (MGA) is a branch of VON that collaborates with Jenny Hall of Fir Tree Community Farm who inaugurated the Market Garden Awards. The inspections are carried out by another farmer or a member approved by SOS and MGA. Certified stockfree organic inspections can be carried out anywhere in the world and cost a fraction of the £500 -£600 charged by the SA. The hybrid logo pictured was the choice of French farmer Jerome Contet who considered this was more meaningful to other French farmers. There are three award levels: bronze, silver and gold.

More information: www.marketgardenbritain.org

ORGANIC FARMERS & GROWERS

OF&G is the organisation that inspects and certifies farmer and VON member John Berry of Rufford Farm in Sussex. John, who is vegan, farms stockfree organically. His grain that we mill into Truly Vegan Flour provided the first vegan organic grown product in 2013.

We can now add Truly Vegan Herbs grown by Maureen and Keith Robertson on the Isle of Arran. Thus ‘Create the Demand’ for vegan grown food becomes a reality.

Mark Waugh from OF&G adds: “Organic certification in the UK is provided by a number of bodies from which producers can choose. After Soil Association Certification Ltd, the second largest is Organic Farmers & Growers, a small, producer-driven organisation which grew out of a co-operative history and has the longest pedigree as a government-approved control body, spanning more than 20 years. OF&G prides itself on friendly and practical service, provided by people who have relevant backgrounds in food and farming.”

More information: www.organicfarmers.org.uk

The distinction between veganic & vegan

by Malcolm Horne

In the Winter 2013/14 issue of GGI (pages 3 and 6-7) we featured the story of One Degree Organic Foods in Canada who distribute veganically grown cereals, seeds, flours and sprouted breads across the USA and Canada.

In April this year, an article discussing the distinction between veganic and vegan, written by Charlie Dodge, was published on One Degree’s blog, and we’ve reprinted it in full below. Have a look, and see what you think – we’d be very interested in readers’ reactions, and we’ve highlighted some key points in bold.

At one end of this debate you have vegans who will, by and large, want to be economically consistent – and probably most VON members will fall into the vegan category. At the other end you will have farmers who choose to grow veganically but many/most (perhaps commercial farmers especially) will not themselves be vegan. And then of course there will be various shades in between.

It has often been said that VON cannot (and should not) insist that stockfree organic growers are themselves vegan – to do that would make VON less effective and it would arguably be too isolating. However, it does mean there will be times when there will be divergences of thought and practice.

It may look obvious to most people that veganic is a word derived from vegan. However, according to various sources, the term veganic was originally coined (we think more than 50 years ago) by Geoffrey Rudd of the UK Vegetarian Society as a contraction of vegetable organic – in order to “denote a clear distinction between conventional chemical based systems and organic ones based on animal manures”. The term was taken up by the O’Brien family in the UK, and in the 1980s Kenneth Dalziel O’Brien published his Guide to Veganic Gardening.

The term veganic has now been adopted for use by both vegans and non vegans. It is the term used by our vegan friends at the Veganic Agriculture Network in North America (www.goveganic.net), who have written regularly for this magazine over the years.

Even the word vegan is interpreted differently by different people (see Editorial page 4) and it should not be a surprise that veganic is subject to the same process.

We’ve reprinted the One Degree article in full, with no editing except for the addition of bold to some parts. (Usually we’d change American spellings to British, but on this occasion we’ve left alone – which some people think we should do anyway.)

Defining veganic, applying our principles

by Charlie Dodge

Winston Churchill once described America and Britain as “two countries separated by a common language”. It’s a wry perspective that often seems to apply to the vocabulary of vegans, vegetarians and other health-conscious consumers.

At One Degree, we’re very familiar with the importance

Vegan organic farming
Across the world
From seed to plant to plate
No farm animal suffers
Growing food
The vegan way
of clarity of meaning in describing the products we create and the lifestyle we promote. After all, we’re the company that has popularized the term “veganic” and is using it to revolutionize agriculture in North America and beyond. 

Now that we’ve added raw light organic honey to our newest cereal, it’s a good time to revisit some of the fine shades of distinction between vegan and veganic, as well as the substantial common ground: 

As for similarities, vegans and consumers who love veganic products are pursuing the same goal – a diet that is healthy for the body and the planet.

As a result, both perspectives have important ethical components. Another key overlap is that veganic breads, cereals, flour and other foods are a perfect fit for vegans, who exclude meat and dairy products from their diets.

Now for the differences:

**Vegan choices center on personal decisions about what types of food to eat.** Veganic methods are choices farmers make in cultivating their fields. Essentially, veganic agriculture is a principled way farmers grow crops without the use of chemicals, compounds or animal inputs of any kind.

Veganic foods also have a wider appeal beyond a vegan diet, such as for mothers with young children, those who have been told by a doctor to fundamentally change their diet and anyone looking for food sources that are grown safely and sustainably.

**Veganic farming promises good food grown safely.** This wider definition allows consumers options that some very committed vegans may not always agree with. For example, One Degree uses a pure organic variety of honey in our Sprouted Khorasan Honey O’s cereal. Many vegans exclude honey from their diets because it comes from a non-plant source, namely honeybees. Although we make sure that our tiny honey suppliers have the freedom to roam the pristine clover fields of northern Alberta, Canada, we understand and respect this choice. (More on this, below.)

Another difference sometimes involves the presence of animals on farms. One of the key tenets of veganic agriculture is to reject animal-based fertilizer of any kind. The reason for this is to keep pathogens and contaminants away from crops. Even many organic farms use animal waste on fields, including blood meal and bone meal. These sources may carry an array of hormones, antibiotics, pesticides and other chemicals.

Veganic farms use only plant-based fertilizers and favor nature’s own time-tested methods to build nutrients in the soil, such as rotating crop varieties and allowing fields to lie fallow. As a result, they produce healthier, safer food.

**But although veganic is a step beyond organic, it doesn’t always meet the strictest definitions of some vegans who may believe farmers should not be raising livestock anywhere on their land, even if the animals are kept far from agricultural fields.**

Again, we respect this philosophy, even as we focus our efforts on ensuring that the crops we use are grown in the safest possible way for our customers.

**Honey is a food that helps clarify the differences between veganic and vegan.** As noted above, many vegans choose not to consume honey. Although bees are essential to many plants, they are not plants themselves of course, and so don’t qualify as a true vegan source.

The veganic perspective is more complex. Veganic farming centers on cultivating crops in the field without chemicals, compounds or animal-based fertilizer. Honeybees don’t fit into that definition either. But there are organic standards that apply to the production of honey, such as rules prohibiting the use of chemicals and mandating natural forage areas. And so when we began looking for a honey source for our new cereal, we considered only pure, raw, organic honey – the best quality and most bee-friendly available.

Organic honey to sweeten veganic grains: it may take a moment for the meanings to crystalize, but in the end you’re left with some pretty delicious food for thought.

**Editor’s Note**

One Degree’s website is at www.onedegreeorganics.com and they have also set up a sister site to explain ‘veganic’ at www.veganic.com

One Degree have a strong concern for the plight of bees, and are donating a portion of sales of their new Sprouted Khorasan Honey O’s cereal to an organisation that works for bee preservation.

The honey comes from Wolfe Honey Company in northern Alberta, Canada, “where honeybees have plenty of pesticide-free flowers and fruits to pollinate”. (Maybe it is only in countries like Canada and the US where farms can be large enough to ensure that honeybees remain within a pesticide-free area?)

“The estimated half billion honeybees are never exposed to chemicals of any kind during the production process.”

More at www.onedegreeorganics.com/honey-bunny

A vegan diet is defined as excluding honey, but this has sometimes been a point of disagreement amongst vegans. For a time in or around the late 1970s, for example, the UK Vegan Society considered that the use of honey was best left to “individual conscience”.

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Photo by Beau (aged 10) at the Fir Tree Community Growers Open Day in June: “I loved seeing the plants and watching the bees, they are everywhere.”
Oh for some worms ...
by Rob Slow

The soil on my allotment is very light and doesn’t retain water well. Worms are such rare visitors that when I see one I book it into one of Rotherham’s many 5-star hotels to ensure that it doesn’t tire itself.

All of this, even to my non-technical mind, shows that the soil needs to be improved generally, as well as for particular crops. Consequently, I employ a mixture of measures which have evolved over recent years. By the end of the winter, there isn’t much bare soil in evidence, and the beds have a variety of things covering or growing out of them. I hesitate to call it a system (proper gardeners certainly wouldn’t) but, to me, it has a logic to it.

How to complicate the composting process
I have four grades of compostable materials which are kept separately:
GRADE 1: annual weeds, plant tops, kitchen waste, card food packaging, envelopes etc
- stored in big wooden bays
- usual 3-stage process: one bay filling, one roting, one being used
- rots within a year
- used in seed drills, plant holes etc
GRADE 2: weeds with tap roots which chop easily, chopped thicker plant waste (peas etc)
- stored in builders’ or plastic bags
- left until rotted enough to add to Grade 1 for more decomposition
- weeds growing again, pulled out, chopped and put into next Grade 2 bag
GRADE 3: green grass and other weeds going to seed, chopped thick plant waste (sweet corn etc)
- stored same as Grade 2
- added to Grade 1 or Grade 2, or used in potato trenches or spread on beds as a mulch, depending on extent of decomposition
GRADE 4: the evil stuff – bindweed, couch grass, dry grass or weeds gone to seed
- thrown on a pile and left (I don’t burn anything)
- I’ve just moved a pile after four or five years of expanding girth and height (the pile’s, not mine); top half dry and hadn’t rotted so started a new pile; bottom half rotted enough to be stripped of the most recalcitrant bindweed for use in trenches or as a mulch.

I follow trusted principles of covering (or not) Grade 1: don’t let it get too dry or wet. The other grades I leave open to Mother Nature.

Council leaves: my work
My local park is about 15 minutes wheelbarrow journey from the allotment. For several years I have plodded that lonely trail with leaves in various conditions. The barrow will accommodate two upright, large, punctured sacks of the current year’s falling, when damp. I’ve stored up to 40 bags a year, with the tops open, requiring minimal attention. After a year, when they’ve partially broken down, I tip them into big builders’ bags for more rottition. It probably takes three years before the resultant leaf-mould is ready to use.

In recent years, Rotherham’s loving council has partly done the job for me. They’ve piled up the leaves but then not moved them into the bays they’ve constructed for them. This means I can fill the barrow with one or two year old, partially rotted, damp stuff and put it straight into the big bags, saving at least a year (and some residents say the council doesn’t do anything for them). When it’s ready I spread it on the beds to assist onions, peas, beans, and others or as a general improver.

Fully rotted leaf-mould is a beautiful substance: lovely dark, crumbly texture with a comforting earthy smell. The trouble is that it takes up a lot of space: four or more times greater than in its eventual, usable state.

Green manures: sounds simple but …
The idiot simplicity of the process, as explained in the literature, hasn’t been simple for this idiot. I’ve found that shaving off and leaving on top hasn’t produced the advertised rottion; turning in has led to regrowth; even good germination and covering has not stopped strong weeds from coming through.

I’ve used three types so far:
RED CLOVER produces a good covering and a very fine soil tilth but has to be dug out, thus negating my minimal dig principles.
PHACELIA, as well as being very expensive, produces a lot of woody growth which is a haven for bees but takes a long time to break down.
HUNGARIAN GRAZING RYE isn’t a good germinator and doesn’t grow strongly until the spring when it’s nearly time to remove it (although that task is easy).

In all cases, I’ve settled on lifting the crop out (Phacelia pulls out by hand, the others have to be forked out), chopping it up off the bed and spreading it back on top to decompose.

An abundance of cardboard
The dutiful shopkeepers of Rotherham put out mountains of cardboard packaging for collection by their tireless council (or one of its “partners”). In partnership, I liberate large sheets of this, on my way home from the pub, and spread on vacant beds. This definitely suppresses weeds and protects the soil from pummelling rain.

Gradually, the winter weather breaks it down: if almost completely, I leave it on the bed; if partly, I dump it on the Grade 1 compost; if not much, I put it round the raspberries to discourage weeds.
The winter survivors
The previous year’s chard and perpetual spinach always produces a spring crop, sometimes bountiful. Parsley gives a second year crop in most years. Also I grow over-winter broad beans, peas and onions with, mostly, good results.

As well as providing early crops these plants do a combination of suppressing weeds and holding the soil together.

Does it work?
The absence of a worm population means that mulches of all types aren’t pulled down into the soil; I have to scratch compost and mould into the surface before sowing and rake off unrotted green manures. But I get plenty of worms in compost and mould, when it’s damp, and under cardboard coverings which, I think, confirms what the problems are. And I use a huge amount of everything listed above so I’m beginning to believe it’s making a difference.

It’s a slow process though, this soil improvement (and living in Rotherham).

Getting started in vegan organics
You’re sold on the theory, but what do you do next? Unless you’re one of the lucky ones to live near a commercial vegan organic grower, you’re probably thinking about giving it a go yourself. You don’t have to go overboard; you can even grow in containers on windowsills or your patio. But if you want to go further here are some places to have a look at.

There is lots of knowledge and know-how on our website at www.veganorganic.net including a range of articles and a full set of Information Sheets. This is always a good starting point.

You can request copies of our DVDs and you can purchase copies of our books – see merchandise, pages 40-41.

If you need help with specific aspects of growing or you’re coming up against a problem you can’t fix, you can ask our advisory panel (advice@veganorganic.net), or you could try instead asking on our Facebook group (www.facebook.com/groups/veganorganicnetwork).

If you’re interested in volunteering on a vegan organic farm then you can contact Maggi Taylor at media@veganorganic.net for a list of potential opportunities (or write c/o VON, address page 3).

