



# Walking on Earth

By Melanie Lenart *The New Southwest - November 2010*

## For peat's sake

When I first started gardening a few years ago, it seemed natural to pick up a bag of potting soil to get my basil and oregano plants off to a good start.

But as I was carefully crumbling the rich, airy soil from that automatic purchase, reality pricked at my conscience. This was peat fraying in my hands. This carbon-rich substrate didn't belong in a pot in arid Tucson. It belonged in the peat swamps that created it – probably in Canada or Alaska – where it could continue to grow, taking up heat-trapping carbon dioxide in the process.

The importance of leaving peat swamps in place came home to me again while listening to University of Arizona fire ecologist Thomas Swetnam talk in November about this summer's fires around Moscow. While Moscow baked under the kind of stagnant heat typical of June in the Southwest, acrid smoke permeated the city. The ground-hugging smoke came from a nearby source – pockets of underground peat smoldering like giant cigarette butts.

Bad luck? Not exclusively. The area under fire involved peat swamps that had been deliberately drained. Soviet era plans to harvest the peat for fuel were later abandoned, but the damage had been done. Meanwhile, the high cost of rewetting the swamps had relegated that plan to the back burner.

This seemingly far-off problem actually affects us all. Scientists have long pointed to the world's peat as a potential game-changer in future climate. Rising temperatures could thaw and dry northern peat swamps, spurring them to release massive amounts of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases. Not good for global tem-

peratures.

Once peat dries out – whether from rising temperatures, falling water tables or draining for peat harvesting – oxygen can rejoin with its carbon to form carbon dioxide. Fire merely speeds up the process.

While southwesterners can do little to prevent Russian fields of peat from going up in smoke, we do have the option of shunning commercial potting soils. The "sphagnum moss" in these bags is another way of saying northern peat.

So the next time you're tempted to reach for a bag of sphag to bolster the winter lettuce, think instead about how Nature labors to turn a pile of leaves and roots into carbon-rich soil that plants love. Then, remember that there's no such thing as too many cooks when it comes to stewing up carbon-rich soil.

Nature's recipe is simple: Stack vegetable matter from dead plants and nearby leaves in the ground and moisten it often. Once the soil measures about half carbon when dry, it qualifies as peat.

To speed up the soil-enrichment process to human time frames, add water almost daily, and stir frequently. Freshen the pile with vegetable matter as kitchen scraps accumulate and leaves fall. (Avoid dairy, meat and leaves from poisonous plants such as oleander.) For a cooking pit, use any place you can turn soil, including a hole in the ground.

Once you've added all the ingredients, let the compost concoction simmer for a month or two (still turning the soil) before serving up a nourishing substrate for plants.

This is something you can try at home. In our front-yard composting pit, the soil darkened over the months as the carbon from decaying vegetables and vegetation built up. By the time we planted a couple of trees in front of our property last year, it looked ripe enough to serve as a peat substitute. Apparently it worked – the trees we planted are alive and thriving. Tangerines dangle from the branches of one.

If, like Sunkist, we were going to put labels on our tangerines, they would read: No peat was harmed in the making of this fruit.

*Author: Melanie Lenart is an environmental scientist and writer, and the author of the 2010 book Life in the Hothouse: How a Living Planet Survives Climate Change. For more on making compost, see her blog on our website: www.thenewsouthwest.com then click on Blogs, Melanie Lenart.*



# Seasonal Gardening

By Gene Zonge *The New Southwest - November 2010*

## Composting Service

Back in January, I suggested that you make a resolution to chop up your summer vegetable plants in October instead of ending up with an unmanageable pile of dead material after the frosts. Green material chops up by hand much easier than brown material. Well, it is past October. Did you take out your squash, tomato, eggplant and pepper plants and get them chopped up?

Perhaps your summer plants are just doing too well and you don't have the heart to rip them out. Maybe you have already taken them out and they are in a heap because you decided that you would rather spend your time planting than working on the compost. I can't blame you.

