

Organic Land Care *with*

**"When one tugs at a single thing in nature,
he finds it attached to the rest of the world."**

- John Muir-

"When the soil disappears, the soul disappears. ~Ymber Delecto."

-Ymber Delecto-



Organic Land Care with SOUL is published ten times per year by the Society for Organic Urban Land Care.

Our Mission:

"To support our communities in their transition to organic practices"

This newsletter is distributed free of charge to all SOUL members. Please feel free to share this publication.

SOUL

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www.organiclandcare.org.

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From all of us on the Board of SOUL, we wish everyone peace and joy and may happiness be part of your lives.

As we move from 2008 to 2009 there is wonder as to what is in store for the year ahead. With this year comes endless questions and infinite possibilities, all of which only time will tell how they will be answered and realized. There appears to be a synchronicity happening as there is much talk and publicity about how we live and should live on our planet. Discussions seem to be taking place about what our individual responsibility is as we try to make sense of our roles on this earth. Questions about how to balance our wage economy with how we should act ethically and morally are being contemplated and, hopefully, will be answered.

The questions being posed are pointing to possibilities about our values and how, with oft times conflicting interests, we can connect with each other. Concerns as to how do we enter community both locally and globally and which leads to a further question as to how we manifest a vision of the world that is sustainable. One aspect is certain, and that is there seems to be an appetite for learning or relearning what has been neglected or forgotten. People, it appears are craving knowledge about how to live better in and on our world. For this reason, SOUL's place as an advocate for change and for awareness is essential for the coming year.

Because of the need to develop our knowledge base and to push the bounds of what we know, the December issue of the SOUL newsletter will be different than those previously posted. This edition features a synopsis of a chapter from a thesis submitted by one of our members and former past president, Maija Finvers, for her MSc degree. At the end of the synopsis is a link to the full chapter. Her work provides research based analysis for why it is essential to protect soil and how one can articulate the value of soil as an ecosystem service. Permission to use her work was granted by both the author and from Cranfield University, UK. Please refer to the link contained in the newsletter to see Maija's full work. In my effort to summarize her work, if there are errors, omissions or the information has not misrepresented, it is my responsibility and should not reflect on the author or the institution.

I hope that you enjoy this newsletter. As the holidays are upon us, please curl up with your tea, coffee, hot chocolate or drink of choice and take a few minutes to ponder the information that is presented before you. The material is not necessarily "organic" in information; rather, it provides a vocabulary and a conceptualization about the value of soil in comprehensive terms.

Best wishes to you all and stay warm because even in the balmy region called Victoria, BC, we are experiencing what the rest of Canada affectionately refers to as winter. I look forward to talking with you in the new year.

Respectfully yours,
David Greig

An introduction to Maija Finvers (she kindly provided this information, thanks):

She is a past president of SOUL (2006/07) and an ardent gardener. She grows year round vegetables, fruit and berries (and ornamentals) organically on a 'regular' size city lot in Victoria. She completed the Ecological Landscape Design course and co-manages the soil and terrain (surficial material and landform) mapping for the province of BC. (Visit http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/terrain/terrain_files/access.html) for information on where to find soil maps and reports). She recently completed the requirements for my M.Sc in Land Management (Soil Management Option) at Cranfield University in the UK."

Ecosystem Services Provided by Soil

(Excerpt from: Finvers, M.A., 2008, Application of e2DPSIR for analysis of soil protection issues and an assessment of British Columbia's soil protection legislation. M.Sc. Thesis. Cranfield University, UK)

There are a number of concepts and ideas that come forth when reading Maija's work. For the purposes of this short synopsis, I will focus on the valuation of ecosystems and soils. There are other important underlying themes associated with this piece, but for brevity, I have chosen to talk about an economic concept of ecosystem services provided by soils.

"This discussion about ecosystem services is provided to illustrate the importance of protecting soil so that it can continue to support human well-being."

Human well-being is dependant on the capital stock on the earth which generates a flow of goods and services to support human welfare. This capital stock exists in the form of natural capital (all the areas above, below and on the earth), manufactured capital, human capital and social capital (institutional rules, norms) (Costanza et al 1997a).

The earth's natural capital is the "human life support system." Humans are dependent on the "Ecosystem services' (which) are the services provided by the natural capital to support human well-being. "

If any of the natural capital is depleted then substitutes may possible be provided by natural or "manufactured capital". It is interesting that in Maija's thesis she presents the economic concept that when loss or degradation of natural capital takes place, the substitution(s) costs money whereas originally natural capital was free. Of course, substitution can only take place if the natural capital can be replaced. As an example, if the atmosphere is lost, there is nothing can replace the effects of the atmosphere on climate regulation. These ecosystem services are categorized as supporting services, provisioning services, regulatory services and cultural services. Maija suggests that all of these "services" are essential for human well-being, and in her work articulates whether these various services can be substituted or "mediated by socio-economic" means. She develops a relationship between ecosystems and economics that provides an economic worth (a valuation) for the services of the ecosystem. It seems, that she is presenting a framework for how to put a cost on natural processes.

Maija goes on to discuss the ecosystem services provided by soil. She points out that soil does not have economic value, per se. Through her research, she suggests that the ecosystem services of soils is not appreciated because of the invisible nature of the services that soil provides as well as the fact that its services' nature is considered 'public goods'. To put a value on the worth of soil and what it does, she suggests using a variety of valuation methods to estimate the economic value of these services. The valuation methods she outlines for ecosystem services provided by soil include "direct valuation, avoided cost, replacement cost, or factor income methods." To quantify the "real cost" to humanity for the loss or degradation of soil as a natural capital resource is an important component of Maija's research. Her work bears closer attention. [Maija provides a vocabulary and conceptualization to speak to people who only understand economic arguments as an explanation for what is happening to the earth. Therefore, her thesis is an additional tool to explain the necessity of using organic methods that provide not only make ethical and moral sense but economic sense, as well. (Editor's comments.)]

Full report:
<http://www.organiclandcare.org/education/Ecosystem%20Services.pdf>



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