Training events or courses
In the UK
Centre For Alternative Technology - www.cat.org.uk
Chyan Community Field - www.chyan.org.uk
Debdale Eco Centre - www.debdale-ecocentre.org.uk
Drimlabarra Herb Farm - www.veganherbal.com
Fir Tree Community Growers Cropshare -
www.facebook.com/FirTreeCommunityGrowersCropshare
Growing with Grace - www.growingwithgrace.org.uk
Hulme Community Garden Centre -
www.hulmegardencentre.org.uk
Kindling Trust - www.kindling.org.uk
Spiralseed - www.spiralseed.co.uk
Tolhurst Organic - www.tolhurstorganic.co.uk
Wildheart Permaculture -
www.wildheartpermaculture.co.uk

Overseas
Veganic Agriculture Network (North America) -
www.goveganic.net
Animal Place (California) - www.animalplace.org
The Tree of Life Centre (Arizona) - www.treeoflife.nu
The Living Centre in Ontario (Canada) - www.thelivingcentre.com
Gentle World (Hawaii and New Zealand) -
www.gentleworld.org
Sadhana Forest (India, Haiti and Kenya) -
www.sadhanaforest.org

Check with each one to see what they are offering at the moment. Please let us know if you attend any of these as we’d love to publish a report in the magazine.

If you know somewhere else running courses, please let us know and we can list them here.

Sheepless
Sheep – Environment – Alternatives – Knitting!

Kath Clements (a former editor of GGI) now spends some time running websites – her latest project is all about yarn, textiles, environment, sheep, and things.

“I was driven to do this when I discovered that there’s just as much ‘turning a blind eye’ in the knitting world as there is in the eating world. I also found that some of the animal rights websites aren’t very good on this matter.”

“More than once I have read the claim ‘British yarn producers adhere to strict animal welfare and environmental standards’ – and part of the purpose of Sheepless is to unravel that myth. I want to show that even without the ‘comfort’ of wool and all its rich associations in our cultural history, we can keep our love of colour, texture, homely inspiration and warmth, and all the other things we like about knitting!”

www.sheeplessknitter.net Hedgehog pincushions
Veganism is a way of life ...
by the Shiva Trust team

Here at Meadows Farm, a small hill farm in the quiet and unassuming green hills of Rossendale in Lancashire, we see veganism as being very much a way of life; an ethos, a philosophy, an understanding – values that we try as best we can to implement in all aspects of life.

It’s about connectivity, oneness and the fundamental principle of *Ahimsa*, or non-violence. As a movement that follows Hindu philosophy, veganism fits right in to everything that we are about. The central concept of Hindu philosophy is the idea of Brahman – that there is a consciousness that pervades and connects everything within existence. From this awareness it is an obvious step to seek to practise non-violence, and non-violence must surely in turn involve a vegan lifestyle?

Our farm is an ashram, home of Satguru Sri Ramana Devi. At present the ashram is small. We are home to Sri Ramana and her family, three practising renunciates, and 37 animals. I almost wrote 36 there – we have a new arrival as of yesterday – ten week old German Shepherd ‘Jnani’. Most of the animals here have Sanskrit names. It’s an incredibly beautiful and ancient language, carrying within it a great understanding of the nature of the reality in which we live.

Sri Ramana’s ashram is home to thirteen dogs, four horses, three highland cows, five kunekune pigs, five pygmy goats, three sheep and four cats. Like the humans that live here, all of the animals are here simply to enjoy life and to realise, ultimately self realise, their true inner nature. To Sri Ramana, an animal is a soul just like us, differing only in its form.

**Anand with sheep and cows**

The animals play a very important role in the life that goes on here. Perhaps of primary importance is that they help the humans that live (and visit) here to challenge the naturally self-centred tendencies that seem to be particularly prevalent in modern Western society. Looking after the animals and being aware of their needs, one has to go beyond the habitual thought patterns that can keep us all too insular and isolated.

The presence of the animals is a constant reminder that life takes so many wonderful forms, and that we are all part of an ecology of life that demands that we consider the wellbeing of all aspects of the interconnected whole in which we live and find our being. Practically speaking their manure makes a wonderful contribution towards enriching the soil in which we grow our vegetables [see note next page], and also nurturing our trees.

The promotion of animal welfare is one of the five objects of the charity that Sri Ramana established in 2012 in order to deliver her great mission in life. That charity is called the *Shiva Trust*. In line with Sri Ramana’s priorities, the other objects of the *Shiva Trust* are the sharing of Sri Ramana’s teachings, the promotion of Hindu philosophy, the alleviation of poverty, and promoting the moral and spiritual development of children and young people.

**Free vegan meals for the needy**

This July will mark five years on the farm and, although the charity is not even two years old, already a huge amount has been achieved.

This year alone, *eighty thousand* (yes!) free vegan meals were given out to the homeless, the needy and the poor. We are now the proud owners of what could be the world’s first vegan catering van dedicated to the service of society. She’s called ‘Parvati’ (the van), see photo next page. Parvati will travel to poor and deprived communities throughout the land, sharing the wonders of vegan food, and the love of Sri Ramana. She has already started her service, in our local town of Burnley, and within only a few weeks hundreds of hearts have been touched and minds opened. In fact this past week, in Burnley Wood, cupcakes were given out using flour sourced, milled (and donated!) by the Vegan Organic Network!

As a whole, we seek to bring about a profound questioning of the society that we live in. The love that emanates from a being such as Sri Ramana has an effortless capacity to strip away the conditioning that so limits us in our beliefs and actions, connecting us with the energy and ‘beingness’ inside us that is who we really ultimately are – divinity, that within us that seeks with all our heart and might to build a better world.

Sri Ramana has created a number of courses that have an incredible capacity to unlock the inner spiritual nature that lies within us all. For children, there is the *Ahimsa* programme, a practical course for non-violence in everyday life, exploring nature, the environment, animals and our relationship with all of these. Then there is the Natural
Ashram Prison Project, a course to support those in prison to connect to their spiritual nature and build back up their sense of pride and esteem. For women there is the Karuna programme, a women’s empowerment course that supports women to embody the qualities of the divine feminine and be a positive force for change in the world.

Now that the weather is more conducive to outdoor living, building works have commenced once more on the farm. We are working towards building a huge barn – a purpose built space where all of Sri Ramana’s beloved animals can live together happily under one roof. Planning permission is being sought and we will undoubtedly be launching several fundraising appeals via www.crowdfunder.co.uk so do please take a look (search for Satguru Sri Ramana Devi UK).

To find out more about any aspect of the work we are doing, please do get in touch – we’d love to hear from you.

Editor’s note: VON has three or four animal sanctuaries that we are very pleased to welcome as members, or who work closely with us. The question of vegan organic / stockfree organic certification was discussed recently with the Shiva Trust when David Graham and other VON members visited them. Certified land must be free from animal manure / by-products, however the manure can be used on land that is not certified vegan organic / stockfree organic. We totally support those who provide sanctuary for animals, and we are currently discussing how we can best accommodate animal sanctuaries or those who provide shelter for our friends. (On the same topic, see top left page 34.)

Opportunity available
Do you long to work with the land? Do you yearn to immerse your hands (and soul) in the soil?

We can offer an acre of land (possibly more) to anyone that would like to work with the land using vegan organic methods. You would have much freedom to use the produce as you wish, though you may like to offer some to Parvati (our catering van) for transformation into delicious vegan meals for the needy and the poor.

We are accessible by public transport and the ashram is a wonderful environment in which to enjoy spending time. Other volunteers would be available if required to help with aspects of the land management, and our resident helpers would be happy to help with daily chores such as seed watering etc.

For further details, or to register your interest please get in touch.

There are also many opportunities for anyone who would like to come and help out with our existing vegetable gardens on a more casual basis, or with helping with the animals.

Anand
Tel: 01706 218272
Email: anand@satgurusriramanadeviuk.org
www.satgurusriramanadeviuk.org
www.shivatrust.org
Facebook: Satgurusriramanadeviuk / Shiva Trust Ashram Fund

Parvati – the vegan catering van
News from Le Guerrat
by Sue Morris
Le Guerrat is Sue’s guest house and home in the French Pyrenees

Well, it’s the end of March and what are we up to? The usual 300 tomato seedlings are coming along nicely, 5'/13cm high and wrapped up in a fleece at night to combat the chilly nights. Together with 80 aubergines, 60 peppers, 30 cucumbers and 18 watermelon plants, this makes up the bulk of our production this year.

It’s amazing how long it takes to get used to quantities – how many plants do we need to have enough, but not too much, to be able to cope with but also to have surplus to sell or give away? In our small mountain community there is very much an attitude of sharing surpluses, and this has a multiplying effect: the more people do it, the more you feel it makes perfect sense.

Even when we ‘sell’ our surplus tomatoes, cucumbers, courgettes etc, we never take the actual money. We buy our bulk food items from the same small organic shop, so in fact it becomes an exchange: 500kgs of our beef heart tomatoes for 25kgs of chick peas, soya beans, lentils etc. Everybody is happy.

Of course for years it has been second nature to buy locally-produced foods, so the chick peas come from SW France, the soya beans and lentils from France too. As a treat for Trevor we often buy 5kg boxes of organic raisins, and these come from Turkey, which is about as far away as we allow. Other than that I’ve got used to saving and drying our own beans and peas, conserving our tomatoes and aubergines, and drying our herbs and leaves, so a good varied meal is never far away.

This comes in handy on the odd occasion when we get snowed in. Living 18kms from the nearest shops, we have naturally developed a self-sufficient ethos, which leads our thinking towards ‘how can I cook this differently?’ as opposed to ‘what do I need to buy for this recipe?’. For a more sophisticated palate, perhaps vegetables and a grain served differently every day would not suffice – for us it is a quick and easy way to enable us to get on with our day!

Other daily tasks include walking the dog, checking on the orchard (lovely peach and pear blossom coming out, apples not far behind), watering and turning around said seedlings and, depending on the season, either making chipped branch wood with our portable shredder (an ‘Eliot’, highly recommended), felling trees for winter wood, spring cleaning in the guest house, or potting-on, maintaining or harvesting the crops.

A councillor’s role
I’ve never tired of these routines, these habits built over 18 years now. They add a rhythm and contentment to our days, a feeling of security if you like. Other responsibilities have been added to the mix, like teaching English, various gardening and DIY jobs with neighbours, and most recently the responsibilities of a local councillor for yours truly!

This is one of those ‘universe provides’ sort of events: never in my wildest dreams, when starting this adventure, did I expect to be on the local decision-making body, but here I am, recently elected with a mandate of six years! It’s a huge commune with a tiny population, which explains a lot, but it still means that it will be more possible than ever to promulgate a ‘think globally, act locally’ philosophy, which most of my fellow councillors share already.

One of our first responsibilities was to divide the team of eleven people into committees, depending on the urgency of the various jobs: road maintenance; school activities; footpaths; energy issues; tourism; budget, etc. There is a lot of scope for the vegan way and a stockfree approach to be incorporated into several of these arenas: encouraging a vegan option for the school once or twice a week (they already are fortunate enough to eat mostly organic food, thanks to the local producers and the pressure of the parents); encouraging a durable attitude to tourism, making sure the budget is spent wisely by encouraging local production, advising for and/or against some practices, like pesticide use, etc.

I’ve volunteered for three of these committees, so I’m going to be busy, but it’s difficult to describe the feeling of dynamism in the commune, the feeling that now we want to take charge of things ourselves, to make our own decisions, to focus on our own priorities. We realise that this is a far cry from normal politics, but that is what makes it exciting: can we make a beneficial difference in six years?

Small local shop?
One of the first ideas to emerge at our initial brainstorming session was a small local shop. At the moment the local population is obliged to drive far to get their shopping, so would it be possible to initiate something locally, to reduce the need for these long journeys? A lot to chew on and weigh up: would there be enough turnover to make it viable? Would there be enough demand from locals to be able to pay an employee? Would there be interest from the surrounding areas? We need to start with a study, to gauge the local opinion.

All very stimulating stuff, which for me seems to blend in perfectly with the lives we have carved out for ourselves at
Le Guerrat: as more people start to wake up to the realities and horrors of globalisation, we have a real chance in our own backyard to effect change. We have the opportunity to have town hall meetings where people can air their grievances or develop their ideas.

As I’m so inspired by the whole idea of taking back the power, I’d like to use this opportunity to encourage everyone else to get involved locally too – whether in a rural location or a city environment, there is so much to be done, and so much that it is possible for people like us to do. We have left the reins to other people for too long – it is time to take charge again.

Vegan and vegan friendly organisations and websites

**Stockfree Organic Services**  Resources for stockfree farmers and growers  [www.stockfreeorganic.net](http://www.stockfreeorganic.net)

**Market Garden Britain**  Addressing food poverty, climate change and the end of cheap oil, and moving towards more low-carbon food systems  [www.marketgardenbritain.org](http://www.marketgardenbritain.org)

**Veganic Agriculture Network**  Promoting plant-based farming and gardening throughout North America.  [www.goveganic.net](http://www.goveganic.net)

**The Vegan Society (UK)**  Promoting vegan lifestyles since 1944. Donald Watson House, 21 Hylton Street, Hockley, Birmingham B18 6HJ  [www.vegansociety.com](http://www.vegansociety.com)

**Veggies**  Vegan outreach and campaign catering at numerous events. Based at Sumac Centre, Nottingham’s vegan social centre & community garden. Compiles Vegan Outreach Diary. 245 Gladstone St, Nottingham NG7 6HX  [www.veggies.org.uk](http://www.veggies.org.uk)

**Movement for Compassionate Living**  Promoting a way of life that is free of the exploitation and slaughter of sentient beings, that is possible for all the world's people and that is sustainable within the resources of the planet.  [www.mclveganway.org.uk](http://www.mclveganway.org.uk)

**Vegan Views**  No longer printing a magazine but many back issues with articles/interviews/etc available online.  [www.veganviews.org.uk](http://www.veganviews.org.uk)

**Vegfam**  UK vegan based hunger relief charity. Cwm Cottage, Cwmynys, Llandovery SA20 OEU, Wales.  [www.vegfamcharity.org.uk](http://www.vegfamcharity.org.uk)

**HIPPO**  Vegan charity emphasising the value of plant proteins. Churchfield House, Weston under Penyard, Ross-on-Wye HR9 7PA  [hippocharity@btinternet.com](mailto:hippocharity@btinternet.com)

**A Well-Fed World**  US based hunger relief and animal protection organisation  [www.awellfedworld.org](http://www.awellfedworld.org)

**World Preservation Foundation**  Livestock farming and the environment  [www.worldpreservationfoundation.org](http://www.worldpreservationfoundation.org)

**The Vegetarian Resource Group**  Health, environment, ethics  [www.vrg.org](http://www.vrg.org)

**Vegan Health**  Comprehensive site on vegan health, maintained by Jack Norris  [www.veganhealth.org](http://www.veganhealth.org)

**International Vegetarian Union**  Promoting vegetarianism (and increasingly veganism) worldwide  [www.ivu.org](http://www.ivu.org)

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**VON DVDs**

*Growing Green: Vegan-Organic Farming*

The first VON DVD sees Karin Ridgers of VeggieVision follow Iain Tolhurst around his groundbreaking farm. You get an inside look at how Tolly manages his land and some of the secrets behind his success. This film could be shown publicly to groups interested in veganism, environmentalism or growing – or can be enjoyed at home. Tolhurst Organic website: [www.tolhurstorganic.co.uk](http://www.tolhurstorganic.co.uk)

*Growing Green: Grow Your Own Fruit and Veg*

The second VON DVD is a guide to growing your own fruit and vegetables using vegan organic techniques, hosted by Graham Cole. You’ll pick up hints and tips that you can put into immediate practice, receiving the benefit of Graham’s many years of experience. This film is ideal for beginners or experienced growers wanting to find out more, and could also be shown at allotment clubs.

*Growing Green: Growing with Grace*

The third VON DVD presents a behind-the-scenes look at stockfree farm Growing with Grace. You get to follow a full growing season and see how they prepare and cultivate their land, which is almost entirely under glass. The production levels of this film are the highest we’ve achieved so far and this would be great to show to groups or for starting a discussion. Growing with Grace website: [www.growingwithgrace.org.uk](http://www.growingwithgrace.org.uk)

VON DVDs are free to members, although we do welcome donations to cover production and postage. For non members DVDs cost £2 each (+ £2.50 UK postage per package)  [merch@veganorganic.net](mailto:merch@veganorganic.net)

For orders by post see form page 41

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See noticeboard page 5
Ugly Produce
by Iain Tolhurst

This article is taken from the February 2014 edition of Onion Oracle, the regular e-newsletter from Tolhurst Organic. You can subscribe to the newsletter at www.tolhurstorganic.co.uk

A recent report states that £19 billion worth of ugly produce is thrown away in the UK each year. This is a staggering statistic and may not be terribly accurate, but even if inflated by 50% it is still an awful lot of food being wasted.

So what is ugly produce? Mostly fruit and vegetables, the bulk of which is discarded by farmers and growers in the field during harvest operations, or from the grading lines that much produce ends up going through before it gets to the distribution hub.

Over 80% of produce is sold via the multiples (supermarkets) and it is here that the greatest amount of food waste is generated. ‘Ugly’ is a general description that can be anything such as produce damaged by harvesting machinery, damaged by insect/disease/animal attack, or wrong shape, size or colour. Outgrades (produce that does not conform to the standards) can sometimes be more than half of the entire crop. Inevitably there will always be some produce deemed unfit for human consumption, primarily due to insect/animal/disease attack, but usually this is quite a small percentage of the crop.

For example, this year our potato crop was especially good both in terms of its yield and its quality. We graded out around 10% in the field, due to being too small or having a small amount of damage, such as greening or wireworm attack. By industry standards this percentage of grade out would be considered very low – few conventional growers would have such small losses.

But that is not the end of the grading process. Once the crop gets back to our packing shed (at this time of year, February, they are coming from a field store of straw bales to protect them from frost), further grading takes place. We remove a further 5% for damage or rot that has taken place during the storage time. The longer we store them the higher the grade out becomes, to the point where it can be no longer worth sorting the crop out, as the labour/handling costs exceed the value of the produce.

Some of the grade outs we keep for seed to plant for the next season’s crop – this is a great advantage to us as we have found that our best crops come from our own seed supply. This makes good use of the smaller tubers that would usually be dumped.

Conventional growers use a chemical (chlorpropham) sprout suppressant. This is used to stop the tubers trying to grow in store, as every spud from January onwards is pre-programmed by nature to start the growing process all over again. We of course cannot use such chemicals and have to either cold store the crop or remove the sprouts by hand, and beyond a certain date the spuds lose too much moisture to be worth selling. So in general we end up losing around 20% of the entire crop that was grown in the field.

This is considered a very low grade out, and remember some of that goes for seed, which reduces what we need to buy in to replant, and keeps our carbon footprint low.

If we were to sell our crop to a third party, such as a supermarket, the situation with grade outs would change dramatically. For a start, the EU regulations in produce grading would come into force, and we would have to grade to the official standards, which are quite strict. When we sell direct to the public, as we do with our box scheme or through the Veg Shed, then grading is entirely up to us. In theory we could put the entire crop out to our customers, just as it was as it came from the field. However we know that few of you would want to buy, even at a lower price, because dearest Joe Public has been conditioned into believing that produce grows to an almost perfect standard.

Supermarkets and Joe Public
Supermeerkats believe that they know what Joe Public wants. Indeed, we are hearing from them so often that “the consumer demands so and so”. Well, I don’t know about you but they have never once asked me what I want from them in terms of standards for fresh produce, so who are they asking about such things? Truth is that they never ask Joe Public what they want, they have made up their own mind as to what the standards of produce should be, so they take the EU regulations as a starting point and add their own interpretation on top of it.

This gives them lots of things, such as having beautiful produce to line their shelves with, and the convenience that all the leeks/other veg will fit their available shelf space. It also means they can have all produce arriving at the stores in the same size containers that fit into the stores’ handling systems. Certain colours look better under lights than others, so particular varieties of veg/fruit may be demanded. I could go on about what the supermeerkats like to dictate to their growers, but will refrain as I am supposed to be covering the subject of ugly produce and waste.

So, all these Euro regs and supermeerkat grading standards add up to a whole lot of wasted crop, and edible food going to waste. It is not unusual with some crops for this to exceed 50% of the harvest, and this has to be paid for, so who pays? Two parties pay. The grower initially has to cover the cost of the reduced yield – the costs of growing a ten tonne crop are about the same as growing a five tonne crop, but the latter will return only half the value. Then the...
consumer pays as well at the cash till, as the supermeerkats need to cover their massive store and centralised distribution costs.

Food waste is not really about chucking out inedible produce. It is about serving the needs of the Eurocrats and the supermeerkats. So, dear reader, the more that you can buy locally and organic then the less gets thrown away.

**Living Soil at Tolhurst Organic**

*by Graham Burnett*

*This report is taken from Graham’s website (where there are several more photos):*  
www.spiralseed.co.uk/grahamwp/?p=468  
Graham’s 'Vegan Book of Permaculture' is due to be published in October

At the end of March I had the privilege of attending a soil seminar held at Tolhurst Organic near Whitchurch-on-Thames in south Oxfordshire. Nestled between the Chilterns and the river Thames, the farm is situated in the picturesque Hardwick Estate with 17 acres in two fields, and two acres in the 500 year old walled garden. The farm has been certified organic under Soil Association standards for over 30 years, and in addition has held the Vegan Organic Network’s ‘Stockfree Organic’ certificate since 2004, having had no grazing animals and no animal inputs to any part of the farm for the last ten years.

Not many people truly realise just how dynamic and wonderful the soil beneath our feet is. Organic experts Iain ‘Tolly’ Tolhurst (far left below, also page 2) and Roger Hitchings looked at all of its aspects, from its creation to its productive uses, via a series of fascinating discussions and slide shows, the key message of which could be summarised as ‘feed the soil, not the plant – and take good care of it!’ It was great to share knowledge and expertise with a room full of people who were clearly passionate on the subject, but the true revelations of the day were reserved for after lunch (a delicious spicy vegan lentil soup with homemade bread and Tolhurst salad, courtesy of Tolly’s wife Tamara).

There is a saying that a picture can paint a thousand words – well, it’s equally true that a handful of soil could potentially convince 10,000 organic sceptics if only they chose to pay attention to the evidence of their own senses.

**The benefits of green manures**

Out in Tolly’s market garden we saw at first hand the benefits of using green manures (eg clovers, lucerne, grazing rye, trefoil etc) as both annual and semi-permanent bio-cropping soil covers – that fix nitrogen, store carbon and mine other nutrients from deep in the subsoil, break up compaction with their deep roots, create humus and have a host of other benefits. Combined with well timed minimal tillage and long term crop rotation regimes, these regenerative techniques not only maintain and build fertility, but also create soil that is amazingly resilient to natural traumas such as flooding. Digging out a series of sample profiles revealed that an area of soil that had been left bare over the winter was still cold, waterlogged, nutrient leached and lifeless, and did not have a good smell about it. Yet only a few feet away, where the soil had been kept covered with green manures, it was warm, friable
and moist with a healthy crumb structure, with plenty of earthworms and the tell-tale sweet woodland floor smell of actinomycetes that indicates an active soil life population at work.

**Adding living organic matter and biomass**

If I hadn’t have seen the photographs earlier in the day I wouldn’t have believed that up until ten days ago these latter soils had been submerged for several weeks when the nearby river Thames burst its banks. Yet they had already recovered sufficiently to be ready to plant with economically viable cabbage crops within a week or two! And all due to the not exactly rocket science techniques of adding living organic matter and biomass to the soil.

There are many lessons here for not only the ‘conventional’ (and indeed much of the ‘sustainable’) agricultural community who are watching their soils not so gradually erode and deplete in fertility due to the overuse of industrialised farming methods – but also for the advocates of ‘dredging’ as the cure-all answer to ‘the flooding problem’ which we are inevitably going to see more of in future years. Just have a look at this short YouTube video [www.tinyurl.com/33water](http://www.tinyurl.com/33water) which explains what happens when unprotected soil and lots of water from above are rapidly introduced to each other. Sometimes the answers to our problems are so simple and obvious...

For me, despite considering myself a reasonably experienced organic grower with a good knowledge of permacultural techniques, I took away plenty of ideas and inspirations that I can think about adapting and applying to the much smaller scale context of my allotment plot. For example I asked Tolly if the strategy of leaving the soil permanently covered with living plants didn’t provide a moist environment that was a perfect habitat for slugs – he responded that this was indeed true for the first year or two, but after this populations of ground beetles and other predators had built up that ensured that slugs were no problem at all. As if to illustrate his point we did come across one solitary slug rather forlornly making its way through the undergrowth, “obviously on its way to being a beetle’s dinner”. Due to my ill health over the last couple of years my own plot has been quite neglected, and has quite a cover of ‘weeds’ and other wild plants, so may indeed be in a good place to start converting to a scaled down version of the systems demonstrated at Tolhurst – more research and experiments are needed, and I hope to report on developments over the coming months!

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### Nuts: a global history

by Ken Albala (Reaktion Books 2014)

128pp, 53 illustrations, 51 in colour

Hardback £9.99


**Book review by Paul Appleby**

When I was growing up in 1960s and 70s Britain, nuts were a commodity that miraculously appeared a few weeks before Christmas and then mysteriously disappeared again once the festivities were over.

Times have changed, of course, and shelled nuts are now consumed all year round, although, as the prolific food writer Ken Albala (who is Professor of History at the University of the Pacific in Stockton, California) points out in the introduction to Nuts, they “are not a staple ... did not change the course of history ... and they almost never form the centre of a meal”.

However, it would be hard to disagree with his conclusion that nuts “are eminently charming, sophisticated and ... wonderfully varied in form and flavour”. They are also surprisingly versatile, and you may be surprised to learn that almond milk is not a new product at all but was widely used in medieval Europe as a substitute for cows’ milk during Lent.

Defining what exactly are nuts is surprisingly difficult. Most readers will know that peanuts are legumes, not nuts, but it turns out that almonds, pine nuts, pistachios and Brazil nuts are, botanically speaking, not nuts either – they are all seeds. Having apparently ruled out most contenders, the author neatly brings them back into the fold with his own concise definition of nuts as “things that grow on trees, have hard shells and are edible”. This widens the field to include coconuts, chestnuts and such exotic foods as the mongongo nut, a favoured food of the San bushmen of the Kalahari Desert, providing one third of their energy intake – and nuts such as the betel nut and the kola nut that are chewed rather than eaten.

There is much that is fascinating about nuts, and it is a pity that with so much material available there is so little to read about them in this slim volume. In particular, much more could have been written about the commercial harvesting of nuts and of their many benefits to health. At much over 100 pages plus a short, mainly vegetarian-friendly recipe section, the book is more tasty snack than satisfying meal although, like other titles in Reaktion Books’ *Edible* series, *Nuts* is lavishly and attractively illustrated and makes entertaining, though all too brief, reading.

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### Your legacy for the future, helping the work of the Vegan Organic Network

Would you consider benefiting the work of the charity by including a legacy in your will? Such gifts are presently tax free and are extremely helpful, making an enduring contribution to the promotion and continuance of vegan organic ideals.

Such legacies can be made by anyone, in the UK or anywhere else in the world, and are normally simple to insert in your will. You can consult your legal advisor, or for those resident in England or Wales we can supply a simple form of words for your will. Legacies of land and property can be made, in which case your qualified legal advisor should be consulted.

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*Bildquelle: Photo by Noodle Too, distributed under Creative Commons licence [www.creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0](http://www.creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0)*
Sadhana just celebrated ten years of work. These ten years have been wonderful, creative and, at the same time, extremely challenging.

In India, we have planted over 29,000 trees and harvested hundreds of thousands of cubic metres of water. In Haiti, Sadhana Forest has planted 80,000 food-producing trees that will feed up to 70,000 people – and trained 7,000 Haitians in agroforestry and permaculture. Now we are starting Sadhana Forest Kenya, creating food forests with the Samburu people, who suffer from drought and malnutrition. You can watch a short video we made encompassing the ten years of our work at www.youtube.com/watch?v=t0uCBSCuoBU

Sadhana Forest has been funded by one-time donations, which have brought us this far, but are very unpredictable. In order to continue our work, we now need your support. We have launched the Sustaining Member program that will enable you to contribute a small amount on a monthly basis. Any amount would help us! To support our work go to www.sadhanaforest.org/sustain

See also Aviram’s article in GGI 30 (page 20). And this 2013 article from 'Auroville Today', about Sadhana’s activities and progress, is very interesting: www.sadhanaforest.org/en/sadhana-forest-in-auroville-today

“Our emphasis is on putting consciousness into matter, on increasing the consciousness in our everyday actions. For example, we try to be very conscious and conserve natural resources. We cook only organic vegan food using very efficient wood-burning ‘rocket stoves’, and provide all our own electricity with solar panels and a human-powered bicycle generator. We also try to be more conscious in our relationships with others in the community.”

Photo shows the campus at Sadhana Forest Haiti
Woodleaf Farm
The evolution of an organic orchard in California to vegan organic production
Helen Atthowe has compiled this feature on Woodleaf Farm in California, where she has lived for the last two years. Carl Rosato’s farm is one of the oldest certified organic farms in California and has been vegan organic for 15 years or so — although Carl (serving on the stall in the photo below) did not know it until Helen arrived, when he began to eat mostly vegan and learned that he is farming veganically!

Over 30 years Woodleaf Farm has evolved into a veganic organic farm that allows natural nutrient cycles and beneficial organisms to flourish. We have learned the most important principle of nature: if you disturb or kill an organism, you inherit its job. Now we do less, and have more time to enjoy bright pink-throated hummingbirds pollinating pale-pink peach blossoms in the spring.

Woodleaf is one of the oldest certified organic farms in California. There have been no animal products used or animals raised on Woodleaf for nearly 20 years. Farm fields are nestled in among 26 acres of native oak/pine forest in the Sierra foothills of northern California.

The climate is Mediterranean and soils are mostly loamy clays with 3 to 8% slopes. There are eight acres (broken into seven fields of between one and two acres) of mixed fruit and vegetable production for farmers’ markets.

Soil tests, taken regularly since 1982, track the rising soil fertility. Reduced tillage, soil mineral balancing, and organic plant residues are the major focus at Woodleaf Farm. “It is crucial to leave the soil as undisturbed as possible. Tending soil for optimum production means adding certified organic minerals when needed, and different organic plant residues regularly. Compost made from branches, leaves and plant residues without manures is better for orchards since it best supports fungal growth,” according to Carl. He believes that the annual addition of different forms of plant organic matter and past soil amendment history keep soil microorganisms actively releasing soil nutrients when crop demand for nutrients is high. Hence, a healthy soil translates into healthy plants. Woodleaf’s records support this theory: insect and disease damage has mostly decreased over the past 30 years. Carl attributes this to his integrated system (details below).

The farm also uses gravity flow irrigation and 100% solar power. In 2012 Woodleaf Farm was recognised with a Steward of Sustainable Agriculture Award at the 32nd Annual EcoFarm Conference: www.ecofarmconference.org

Soils and fertility
Woodleaf has a unique nitrogen cycling and mineral balancing soil management system that works in a synergistic manner and mimics nutrient cycling in a natural forest. The system has two parts:

(1) Closely coupled nitrogen to carbon cycling soil management system

Over time, soil organic matter (SOM) levels have increased from an average of 2.4 in the 1980s to an average of 3.4 in 2012. Soil nitrate-nitrogen levels have decreased from an average of 34 ppm (parts per million) in the 1980s to an average of 8 ppm in 2012. Yet high yields have been maintained. Carl applies several different kinds of plant residues, with both harder and easier to degrade carbon, regularly throughout the year in order to link nitrogen mineralisation to SOM decomposition. These include:

- Off-farm chipped branch wood yard waste compost applied two to three times a year (usually spring and summer) at two tons per acre. As soil fertility builds, Woodleaf is experimenting with less compost addition. Nutrient analysis of the chipped branch wood compost is (dry weight):
  1. Carbon to nitrogen ratio 10:1 to 15:1
  2. Nitrogen 1.3% to 1.48%
  3. Phosphorus 0.25% to 0.43%
  4. Potassium 0.76% to 1.5%
  5. pH 7.7 to 8.2
  6. Organic matter 34% to 36%
- Woodleaf chipped branch wood (green leaves and young branches 0.5-1.25 inches [1.3-3.2cms]) from on-farm fruit-tree prunings applied twice per year during pruning in fall and spring. Branches from pruning are placed in row middles over the living grass/clover/weed mulch and broken up with a rotary riding mower. This is a harder to degrade, higher carbon source.
- Hay mulch from the permanent grass and legume ground cover/living mulch. Living mulch residue is mowed two to four times annually, supplying a slightly higher nitrogen residue to the soil on a regular basis during the growing season. Mowed living grass/clover/weed mulch additions to the soil range from 1-3 ft [0.3-0.9m] in height of mowed residue per mowing. This results in annual, on-farm grown
‘hay’ soil surface residue applications of approximately 2-4 tons [1800-3600kg] in dry weight per acre, for an annual N-P-K (nitrogen-phosphorus-potassium) application of about 50 lbs [23kg] per acre N, 22 lbs [10kg] per acre P, and 38 lbs [17kg] per acre K. Living mulch hay also supplies other nutrients per acre: sulphur (4 lbs [1.8kg]), calcium (4 lbs [1.8kg]), magnesium (3 lbs [1.4kg]), manganese (0.1 lbs [45gms]) and other micronutrients. This is an easier to degrade, lower carbon source. Regular mowing allows nutrients to be continually ‘recycled’ in this nitrogen cycling management system.

(2) Mineral balancing soil management system
Minerals are applied and incorporated at tree or vegetable crop planting and surface applied when soil tests indicate the need which, except for gypsum and boron, is rare now at Woodleaf. Carl applies foliar mineral sprays regularly throughout the early part of the season (normally two to four cover sprays from bloom until fruit thinning). Minerals applied as foliar sprays include:

- Kelp for micronutrients
- Solubor for boron
- Manganese sulphate 31% for manganese
- Ferrous sulphate for iron and pH adjustment
- Gypsum with 22% calcium and 16% sulphur
- Micronised sulphur (80% sulphur)
- Sulphate of potash with 50% potassium and 18% sulphur
- Azomite (mined from an ancient mineral deposit in Utah — contains 70 minerals and trace elements)
- Activate (a humate)
- Nutramin: calcium 1%, Fe (iron) 2.5%, S (sulphur) 2%, SiO2 (silicon dioxide) 30%

For details about Carl’s mineral balancing process, read ‘Balancing Soil using Organic Materials’ at www.woodleaffarm.com/enlivening-soil

Insects
Insect problems are changing and have generally diminished over time. Aphids, peach tree twig borer, and oriental fruit moth have decreased over time at Woodleaf and are no longer spray targets. Carl now allows the ground cover to flower and seed in the spring before mowing. He also maintains blooming ground cover within the orchard and vegetable production areas throughout the season. The ground cover provides habitat for ground-dwelling predators (spiders and carabid beetles), and pollen and nectar for predators such as syrphid flies and soldier beetles and parasites such as wasps and tiny flies.

In 2012 and 2013 the only insect spray applied at Woodleaf on the main crop (peaches) was a half spray (in every other row middle) of Entrust for western flower thrips and drosophila. [Entrust is 80% spinosad, an insecticide based on a compound found in the bacterial species Saccharopolyspora spinosa. Spinosad has high efficacy, low mammalian toxicity, and a good environmental profile: less toxic to beneficial organisms than many certified organic insecticides.]

Pears and apples are not sprayed for insects. Codling moth damaged up to 30% of the apple crop in the 1990s and still damages 12% (2012) to 20% (2013) of the apple crop. However, codling moth damages only 1% (2012) to 9% (2013) of the pear crop. Pears are the more important crop on Woodleaf Farm and Carl considers apples a ‘trap crop’ for codling moth. The only ‘pest control’ for codling moth is the system’s pest management from beneficial insect predators and parasites, birds, and soil microorganisms.

No insect sprays have been applied in 2014. This is very exciting because all other organic fruit growers in northern CA had insect problems this spring and Woodleaf, while...
veganic in practice, is considered a leading organic farm with comparable yields and better quality than other organic (and conventional!) fruit growers. Predator insect populations in fruit trees (banded thrips, crab & jumping spiders) were very high and fruit is 96% perfect as we begin the first peach harvest. Carl predicts 2014 will be the most lucrative year ever at Woodleaf.

**Weeds**

There is little to no tillage and hand-weeding at Woodleaf, in either fruit or vegetable crops. But some vegetable crops get weedy by the end of the season. Mowing to manage weeds and competition from the living mulch is intertwined with disease, insect, and fertility management systems. Mowing timing revolves around best timing for insect pest biological control and air movement for disease management. Weeds, clovers, and grasses in the living mulch between tree crop rows are allowed to bloom and seed; they are allowed to bloom but not seed (when possible) in the vegetable production areas.

Woodleaf Farm’s evolution into a veganic organic farm helped us become a leader in two important areas of organic fruit production: ecological farm design to suppress insect and disease pests and a plant/mineral-based soil management system to improve plant health.

Along the way, we’ve discovered that this approach – less human intervention and letting nature do most of the work – saves us a lot of labour and brings a smile to our faces every day. It also gives us time to create and further evolve!

Meanwhile Carl and I are ‘debating’ the use of mined minerals, and experimenting with plant-based ways to add balanced minerals to soils and fruit trees. And we’re now developing one acre of mixed fruit trees species into a forest farm, where we are harvesting artichokes and strawberries and will soon be picking blackberries and blueberries beneath developing pear, apple, cherry, fig, and persimmon fruits – see the front cover of this issue.

Woodleaf Farm website (with more photos):
www.woodleaffarm.com

In GGI 29 (pages 26-27) Helen Atthowe wrote about her old vegan organic farm in Montana. Helen also appears in several YouTube videos, including a talk on ‘Vegan Farming and Gardening’ (type her name into the YouTube search box).
Gambling with our seed heritage – who will the winners be?

Joseph Croisdale from the Soil Association writes about the proposed Plant Reproductive Material (PRM) regulation

Judgement day arrived for the EU Commission on 11th March 2014 as the European Parliament voted almost unanimously to reject the proposed Plant Reproductive Material (PRM) regulation, which aimed to combine the current 12 EU regulations with the added problem of making the market more uneven and contributing to the reduction of agricultural biodiversity.

Joel’s it? It’s all over? Not quite...

In one final roll of the dice the European Commission have opted to ignore Parliament’s rejection and take the proposal straight to the Council of Ministers, where the proposal will either be sent for re-draft, rejected or accepted. But the complications don’t end there, as MEP elections that took place in May could result in a change of Commissioners. Following this decision, it is possible that the PRM regulation could still be introduced in some form later on in 2014.

Even if the current proposed regulation is rejected, the EU Commission have a “smarter rules for safer food” initiative, so we could see attempts at changes to current regulation that may have a similar impact.

So why are we making such a fuss over a proposed piece of regulation? If we cast our minds back to May 2013, when the PRM proposal was first released, the Soil Association and other similar organisations were put on red alert. The proposed PRM regulation at that time would have meant that most plant reproductive material would have to pass strict tests and become registered, all of which costs money. These costs are fine for large corporations like Monsanto, Syngenta and DuPont, who currently control 47% of the world seed market. However, small scale seed producers that tend to produce a range of diverse and open pollinated (OP) seed varieties would struggle to pay for the registration and testing of all varieties. So the small diverse businesses would be left to struggle as the large businesses reap the benefit and gain more control. Already we can see why the European Parliament rejected the proposal almost unanimously.

Tip of an iceberg

This is only the tip of a very large iceberg. Because smaller scale seed producers will struggle to register all of their varieties, in particular the less commercial OP varieties, we could see a loss in our plant genetic diversity. This is not something we want, mainly because we need plants that can adapt over time to the threats of climate change and disease. Even now, it’s not looking good. Globally we currently use over 150 plant species for food – but just 12 of these plant species take up three quarters of the total use. Biodiversity is already very low within agriculture – if we lower it any more there could be serious threats to our food security.

With the proposed regulation, if passed, looking to inflict damage on plant diversity, it is worth mentioning the importance of OP varieties in particular. OP varieties pollinate naturally, so the plants are subject to natural selection and they are liable to genetic drift (which is an attractive quality for many growers as you can save seeds and adapt them to your microclimate). Whilst F1 hybrids are useful to provide a uniform crop, they do not provide a means of adapting a plant to your own specific growing conditions.

Here at the Soil Association we are working hard to ensure we keep our seed heritage. Behind the scenes we are working closely with a focus group that includes Defra (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs), and various other NGOs and seed businesses, so we are ready for action should anything go wrong in Brussels.

The proposed regulation has also inspired a Soil Association campaign to protect our plant diversity. The Save Our Seeds campaign is aiming to encourage us all to improve our plant genetic diversity. The UN have noticed a 75% decline in world crop diversity over the 20th century and it is predicted that a third of the diversity we have today will be lost by 2050, unless we do something about the situation – and we need to act quickly.

To combat this we urge everyone to buy open pollinated seed, and begin saving seed and turning your garden, allotment, or even window box into a part of the living gene bank of the world. Saving seed will enhance plant diversity and it could create a plant variety that is very well adapted to the climatic changes of the future.

Open Source Seed Initiative (OSSI)

The OSSI group in the USA includes scientists, citizens, plant breeders, farmers, seed companies, and gardeners. OSSI has its origins in both the open source software movement and in the realisation among plant breeders and social scientists that continued restrictions on seed may hinder our ability to improve our crops and provide access to genetic resources.

Starting in 2011, open source seed advocates began meeting to chart a course for developing and releasing open source seeds. A free seed pledge was developed by the OSSI group and printed on seed packets. The pledge describes that the seed can be freely used, sold, bred, and shared, but not legally restricted. The first release of their open source seeds – 36 varieties of 14 different crops – took place on 17th April 2014 on the University of Wisconsin-Madison campus, and their first seed packets were due to be mailed to people around the country in May.

The most distinguishing aspect of OSSI is the idea that genetic resources – in the form of seeds – are going to be set aside for humanity to use in any way it sees fit. These genetic resources cannot be patented or otherwise legally protected, making them essentially available in perpetuity in a protected commons. If they were just in a regular commons, people could obtain them and protect them, but in this commons they must remain free. Hence the phrase Free the Seed!

Information above is from OSSI’s website: www.opensourceseedinitiative.org
Running your own Seed Swap
by Ziggy Woodward

Ziggy at the 2012 seed swap with Keith Bickmore

I was inspired to start a seed swap event in Southampton after visiting the very well run and successful one in Brighton – Seedy Sunday – several years ago.

So why run a seed swap? Well, in the words of Seedy Sunday’s organisers, “to protect biodiversity and protest against the increasing control of the seed supply by a handful of large companies...” plus of course the ever tightening regulations from the European Commission: COM (2013) 262 final 2013/0137 (COD) – see www.realseeds.co.uk/seedlaw2.html for more information, and also Joe Croisdale’s article on EU seed regulations on page 25 of this issue.

Apart from all that ‘doom’, running seed swaps (particularly if you are organised about it!) is a lot of fun!

Other reasons for running seed swaps include:
- Swapped seeds are FREE
- They are likely to be well-suited to your local growing conditions
- They often come with first-hand advice on how to grow them
- Community Seed Swaps are great places for meeting local people with a shared interest in growing food and protecting the environment
- Seed Swaps can become exchanges for all sorts of useful local knowledge, as well as seeds

But you do need to put some planning in if you want your event to run smoothly. So here are the key ingredients for a good swap!

Organisers Whilst it is possible for one person to organise a seed swap, it’s not easy, and the more the merrier! Put up notices where you think interested people might see them (libraries, food co-ops, garden centres etc). Make use of the local allotments network and of course social media.

Seeds These of course should come first! My first seed swap in 2006 was run on blind luck and enthusiasm – I got loads of seeds from the lovely people at Hampshire Potato Day which was amazing ... but ideally give seed collectors advance notice, ie at the end of summer, to start collecting and preparing seeds. The seeds should come from local gardeners and growers who grow open-pollinated varieties of vegetable. If you decide you want to be all-organic, you will need to choose organic growers. Remind them to label their seeds clearly. The more seed collectors you have, the better. You may find you have more customers for seed than you have collectors, especially at first.

Talk to other Seed Swaps around the country for advice and guidance. They may even have seeds they can let you have. The Heritage Seed Library are also very helpful and will send information and some seeds – these of course cannot be sold, only exchanged for a donation. They ask that after your event you pass the seeds to another swap, or return them. It’s nice if you send them a donation to help with their good work (follow the ‘Organic Heritage’ link on the Garden Organic website www.gardenorganic.org.uk).

Venue As small or as large as you like – this will depend on how many people you can expect, and on your budget. Booking well in advance is advisable and should be one of the first things you do once you have got your group of organisers together, and established that you have enough people who can supply seed.

Publicity Seed swaps are amazing but if you don’t publicise no one will turn up! This sounds like an afterthought, but it’s essential. If no one turns up on the day, you won’t have a seed swap. And publicity can’t be left to the last minute – it has to be planned and sustained. Use every means available to let people know what a seed swap is, and when and where yours is taking place.

The first seed swap I helped to organise was a bit of a ‘fly by the seat of your pants’ affair! Together with a couple of friends we knocked together a website, flyers, posters, charmed stallholders from similar events along, nattered on the radio, had a mention in the local newspaper, and told as many people as we could who would sit still long enough.

Other lessons learnt included finding out about local parking and public transport, particularly the former. Stallholders will need to know where they can park their vehicles. If your venue has parking on-site, even better! It is a good idea, if you are going to charge stallholders a fee, to take a deposit and send clearly worded information, directions, and your contact number to save tears and confusion on the day. Taking a deposit means that if they don’t show up on the day you are not too out of pocket. Whether you charge a door entry is up to you. This depends on how much your costs are and if you want to raise funds for the next year’s event (or for the Heritage Seed Library).
Refreshments If you can get the use of a kitchen at your venue, leap at the chance. If people can have a cuppa and a bite to eat they are more likely to stay longer. Tea, coffee, bickies, home made cakes and buns, soup, bread, etc.

Raffle/tombola Another way of raising a bit of extra cash. It can be as simple or complex as you like – starting with asking stallholders to donate something small helps. This year we were given a compost bin by the local council recycling people as a prize!

Volunteers/helpers Your most valuable asset (next to the seeds!). Ideally lots, who know what to do and are as enthusiastic about it as you are.

Signage People have to know on the day where it is. You may not be able to put signs on lamp posts but you can put a sign on a bike (a friend’s or yours for example) and chain it up nearby. You will also find signage in the venue useful for pointing the way to the seed swap table, the loos, talks, film showings etc.

Seed table This can be loosely organised or run as a very tight ship, whichever. I like my seeds in boxes with categories A-Z. However, in a very short amount of time there can be disarray! You will need at least another couple of people there to help sort donations (say into smaller envelopes) and answer questions from newbies. Alas I have had seeds arrive in a very sorry state (the worst was a packet of beans covered in a sticky mess of pet hair!). Or damp and in disintegrating envelopes. Smile and accept graciously, making a note that later in the year you will need to hold a ‘how to save seeds for a swap’ workshop!

Talks and film showings can really add value to the event, though detract from seed swapping – there are often local people involved in all sorts of campaigns from composting, gardening for wildlife, urban foraging etc. I can recommend the following films to show: www.seedsoffreedom.info Seeds of Freedom www.permaculturenews.org/shop/dvd/seeds-seeds-blong-yumi Our Seeds/ Seeds Blong Yumi There are also little gems on YouTube which are worth screening.

Website With thanks to more friends we now have a website www.seedswapsouthampton.wordpress.com and also a presence on Facebook and Twitter. This year about 300 people attended, next year hopefully many more!

Postscript So, at the time of writing, it’s still OK to save seeds … for now at least. I hear there is a campaign to stop these draconian proposals becoming law – co-ordinated by Garden Organic and the Heritage Seed Library.

All the information mentioned in this article has been extensively drawn from Seedy Sunday’s website www.seedysunday.org/index.aspx and also Real Seeds www.realseeds.co.uk/seedlaw2.html You may also be interested in this organisation www.saveourseeds.org/en.html – who are campaigning against GMOs and restrictive legislation, whilst promoting sustainable agriculture and food sovereignty.

Reading Seedswap by Josie Jeffery & Alan Phillips (Ivy Press 2012, ISBN: 978-1908005564). How to start from the basics, plus starting local seed saving circles, plus DIY guidelines on designing your own seed bank. Add an invaluable directory of the best seeds to save (and swap) and you’re all set to start a growing revolution.


Both available from independent bookshops or from Hive www.hive.co.uk which is a nicer ‘shop locally online’ alternative to Amazon (eg: here’s a Hive link that supports the bookshop co-op in Southampton where I volunteer www.hive.co.uk/shop/portswood/october-books).

Growing the growers Bursaries to help students are available from VON in approved cases.

Contact David Graham info@veganorganic.net or ring 0161 860 4869 for more information.
Planting the seeds of social, economic and political change
by David Graham

Is it really almost 20 years since VON was launched to fundamentally change how we live?

So how do we begin to change those structures of the state within which we are contained, controlled and neutralised by the police, the courts and bureaucracy? Direct non-violent actions and protests are necessary, but nevertheless are insufficient to bring about fundamental changes. We have the will to make change happen but often feel powerless when our efforts are frustrated and misrepresented. Many of us have been involved with different levels of confrontation and demonstrations for a long time. This must continue – but where does VON fit into this?

VON was founded because we wanted to explore non-violent social change with a focus on cruelty free farming, for central to every aspect of society is the production of food.

The massive subsidies that are paid to farmers arise from the fear of famine, residual anxiety from food rationing during the Second World War, and a host of other factors such as the powerful dairy and animals for food lobby. We feel safe when we are free from food shortages. Whatever some farmers have done to pollute the soil and the rivers, and destroy the habitat, flora and fauna, it is tolerated because of the fear of hunger. This is also true of animal abuse in farming, and the fact is that most of our land is used to grow food for animals.

Although our main thrust is to organise a movement to educate people away from their dependence on animal slaughter, we are acutely aware of the social, economic and political awareness that has to accompany this aim. Progress is slow but sure. How can it be otherwise when you consider the forces that perpetuate mainstream culture?

If climate change, and the means to combat this, is to be taken seriously then how we grow our food must be a priority. Only one vegan organic farm, Iain Tolhurst’s (no doubt respected by a section of the farming community), was known to VON in 1996. VON has broadcast far and wide this successful vegan (stockfree organic) method. We have used this as a practical model that would fulfil many of the measures required to avert the catastrophe of climate change cited in reports such as Livestock's Long Shadow, the disappointing EU’s 2030 climate and energy plan, and others that continue to gather dust or are not acted upon.

VON now lists about 100 stockfree organic farms in Britain and overseas. We do not consider this an insignificant number because they act as catalysts for change; they challenge the embedded system on every humanitarian front, as do our members and supporters.

The industrial and farming revolution did not happen overnight! And we know that two vegan organic products may not undermine consumerism. But last year we marketed one truly vegan organic food – flour from John Berry’s farm in Sussex. And this year we can add truly vegan grown herbs by the Robertson’s on the Isle of Arran.

Yes – we are acutely aware that we need a more cooperative, more cohesive, vegan and green movement. VON will appeal to vegan groups, organisations and those that support our objectives to work together on an agreed project in order to make a stronger educational and personal impact. Social, economic and political change has traditionally and effectively been accomplished by like-minded people coming together to form a movement which has a clear focus and purpose. This is our aim.

Establishing networks across the country
Of course we Mancunians know that what we do today the rest of the world will follow. The challenge is to repeat in other areas the first coming together of six farms and garden centres, mostly in the Manchester area, to publish the North West Stockfree Organic Farming and Growing Network double page newsletter.

Are we – up north – that unique? I doubt it. If you can research what stockfree organic farms there are in your area we would help organise a meeting with them so that the network can expand, and then perhaps another local publication can be set up.

Another important network involves our supporters and members offering help, forming a group, working with others, to help organise a stall at their local green/vegan event. At present VON’s events organiser, Daniel, is travelling from Manchester (with supporters) to fairs that are 3-4 hours away. Whilst it is important to have a VON presence, to hand out leaflets and recruit new members, the time involved is a strain on the organisers and VON’s resources. We would be more than happy to meet with you and provide material for a stall. Please let us know if you can help.

In a world where many feel powerless and compromised, vegans demonstrate that a truly life-transforming decision can still be made. We can control what we put into our
bodies so that, as far as possible, it does not involve killing. This is life and health enhancing, both physically and psychologically. It goes some way towards freeing land to feed the people. Vegans are working together for a world where all life is free from exploitation, war and poverty. We will continue, with your help, to plant the seeds that will bring about this change.

The Vegan Fair at Preston last December was a Vegan, Green, Fairtrade and Human Rights Fair. In order to embrace these concepts we produced a leaflet with wording similar to that shown in the panel below.

This led to a lively discussion, and your feedback would be welcome ...

### VON PRINCIPLES

**Article 3 of the Declaration of Human Rights states:**
Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

**Article 4**
No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.

**Article 5**
No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

The Vegan Organic Network unambiguously embraces this declaration in relation to people and animals. Join us in our work promoting peace, justice, stockfree vegan organic farming and growing. Join us in our rejection of war and cruelty.

These are the six farms and garden centres, mostly in the Manchester area, that make up the North West Stockfree Organic Farming and Growing Network

- **Hulme Community Garden Centre**
  A community led inner-city horticultural project. Open day on 19th July with a sale of vegan organic produce contributed by local growers.
  [www.hulgardencentre.org.uk](http://www.hulgardencentre.org.uk)

- **The Kindling Trust**
  Working to create more sustainable food systems.
  [www.kindling.org.uk](http://www.kindling.org.uk)

- **Growing with Grace (near Lancaster)**
  Provides local communities with fresh, locally grown stockfree organic foods – open day on 19th July, see page 9.
  [www.growingwithgrace.org.uk](http://www.growingwithgrace.org.uk)

- **Fir Tree Community Growers**
  Market gardeners, see photos and info page 24.
  [www.facebook.com/FirTreeCommunityGrowersCropshare](http://www.facebook.com/FirTreeCommunityGrowersCropshare)

- **Debdale Eco Centre**
  Non profit organisation enabling personal growth and social change through horticulture.
  [www.debdale-ecocentre.org.uk](http://www.debdale-ecocentre.org.uk)

- **Moss Brook Growers**
  Workers’ co-op of organic veg growers.
  [www.mossbrookgrowers.co.uk](http://www.mossbrookgrowers.co.uk)

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Jakobus Langerhorst (1945-2013)

Jakobus Langerhorst, who died in October 2013 after a short illness, was a well-known figure in Austrian vegan organic (bio-vegan) farming. He and his wife Margarete (who survives him) ran a small scale vegan permaculture farm in Austria, where they welcomed many visitors from around the world.

Jakobus published a book *Mischkultur und naturgemäße Bodenpflege*, which summarised his knowledge and experience and discussed his ‘mixed culture’ approach, soil improvement, crop diversity, compost making, and sustainable fertility.

An appreciation of Jakobus by Bernhard Gruber (written in German) can be seen here: [www.permanorikum.wordpress.com/2013/11/10/jakobus_langerhorst](http://www.permanorikum.wordpress.com/2013/11/10/jakobus_langerhorst)

“Jakobus Langerhorst was a pioneer of organic farming, and a man who lived according to the ethics of permaculture: care for the earth, caring for people, fair share and limit your growth.”

This photo shows Jakobus (far right) with Margarete and well-known permaculturist Joe Polaischer, who in 1988 established the Rainbow Valley Farm in New Zealand.

Both photos here are courtesy of Bernhard Gruber at [www.permakultur.biz](http://www.permakultur.biz)
Using water as an overnight temperature moderator to improve plant growth and germination in greenhouses

by Tony Martin

For many years I’ve used water in containers to help moderate the temperature of cold frames, greenhouses and conservatories – soaking up the excess heat of the day and releasing it at night to help keep tender seedlings from getting too hot/cold, and to speed up germination. I have used whatever containers are to hand, ranging from hundreds of little 0.25 litre glass juice bottles to 200 litre barrels.

The question
The rate of heat energy gained or lost by an object is related to its surface area and volume (amongst other things). I wanted to know if there is an optimal size of container for overnight temperature moderation, rather than using an ad hoc mix of sizes.

Testing time
I set up an indoors experiment at my home in Wales, using the sorts of containers that most people will be able to pick up for free or very cheap, filled with my leftover warm bath water (why waste it?). I used the following five sizes of plastic containers: 0.25 litre juice bottle; 0.5 litre pop bottle; 2 litre pop bottle; 5 litre vinegar container and a 25 litre water container.

The containers were shielded from draughts, other than the naturally produced convection currents, and I attempted to keep the ambient temperature stable. I then set a timer and measured the temperatures in each bottle for the next ten hours [Note 1] and placed the data in a spreadsheet.

Results
Using this data I produced a graph (see next page) showing time in minutes against temperature of the water (°C).

From this graph I was able to create the following table which shows the time in hours it takes for the different sized containers to give up 50% and 90% of their available heat energy. As you can see, the smallest bottle (0.25 litres) gave up about half of its heat in just over half an hour, whereas the 25 litre one took nine hours.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Energy released</th>
<th>0.25 litres</th>
<th>0.5 litres</th>
<th>2 litres</th>
<th>5 litres</th>
<th>25 litres</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>50%</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90%</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>14.0 *</td>
<td>16.7 *</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Times in hours (* estimated values)

Calculating the quantity of water needed
With the aid of a calculator from the internet [Note 3] we can work out the power needed to keep a greenhouse warm for different conditions. Using an example of an 8ft x 6ft x 9ft high [2.4 x 1.8 x 2.7 metres] glass-covered greenhouse, we would need 530 litres of water [Note 4]. Adding a layer of bubble wrap to the inside of the greenhouse would approximately halve the energy needs.

Conclusions
Based on an 11 hour night [Note 5], I believe that the 2 and 5 litres bottles with their respective 90% energy release times of around 10 and 14 hours would give me the best results.

If however I was trying to moderate the temperatures over several days to cover a ‘cold snap’ then 25 litre or larger containers would be preferable.

The smaller 0.25 litre (3.8 hours) and 0.5 litre (6.3 hours) would likely have run out of useful amounts of heat long before daylight. Although they would help stabilise the temperature, especially early on, they would leave the plants vulnerable in the early hours of the morning.

Whilst every situation will vary greatly [Note 6], the use of any thermal mass (water or otherwise) will help reduce the risks to plants that are caused by wide variations in temperature from night to day and back again.

Further experimentation needed
Whilst this test has given some useful data, a full scale experiment that logs temperatures over a period of days or weeks is needed.

The effects of positioning the water, plants, the quantity of water, estimates of additional thermal mass, the use of solar powered fans etc, need to be investigated to see how well theory matches reality and what the optimum set-up is.

From previous experience, a solar powered fan drawing heat from the apex of the greenhouse down to containers at ground level is, I believe, likely to be part of the optimum solution. I would love to hear any experiences people have had with similar systems.

Assumptions and calculations
There are many varied conditions: length of night, minimum and maximum tolerable plant temperatures, space, rate of heat loss, initial temperatures, position and quantity of containers, etc.

For example, the approximate length of night on different months [Note 2] in the UK is 1st March 13 hours, 1st April 11 hours, 1st May 9 hours. Minimum temperature for seedlings: carrots 5°C, peppers 13°C.
Notes

1. The temperatures of the bottles were slightly different at the start, possibly due to evaporation from the surfaces from the time taken to fill the containers to the time of the first measurements. I used two identical digital thermometers which had an internal and an external thermometer on a lead, that displayed to 0.1 °C and were matching to within 0.1 °C of each other at the temperatures used.

2. Sunrise and sunset times calculator: www.timeanddate.com/astronomy
   (Type a city into the 'Sun' panel, click Go and then select a month.)

3. Greenhouse power calculator: www.hartley-botanic.co.uk/greenhouse-power-calculator

4. Example of an 8ft x 6ft x 9ft high greenhouse with 6ft eaves (291 sq ft) and standard glass. With minimum external 0°C, minimum internal 5°C and a water temperature change of 15 °C it needs 844 watts (using calculator in Note 3) .

   Energy required in joules to heat the greenhouse = watts x the number of seconds (11 hours = 39600 seconds). That gives us 844 x 39600 = 33 megajoules or around 9.3 kWh.

   The amount of energy stored by water in joules equals mass (in kilograms) x temperature difference (°C) x 4200 (specific heat capacity of water).

   So to find the amount of water we need (assuming say a 15°C overnight drop of water temperatures): 33,000,000 = mass of water x 15 x 4200. Rearrange to find the mass of water: 33,000,000/63,000 = 530kg = 530 litres.

   The rate of heat released by the water will initially be high and then drop as the water cools. Also the external temperature will drop over time so I have used the average power.

5. 11 hours for London on April 1st.

6. The testing of the bottles was done in a relatively fixed temperature environment. In a greenhouse the ambient temperature would vary more, being raised due to the heat released by all the water containers and lowered depending on the night time weather conditions. I have ignored the thermal mass of plants and racking in the greenhouse, but in real life these would contribute some heat storage capacity.

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11-12cm: £8.50 for 1 / £50 for 10 / £365 for 100
13-14cm: £9.50 for 1 / £60 for 10 / £465 for 100
15-16cm: £11 for 1 / £80 for 10 / £620 for 100
17-18cm: £13 for 1

Tony Martin: 01639 845144 or 07500 956022
tony@veronicathecow.co.uk

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New date for Permaculture Design Course in South Wales

The full Permaculture Design Course, due to be held at Tony’s 5½ acre site near Swansea this July, has been postponed to 30th May - 13th June 2015, giving Tony more time to improve visitor facilities and do work on his projects. The cool and very damp spring made progress slow, and more than a little frustrating!

Course details at www.designedvisions.com/gw.html

See Tony’s article in GGI 32 (pages 12-13): A forest garden on a South Wales hillside
I’m interested in gardening vegan organically. Can you recommend a book?

Growing Green: Organic Techniques for a Sustainable Future by Jenny Hall & Iain Tolhurst (ISBN: 0955222516). This book is really for farmers rather than gardeners, but has some very useful and current information. As far as we’re aware it’s the only vegan organic book in print at the moment (more details page 5).


Veganic Gardening by Kenneth Dalziel O’Brien (ISBN: 0722512082). This book is aimed at gardeners and allotment holders and was published in the 1980s, but is now out of print. You can find second hand copies for sale online. It’s a bit dated, but might be worth buying. Note that the “QR compost activator” mentioned in this book contains honey, which isn’t vegan.

Both books assume that you’re growing in the UK (or areas with a similar climate).

Where can I buy vegan organic compost?

The VeGro range is vegan organic, peat-free and based on coir: www.fertilefibre.com/growing-media/vegro – try a Google search to find a mail-order stockist. Tamar Organics www.tamar.co.uk sell the VeGro multipurpose compost.

Jenny Hall of Fir Tree Community Growers personally uses West Riding Organic’s Vegan Potting and Container for seedlings: www.westridingorganics.co.uk

You can buy dried, compressed coir blocks – you soak them in water and they expand enormously in size. This is a good way to save on postage since you’re not shipping water, which also makes the shipping more environmental. They are pure coir and don’t have any nutrients of any significance, so you may want to mix them with something, eg liquid seaweed feed. In the UK you can even buy a fair trade one by Traidcraft – see www.tinyurl.com/33compost or see if your fair trade or world shop sells these Tradeaid blocks. If you want to buy larger amounts of dried compressed coir at much lower price, try Ebay.

Compost bags available from garden centres and hardware shops generally can’t be verified as being vegan. Avoid any that are peat-based since harvesting peat causes a great deal of environmental damage. Quite often the peat-free ones are based on composted wood/bark mixed in with composted grass clippings. The wood gives it good structure, and the grass adds nutrients. It’s important that the woody part is well composted, otherwise it can temporarily decrease the availability of nitrogen to plants. Beware that many have added animal-based fertilisers, so read the contents carefully and, if the contents are vague about what it contains, it’s best to avoid it.

Another source is compost made by local councils. They often make compost from parkland grass clippings and hedge trimmings, and sell it at recycling centres in bags. If you enquire at your local council, you may find that you can buy it in bulk. Check on the packaging to make sure that animal by-products haven't been used.

Is putting worm casting in my compost vegan organic?

Worm casting, if you collect it from your lawn, is generally considered to be fine by vegans – there's no exploitation of worms involved. Avoid buying worm casting since you wouldn't know if there was any exploitation.

I have been unable to find spent mushroom compost that does not contain horse or other manure. Is vermiculite or perlite acceptable?

As far as we know, both vermiculite and perlite are vegan since they are minerals that are mined. From the organic point of view, they are not chemically synthesised so are considered to be organic. Some people in the organic movement try to avoid using mined substances since they are non-renewable, might have been transported thousands of miles, and also mining can cause ecological damage.

Unlike spent mushroom compost, neither of them provide nutrition (eg nitrogen, potassium and phosphorus) to plants, but they are good for water retention and help to prevent soil compaction.

I’ve been growing veg in my garden pretty much vegan organically for quite a few years. Last year I had a huge problem with rats – they dug up and ate broad bean seeds, peas and French beans. Wherever I put the pots the rats got to them. I tried planting directly into the garden, they ate those! I managed to rescue a few plants, which flowered and set, but the rats opened the pods and ate the beans before I got to them.

They also really liked my young emerging potatoes, so my crop was dismal. We tried to grow in Sepp Holzer hugelkultur style, but the rats found these to be wonderful homes. Help!

Any suggestions on how to protect the crops from our resident rats? I read about soaking seeds in paraffin to deter them, but am rather worried about the effect on the soil that the seed is planted in.

I’ve never heard of rats eating planted bean and pea seeds before, although I guess it’s possible. The usual culprits...
are mice.

I always plant runner and French bean seeds indoors, in compost in toilet roll inner card tubes (rather than using plastic modules). This gives them a better chance of survival against slugs, although it would also protect them from rodents in the early stages. You plant them out when they are around 20 cms tall.

This isn't practical for peas since you plant many more, but some people plant them in a section of old guttering (ie a semi-circular bit – like a pipe cut in half lengthwise). They put compost in and sow the peas, and put them somewhere where the mice can't get to, eg indoors.

When they've germinated and are ready to plant out, you make a shallow trench in the soil, put the guttering on it, and swivel the guttering carefully so that the seeds and compost come out together and go in the trench.

I've also never heard of rats eating the seeds from the pods. Are you sure it isn't birds doing this? If so you can put pea and bean netting up to protect against birds.

There are rats in my garden, but they've never caused any damage to crops. They try to get in the plastic compost bins, but I've put some fine metal mesh under them to stop them from burrowing in.

Where to get stockfree organic fruit and veg

Unless you grow your own, or are lucky enough to live near a vegan organic box scheme or producer, this is likely to be a problem. We do need more vegan organic growers – but there may be some, like Carl Rosato of Woodleaf Farm (see article pages 22-24), who have been growing vegan organically but never knew it!

It would be worth asking any local organic growers about their growing methods (if they are not part of a mixed farm which keeps animals).

If not completely vegan organic, some may not be using very much in the way of animal products, and it could be easy for them to become stockfree. More on stockfree organics at www.stockfreeorganic.net

VEGAN ORGANIC PROJECTS IN SOUTH WALES

Brynderwen Vegan Community (formed in 2002), on the outskirts of Swansea, has been a bit inactive in recent years but we're now looking at the possibility of trying to develop it as some sort of Vegan Organic Network type project – and to twin it with Tony Martin's 5½ acre forest garden some 15 miles north. Tony has the land (and is planning to run permaculture and other courses, see p.31) but not very much extra accommodation, aside from camping. At Brynderwen we have accommodation (large 4-bedroom house and double garage) but much less land, an acre or so. It's mostly steep but is south facing and does have potential, although a lot of work needs to be done clearing the land (Japanese knotweed, and a collapsed garden wall). If anyone's interested in knowing more, and maybe visiting, getting involved, or moving to the area, ring Malcolm on 01792 792442 or email malcolm@planetwave.net

BUNGALOW FOR RENT IN SUSSEX

Detached 2-bed bungalow in Peacehaven, Sussex. Lounge, kitchen, bathroom (new shower), gas central heating, ample off-road parking at front of property, £1,000 pcm. Rear garden with walls and paths, 11x9m grass area, not overlooked. Sea at end of road (driftwood and seaweed). Does get windy! Alyson Beaumont (VON member) tel: 07805 663290.

New Leaves

Newsletter of the Movement for Compassionate Living

Full information available from the Movement for Compassionate Living: Ireene-Sointu, MCL, 105 Cyfyng Road, Swansea SA9 2BT. Please send SAE and extra stamp for leaflets.

The well researched booklet Abundant Living in the Coming Age of the Tree (£2.00 + 35p postage) is available from MCL c/o Veggies, Sumac Centre, 245 Gladstone Street, Nottingham NG7 6HX.

www.MCLveganway.org.uk

ANIMAL AID

www.animalaid.org.uk

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\ Multi-award winning vegan cheese and meat free alternatives /
Discussions from VON’s Facebook group
www.facebook.com/groups/veganorganicnetwork

NB: The links in this panel are only likely to work if you’re a Facebook member

- **Animal manure – yes, no, maybe**
  A vegan farming student asked the group if you can still call it a vegan farm if animals are around, living pleasantly and not being exploited – but with their manure being used on the fields.
  
  Cue several responses, with some people considering this a mite tricky. The argument against is that it’s necessary to demonstrate that plant-based agriculture is possible. But some felt there could be compromise, and that it might come down to individual agendas and beliefs.
  
  See discussion at www.tinyurl.com/33fbk-1

- **Humane ways to repel slugs?**
  Graham Burnett was one who responded to this query: “There are loads of ‘solutions’ to the ‘problem’ of slugs, some are effective some of the time in some circumstances, then after a while they don’t work any more. Slugs are like people, they learn, and find ways around our contrivances! Or so it seems.
  
  As a permaculture teacher I’m often asked the question ‘what is the permaculture answer to slugs?’ To which I respond: ‘What is the question the slugs were asking you?’ – in other words, if one’s system is unbalanced to the degree that slugs have become a ‘pest’, how can you bring that system back into balance? Which is partly about understanding the lifecycle and behaviour of slugs, and figuring out effective ways of leveraging their systems.
  
  Tolly of Tolhurst Organics favours long term living soil covers, including green manures. I asked him: ‘Don’t these provide perfect habitats for slug populations?’. He said: ‘Yes, for the first year or so. Then ground beetle populations build up that keep the slugs in check.’
  
  So I guess it’s a question of holding your nerve for a year or so. It’s an approach I’m trying on my allotment, I’ll try and blog my reports of how things get on.”
  
  See discussion at www.tinyurl.com/33fbk-212

- **Worms and vermiculture (worm farming)**
  “Keeping vermicomposting bins is awesome, and in my opinion, it’s possible to do it in a way consistent with the vegan ethic” was put forward, but Rob Jackson objected: “If worms are bought and sold or are captive then I don’t think we can call that vegan … wormeries and worm compost are not permissible under the Stockfree Organic Standards.”
  
  The debate continued for some time. A veganic farmer can keep and manage worms (and bees) it was argued, and it’s not possible to produce plants without relying on animal inputs. Rob again: “No one’s saying that all wild animals should be banned from the land (would be impossible anyway) … veganism isn’t exactly about divorcing ourselves from animals per se, it’s about ending their exploitation.”
  
  See discussion at www.tinyurl.com/33fbk-111

VON on Facebook

by Malcolm Horne

I’ve come across quite a number of people who steer well clear of Facebook. Indeed, I was one of them until a couple of years ago. I was already closely involved with my local vegan group in Swansea and it became more and more inconvenient not to be on Facebook, as that was where discussions were taking place and events advertised.

So I reluctantly dipped my toes into Facebook’s murky waters. I found out that you don’t have to participate in all the ‘friends’ stuff, or post up minutiae about your life – which is precisely what was putting me off. You can, if you choose, use Facebook exclusively to look at specific groups/topics you’re interested in. You can merely read and not participate, but it can also be stimulating to exchange views and ideas with others of like mind.

VON’s Facebook group (which was set up around five years ago) currently has around 3,500 members. That number is a bit misleading because many people join a multitude of Facebook groups and then only occasionally return to look at them. In VON’s case, partly because ‘Vegan Organic Network’ doesn’t spell out growing/farming (and people don’t always read the small print), it does mean that less than relevant posts do sometimes crop up, some of which are deleted by Rob or Amanda, or others who administer the group.

From the trivial to the informative

The posts and comments (on this and most other groups) can be quite a jumble, from the tedious to the absorbing and from the trivial to the informative. There are new posts or comments on VON’s Facebook group pretty much every day, and the panel on the left features just a few of the topics that have been discussed recently. One thing the group is really good for is if anyone has any growing/farming questions, or problems that others may be able to answer. You will quite likely get a response or three very quickly! As time goes on, all the posts (even the interesting ones) disappear down the page and, like old newspapers, are largely forgotten about – so it’s a good idea to visit the group frequently.

Other topics/dilemmas that have come up recently have included problems in a cool, damp spring with germination rates, a vegan solution to dealing with a bare patch on your lawn, how to keep cats out of your herb garden, and how useful green grass clippings soaked in water might be as a good nitrogen source for the soil (green manures, compost and mulches may be better). And then a patchwork of everything from climate change to GMOs to permaculture to allotments to vegan ethics – and events/news/reviews/videos of interest.

There are more vegan groups on Facebook than you could possibly keep up with. Many local vegan groups have a Facebook presence nowadays, and there are a multitude of other more general groups such as Veganism Is The Future, Vegan Feminists, Vegan Cartoons, Vegan Cakery, Vegan Dog Nutrition, and so on and so on. And a million other groups on a million other subjects.

Where does it all take us? A friend of mine commented...
perceptively: “I don’t know what it is about Facebook that in some ways makes us more connected, but in others makes sure we never connect.” She was referring to the tendency for some people to interact with others online rather than face to face. And yet – moderation in all things! The internet, and Facebook in particular, is also a boon for those vegans who have little opportunity to meet others in the flesh.

John Davis, for many years manager of the International Vegetarian Union, attributes much of the recent growth in veganism to the internet: “This vast increase in easily available information does appear to have raised awareness of both a completely plant-food diet, and (ethical) veganism as an ideal, and a major increase in people at various points on the journey.” (Vegan Views interview, 2012)

To view Facebook groups you do have to first join Facebook. It is simple enough, and free. There are also Facebook ‘pages’ which you should be able to view without having to join – these are less of a free-for-all as only the people who run the pages can create new topics (though anyone can respond with comments). They are often used to promote organisations or projects, and VON has one such page www.facebook.com/VeganOrganicNetwork (although it’s currently much less active than the group).

Many of the projects mentioned in this issue of GGI (eg Sadhana Forest, Fir Tree Community Growers, Oakcroft Organic Gardens, Southampton Seed Swap) have Facebook pages that help to promote them. There’s also an Australian-based Vegan Organic Gardening group at www.facebook.com/groups/176862412339363

When I took a look there someone had just asked: “Do any slugs die of old age?”

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To grow or not to grow them

The principal advantage of planting onion sets in the autumn is that your onions are ready to harvest around a month before spring-sown onion sets are. Also, because they are harvested around a month earlier, you can potentially immediately follow them with another crop that would be too late to plant a month later. Sweet corn and winter squash are examples.

For a good yield, onions need moist soil when they are bulking up (onion-speak for when the growth of the bulbs accelerates). With luck this will be provided by rain, but if it’s dry then by watering can or hosepipe. Because overwintering onions bulk up earlier than spring-sown onions, there’s usually less or even no need to water them, depending on how lucky you are with the rain.

The main disadvantage is that the soil is left almost bare over winter – in the UK they are normally planted around September/October whereas spring-sown sets are normally planted around six months later in March/April. Since onions don’t grow much over winter, they only sparsely occupy the soil. That’s six months of minimal soil occupancy where an overwintering green manure could have been planted instead, which would have covered the soil much better, producing much more green growth and also taking up some of the soil nutrients that would otherwise have been washed down into the subsoil. The abundant growth and the absorbed nutrients are beneficial to the compost that the green manure produces – by turning it into the soil, by cutting it down and using it as a mulch, or by composting it in a pile or bin.

Another annoyance is that they are more likely than spring-sown onions to bolt, which means that they produce a flower and run to seed, and although onions which bolt are still usable, the eating quality is impaired.

It’s advisable to only grow them if your soil is poor, increase the separation so that there’s more space between rows, and within a row. I would suggest that if your soil is poor, increase the separation so that there’s an overwintering green manure could be planted, which avoids unproductive bare soil. Harvesting spuds invariably involves quite a bit of digging which loosens the soil – ideal for growing onions. I always add compost just before planting seed potatoes earlier in the year, so there should be a reasonable amount of nutrition and moisture-retentiveness still left in the soil after harvest to be of benefit to the follow-on onions.

Onions prefer loose soil, so if your soil is badly compacted you might want to shallow-dig it to a depth of 10cm/4". With compacted soil, I expect you’ll still get a reasonable crop, so don’t dig if you don’t dig digging. The soil should be reasonably but not especially fertile, so don’t dig if you don’t dig digging. I normally plant the sets where maincrop potatoes were – an ideal rotation I think, since our main crop spuds come out in early September just before the onion sets are planted, which avoids unproductive bare soil. Harvesting spuds invariably involves quite a bit of digging which loosens the soil – ideal for growing onions. I always add compost just before planting seed potatoes earlier in the year, so there should be a reasonable amount of nutrition and moisture-retentiveness still left in the soil after harvest to be of benefit to the follow-on onions.

Onions dislike very acid soil, and they prefer a reasonably sunny spot.

Varieties, planting time, soil preparation, and planting

Both red and white varieties are available. I don’t have enough experience to give advice on varieties, but for whites, Senshyu and Radar are commonly available. For reds, the popular choice is Electric. In the UK the usual advice is to plant them in September or October. Planting in September can be a challenge since they aren’t always available in garden centres in early September.

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Planting distances are a matter of opinion. Most books say something like put them in rows 30cm/12" apart, and separate them within rows by 10cm/4", then they go on to say that wider spacing produces larger onions. I plant them on the square, normally separating them around 15cm/6" between rows, and within a row. I would suggest that if your soil is poor, increase the separation so that there’s
less competition from neighbours for your limited soil nutrients, or you can reduce the spacing a little if your soil is very rich.

If your soil is very loose, it's OK to push them in, but if it isn't, pushing them in can damage them, so instead use a dibber or stick to make a hole, pop them in that, pointy bit upwards, rooty bit downwards, and gently draw in and firm some soil around the sets. The top of the set should be just protruding or only just covered with soil.

Winter hardship

I've found that they cope well with very wet winters – but the soil in our garden doesn't get waterlogged, and from what I've read, I would have been disappointed if it did – they rot in waterlogged soil. A very cold winter has caused us more problems – most sets survived, but many only developed into very small onion bulbs, resulting in a poor yield overall. If only we could predict what the winter is going to be like ...

Problems, problems, problems – and solutions

SMALL BULBS Assuming you didn’t harvest them too early, next time don't let them dry out, especially when they are bulking up (ie when the bulbs start to get noticeably bigger at a much faster rate). I've found by accident that onions always seem to be bigger after a wet spring, which I think is trying to tell me that I should water them more in an average or dry spring. That's easier said than done though. You think the soil is moist, but it may only be the surface that's moist. An infrequent thorough watering is needed rather than little but often watering. The soil needs to be reasonably fertile to get big ones and, especially if your soil isn't very nutrient-rich, don't put them too close together otherwise they'll compete too much for nutrients and water.

BOLTING This was discussed above. Choosing varieties that are resistant to bolting helps or, if available, heat treated sets. If they do bolt, the bulbs stop getting bigger and they are much more likely to rot, so harvest any that bolt and use them first.

WHITE ROT This is a serious fungal disease. Foliage goes yellow and the bulbs rot and are unusable. You'll see a grey-white mould around the base of the bulb. Once you have it you'll have it worse in the years that follow. The fungal spores survive in the soil for a long time, so the only way to eliminate it is to not grow onions for at least 15 and preferably 20 years.

SLUGS AND SNAILS These rarely get mentioned in growers’ guides. I've found that the leaves can host lots of small slugs, but they don't seem to do much damage.

See also the onions photo on page 2, taken by John Curtis in mid April. It shows spring-sown onions (sets planted in mid-March) on the left, and overwintering onions (sets planted in early Oct) on the right. The purpose of the photo is to show that in spite of being set around five or six months earlier, overwintering onions don't actually have that much advantage in terms of growth and, even at this stage, their grown coverage is low.

Favourite tools:
the swan neck hoe
by John Berry

The tool that I would recommend is the swan neck hoe. Unfortunately, as far as I am aware, it is no longer made in large numbers. I brought mine when I lived in Bedfordshire about 20 years ago, and it is still in very good condition.

It is a far better hoe than any other I have used. Swan neck hoes were widely available about 50 years ago but now it's difficult to find one, even second hand. I have looked on the internet but most of the hoes described as swan neck are not like the one I own.

I can remember about that time when farm workers who were doing piece work went to work with these hoes tied to the crossbars of their bikes. This was before the widespread use of chemicals, and they were going to hoe Brussels sprouts which were widely grown in our area. They didn’t use any old hoe but the best, as they got paid by results. I remember my late father using one of these hoes and he always said that the crops grew better afterwards.

Of course hoeing introduced air into the soil, and as air contains about 80% nitrogen this stimulates growth – though I don’t think my father was aware of this. The same effect has been observed using tined weeders in arable crops but unfortunately the soil here in Sussex, where I now live, is so heavy that these weeders are ineffective.

The only place that I could find that sells a similar hoe in the UK is the Greenhouse Warehouse but that appears to have a smaller blade. These hoes are more widely available in America, where they are known as half moon hoes.

I use a garden fork to dig out the docks in the fields, and only the best quality tools are up to the job. The cheap forks that are available today would only last a week on this heavy soil. Tools like the lazy dog would be useless here unless there has been plenty of rain to soften the soil, and then it would be just as easy to pull the weeds up by hand.

It is getting harder to buy decent garden tools, and everything seems to be down to price these days. Garden forks seem to be welded together instead of forged, as they were made traditionally, and are not as strong. I also suspect that is the same with the spades and other garden tools. That is what you seem to get in this throwaway age – it seems that when it breaks you throw it away and buy another, which is not very environmentally friendly.
How to prune an apple tree
by Chloe Ward

Fruit tree pruning is one of those things that can cause fear in an otherwise confident gardener. All too often people lament that on opening the pruning books they see trees which are ‘perfect’. These perfect trees are covered with little red lines showing where to cut – but what if your own tree isn’t ‘perfect’? What then? How do you know where to cut? Or when?

One of my winter occupations is visiting people in their back gardens and teaching them how to prune their imperfect trees. It’s very rewarding, because you don’t need to be an expert to prune an apple tree – ordinary mortals can learn to do it! For example, do we want to help the tree to grow more, or to limit its size, or do we want to encourage more fruit buds?

One important pruning principle is the difference between winter and summer pruning. In winter, most of the tree’s food store is in its roots. When we remove branches it reduces the size of the tree (above ground) compared to the stored energy (below ground). Therefore the stored energy which would have been used to grow leaves is now going spare, and so a winter-pruned tree will often put on a rush of growth using this excess energy.

However, when we prune in summer, the removal of leaves weakens the tree. Summer pruning (from July to September) also has the effect of increasing the number of fruit buds, as the tree diverts its energy to the next generation by producing seed-containing fruit. Therefore for a strong, growing tree which is not producing many flowers or fruit, summer pruning can be useful.

Learning a few ‘principles of pruning’, such as those explained above, makes pruning more understandable. I’ve tried to address the need for pruning advice for the ordinary person by writing a small book ‘How to Prune an Apple Tree’ which explains the principles, along with how to ‘read’ your tree, and how to decide what your tree needs. Of course, when I sat down to write, it wasn’t an easy task, but I hope the publication adds something a little different to the existing literature, and I hope it will help demystify pruning for some.

Chloe Ward is an environmental gardener based in mid Wales. She has recently completed an MSc in Food Security at Aberystwyth University, and is interested in working towards diversification of agriculture in Wales. The spring of 2014 saw her first commercial rhubarb harvest!

Review by Ziggy Woodward

At last! A manual that demystifies apple and pear tree pruning. As the blurb on the back mentions: “the subject of fruit pruning can cause much confusion, and the technical terminology and perfect-looking trees in the pruning manuals are sometimes demoralising’. This cannot be said for this manual, which I found very empowering.

I now understand what I have done wrong in the past when attempting to ‘rescue’ previously neglected trees, and what all those thin shoots are about after you have cut off a big branch (water shoots!) and what to do about them.

The importance of reading the whole manual start to finish, and not skipping ahead to the chopping bits off trees part straightforward willy nilly, made me smile – being one of those people who, if all else fails, then reads the manual. It really is worth reading cover to cover. It is worth paying attention to the details, and getting the right tools for the job.

My only niggle (and it is a tiny one at that) is that the picture of ‘canker on apple’ is a bit hard to make out. And I am still confused about tip bearing apples, but it’s down to me to get myself educated about that!

However, that aside, I now understand the importance of summer pruning, and indeed why pruning is necessary in summer as well as winter – and the different kinds of pruning, ie formative, maintenance and restorative pruning. Now I feel very justified in splashing out on some decent pruning tools to do my trees justice this year – no more ragged cuts and guesswork! Thanks Chloe!

‘How to Prune an Apple Tree’ (32 pages) is available at £3.60 from www.amazon.co.uk/dp/1496008790 and there is a Kindle edition too. Chloe can alternatively provide a basic printed copy (which will just be on A4 paper, rather than in book form) – send an A4-size SAE with ‘large’ stamp, and £2 in coins, to Chloe Ward c/o CAT, Machynlleth SY20 9AZ, Wales.
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BOOKS ON GROWING

Growing Green - Organic Techniques for a Sustainable Future by Jenny Hall and Iain Tolhurst. £18.99 (or £11.50 if you’re a VON member). This book is published by VON and is an essential reference guide for all private and commercial organic growers, researchers and students. This book introduces the concept of stockfree organic and shows, through case studies, that when growers abandon the use of slaughterhouse by-products and manures they can be rewarded with healthier crops, fewer weeds, pests and diseases. The reader will be taken through each Stockfree Organic Standard step by step and learn how to grow and sell 60 different vegetables with confidence.

Growing Sustainability by Dave of Darlington. New reduced price for VON Members: £4.50. Non-members: £8.50. The book is a compilation of the writings of Dave of Darlington - a treasury of useful information for gardeners and farmers, gleaned from Dave’s long experience and enhanced by well-informed thoughts on the ethics and politics behind farming.


Well Fed Not An Animal Dead by Graham Burnett: £4.00. A guide to the wider implications of veganism, including recipes and cookery guidelines, growing your own vegan organic food, food for free, vegan mothers and infants, and making your own alcohol!

Earth Writings by Graham Burnett: £9.00. If you’re not looking for the solution, you’re part of the problem... get out there and Do It, with help from this book.

Towards an Ecology of the Self by Graham Burnett: £3.00. Explores the role of the ‘personal’ in permaculture design systems.

Happy, Caring, Healthy and Sharing by Graham Burnett: £3.00. An introduction to the green and compassionate way of Ecological Veganism.

BOOKS ON HEALTH

A Living Miracle by Pat Reeves. £9.99. The author was diagnosed with terminal bone cancer over 30 years ago. She fought it with natural remedies, and has since run marathons, triathlons, and is now a champion powerlifter. Vital information for anyone with cancer, or for those wishing to optimise their present health and longevity.

Plant Based Nutrition and Health by Stephen Walsh. £7.95. Up-to-date and well researched, covering the health advantages of the vegan diet, as well as the pitfalls and how to avoid them. Clear advice given on vitamins B12 and D, and on Iron, Calcium, Zinc, Iodine and Selenium. Also, advice on getting omega 3 fatty acids from non-fish foods.

FICTION BOOKS FOR CHILDREN/TEENAGERS

Organic Alice and the Wiggly Jiggly Worm by Jenny Hall. £4.99. For preschool and Key Stage 1 children complementing the National Curriculum. Readers discover an actual organic farm where wildlife characters are as real as the people. The author, Jenny, is a vegan organic farmer.

The books below are written/co-written by Mary Brady of the excellent vegan campaign group Real Food (www.realfood.org.uk).

Under the Stairs by Mary Brady. £4.99. Aimed at teenagers but popular with adults too. Deals with all aspects of animal rights, from veganism and anti-vivisection to zoos. Draws the parallel between abuse of animals and humans, but is also positive, showing a compassionate and cruelty free lifestyle.

The Umpteenth Dalmatian by Mary Brady and Steve Hutton. £2.99. Aimed at young children. The story of a Dalmatian puppy, who is very scared when someone buys her from the farmer, but is later reunited with her mum in this heart-warming book. Beautifully illustrated by Steve Hutton.

Tiger Fruit by Mary Brady and Steve Hutton. £2.50. A tiger lives in the heart of the forest, but at times his world edges onto human territory. What happens when human and animal worlds collide? How can children save a tiger? A sympathetic look at the life of a tiger, this story surprises the reader with the courage of some humans against the inhumanity of others.

COOK BOOKS

Vegan Rustic Cooking Through The Seasons (revised edition with 60 new recipes) by Diana White. £9.95. Published in Summer 2006. 194 pages, and over 160 delicious recipes inspired by the seasonal produce from the vegan organic garden. The author, Diana, and her husband Peter both have an allotment and are active VON members. All of Diana’s royalties for books sold through this VON merchandise catalogue will go to VON, to help fund our important work.

Vegan Feasts by Rose Elliot. £8.99. Rose has been writing vegetarian cookery books since 1967. This book has a good range of recipes, varying from simple to sophisticated.
Spiral-bound so it stays open at the right
page. Wipe-clean pages, making it a highly
practical design for the kitchen. The recipes
include vegan versions of conventional meals
like shepherd’s pie, pasties, pizza, pancakes
and cakes.

The following books are written by Linda
Majzlik and cost £5.99 each. These books have
often been reviewed in, and have been the
source of many of the recipes in Vegan Views
magazine. We stock the full series. A Vegan
Taste of Central America. A Vegan Taste of East
Africa. A Vegan Taste of Eastern Europe. A
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A Vegan Taste of India. A Vegan Taste of Italy. A
Vegan Taste of Mexico. A Vegan Taste of North
Africa. A Vegan Taste of Thailand. A Vegan
Taste of the Caribbean. A Vegan Taste of the
Middle East. Vegan Baking. Vegan Barbecues
and Buffets. Vegan Dinner Parties.

BOOKS BY HARRY MATHER
Looking for a Green World by Harry Mather
(former editor of Vegan Views magazine).
£2.50. Self-published by Harry in 1983, it cov-
ers ecology, animal rights, unemployment, the
green movement, war and disarmament.

Sunshine and Shadow: an Autobiography
by Wilfred Crone. £7.50. Wilfred was a fruitar-
ian and published many articles in Vegan Views
magazine. He also wrote down many
of his stories, and they were discovered after
he died. Harry Mather put this book together
from them.

RAW FOOD BOOKS
Eat More Raw by Steve Charter. £12.95

VON DVDS
Growing Green: Vegan Organic farming
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Growing Green: Grow your Own
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fruit and vegetables using vegan organic
techniques, hosted by Graham Cole. You’ll
pick up hints and tips that you can put into immediate practice, re-
ceiving the benefit of Graham’s many years’
experience.

Growing Green: Growing with Grace
DVD. A behind-the-
scences look at stock-
free farm Growing
with Grace. We follow
a full growing season
of greenhouse grow-
ing. The production
levels of this film are the highest we’ve achieved
so far and this would be great to show to groups or
start a discussion.

See bottom of DVD notice on page 17 for the
cost of DVDs (which are free to VON members).

VON BAGS
Brown. With handles, £3.50, two or more for £3
each. With shoulder straps, £4, two or more for £3.50
each. Strong and hardwearing, fair trade and organic,
made from jute. Unlike a cotton bag, it is self-supporting which can be
handy for bulky items. It’s another way to spread the
environmental stock-free message. Use it on
your shopping trips to avoid all those plastic
bags. Or you can make good use of them in
your garden or on your plot.

WALL CHARTS
£3.25 each. Extremely popular and colourful
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Events Roundup
by Dan Graham

VON’s presence at the Brighton VegFest in March 2014 (see photo back page) was a great success, with a mini gathering of some of the VON farmers. Herbalists Maureen and Keith from the Isle of Arran, and John and Denise from Rufford Farm in Sussex (who produce vegan organic grain) all helped on the VON stall. Maureen and Keith supplied us with nearly 20 varieties of herbs, and people enjoyed a cup of their herb tea when they visited our stand.

We had other help at the stall from local people; a big thank you to Justine, John, Kulbir, Simrit, Harkiran and of course Izaak who travelled down from Manchester with me. Our new pop up banners were unveiled at the event, for which we got many positive comments.

At the Liverpool LABL (Live a Better Life) Vegan Fair in April (photo back page) it was all hands on deck for the VON crew — Cherry, Kerry and Jenny worked hard at our ever popular juice stand, Jane and I helped on the VON info stall, and David gave a talk to about 30 people who wanted to learn about VON and the work we do.

VON were also at Chorlton’s Big Green Happening in April (main photo, back page) and at the Great Yorkshire Vegan Festival in Leeds in May, which was attended by over 2,000 people. Also at Bristol Vegfest the same month, with Simon and Louise on the stand (and Jessica helping on Saturday) — and then at the North West Vegan Festival in Lancaster in June, with Simon and Doug helping me on the VON stand.

Many thanks to all the companies who sponsored or supported VON at the Manchester Vegan Fair and other events (most of the advertisers on other pages also helped us).

ANANDA FOODS is
Derbyshire’s award winning family business. We hand make a delicious range of gelatine free marshmallows and waggon wheels using only the best ingredients and real natural flavourings. At Ananda Foods we pride ourselves on bringing you the very best ‘hard to find’ vegan products. We are distributors for Bellissimo Dairy Free Parmesan & ‘Cheesey’ Sauce Mix and the wonderfully unique Condensed Soya Milk.

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10% off UK Juicers quoting Vegan Organic Network.

Snowdon Vegan Weekend (VON event)
We still have a few spaces left at Pen-Y-Pass YHA, and space for extra stalls. Also people can buy individual meal tickets for Friday and Saturday. For more information visit www.snowdonveganparty.co.uk or give Dan a call on 0161 232 7807.

Snowdon Vegan Weekend
25th-27th July 2014
New World Record Attempt
Vegan Cake Eating on Snowdon Summit
www.snowdonveganparty.co.uk
As the sun shone down the good vibes streamed out, and about 1,600 people joined in the fun at the Chorlton Irish Club, raising £1650 in the process.

At 11am doors opened to over a hundred people who had been queuing to be first in line for a free goody bag containing treats from Koko, Pulsin', Nakd, Vegusto, Gillies and the Vegan Tuck Box.

Visitors were treated to outside activities including rickshaw rides, circus skills, yoga, massage, and whistle making – and a series of short films in the film tent.

Local musicians and poets performed on Des’s solar powered stage, and the Spokes bicycle troupe had people rolling with laughter with their new vegan pedal powered show.

About 40 stalls were outside, including food and refreshments from local companies: the VON café (juices and energy balls), V Revolution, Krunchy Salad, Tea Time Collective, The Kitchen, Cranks Coffee, Veggies, James Catering Van, and Pedal Powered Smoothies. St Best Caribbean Food Van travelled all the way from London, and in the sunshine the vegan ice cream stand did a roaring trade. The free food tasting table included ice cream and cheesecakes from Food Heaven, Moo Free Chocolate, Bute Island Scheese, and Vegusto. Good Hemp and Pulsin’ provided protein powder for the smoothies.

Stalls generously donated some great prizes to the raffle. Inside we had a talks room and about another 40 stalls, which included animal rights campaign groups and a chocolate fountain from Ananda Foods.

The event was featured in the local press and a local film crew filmed the day. You can watch their short video at www.tinyurl.com/33manchester

A big thank you to all the volunteers, who helped in the build-up to the event and supported us on the day. Roll on Manchester Vegan Fair 2015!
CHORLTON (top): VON at the Big Green Happening April 2014 (David Mather far right, with son Theo middle).

BRIGHTON (above left): VON at Brighton’s VegFest March 2014 (Denise & John Berry, with John Curtis between them; Harkiran and Izaak on the left).

LIVERPOOL (above right): Kerry and Cherry on the VON stall at Liverpool Green Fair April 2014.

LONDON (left): Let them eat cake! Gemma Harris held another ‘Cakefest’ April 2014 for the 6th Worldwide Vegan Bake Sale, and again generously sent the donations to VON. “Cakefest was fun, we got £50 for VON and hopefully a bit of publicity.”

Seeking stallholders!
We’re looking for more people to help represent VON at information and merchandise stalls in various parts of the UK, including the many local VegFest events. If you’d like to help out at a stall, or if you know of local fairs and festivals where you think you could organise a stall, please get in touch: events@veganorganic.net or ring Dan 0161 232 7807.