This year I am trying composting a completely new way – I am letting someone else do it for me. There are several reasons for this:

- I need the yard space that the composting operation was using.
- I need more compost than I can produce.
- I need a break from the noise of the chipper/shredder.
- I need peace in my house and if I don't finish tiling the bathroom, I am never going to get any peace. I don't have time to spend composting.

Instead of doing my own composting, I load up all of my plant material and take it to any of three reclamation sites in Tucson where I can dump it with a clear conscience because I can see the people turning it into compost right there.

The material is not taking up space in a landfill but is being put to constructive use. After I am done dropping off the material, I can pick up a load of finished compost and take it home for immediate gratification and garden amending, all done in the time it takes to load the truck and drive to the site.

You didn't know about these

composting sites?

Visit [www.thefairfaxcompanies.com](http://www.thefairfaxcompanies.com) for the locations, hours and costs. I like to get the compost in bulk because I use so much but you can get it bagged starting the third week in November. It is called "Tank's Green Stuff."

If you still want to do-it-yourself compost at home, I recommend a tumbler because it is easy to mix the ingredients and turn the compost to keep it aerated. If you chop up all of the material and you get the correct proportions of green and brown material and you keep it properly moist, you will have finished compost in 14 days in the summer and a little longer in the winter.

Good compost is possible with a pile or a crib or a bin, but it is much more work to turn the materials, so we end up not doing it and the result is that the composting process takes a lot longer.

Regardless of your composting equipment, remember to use both green and brown materials and to keep it as damp as a wrung out sponge. Running the bigger material through a chipper/shredder makes the composting process go even faster. Plastics, metals, rubber and other trash, as well as rocks, will not compost in our lifetimes.

At-home composting should not include dairy (cheese, milk, yogurt, etc.), meat (blood, bones, etc.), dog, cat, or pig poop (or other non-vegetarian animal waste), oils (olive oil, canola oil, mayonnaise, etc.), or desserts (cakes, cookies, etc.). I never put weeds with flowers or seeds in my compost because I don't want to take the chance on a few seeds making it through alive.

Compost is the best thing to add to our desert soils. So, whether you do-it-yourself or let someone else do it for you, make sure

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## GREEN SNACK

Air fresheners turn out to be among the most toxic products in our homes....

Even air fresheners labeled "natural" contain harmful ingredients.

"Natural" is a term without any standards behind it.

- Alice Shabecoff, author of "Poisoned for Profit"

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# New research shows LifeWave patches restore sleep

By C. Norman Shealy, MD, PhD

The New Southwest – November 2010

Insomnia is one of the most serious and common health problems. The average American is said to sleep an average of 5.5 hours. A minimum of seven or eight hours is essential. Insomnia weakens the immune system and is a major contributor to obesity, diabetes and heart disease.

A few months ago a friend introduced me to the LifeWave® line of products. At my suggestion, the company encouraged me to do a research project on Silent Nights, their “Non-transdermal Acupuncture Activation” system for sleep enhancement.

I enrolled 25 individuals with chronic insomnia. We did a battery of baseline tests for the effects of the insomnia and gave them the LifeWave Silent Nights patches. These paste on patches “... only reflect energy back into the body and they do not generate energy.”

LifeWave patches are a safe and effective new technology capable of gently stimulating acupuncture points without the use of needles. LifeWave’s Silent Nights patches utilize this innovative technology to stimulate acupuncture points on the body for improving the flow of energy and promoting drug-free sleep. The patches are designed to stimulate acupuncture points by several mechanisms that involve both acupressure and energetic principles.

The self-adhesive patches utilize the principles of Oriental medicine and needleless acupuncture to gently stimulate points

on the body that have been used to balance and improve the flow of energy in the human body for thousands of years. Because the patches are non-transdermal, the use of these patches results in a natural way of improving the quality of your life without any chemicals, drugs or sedatives entering your body.

Multiple independent double-blind-placebo-controlled clinical studies have already been completed proving the effectiveness of LifeWave technology. In addition, extensive infrared studies have shown that LifeWave patches provide a thermo regulating effect to the body, promoting relaxation and stress reduction by stimulating parasympathetic nervous system activity. The parasympathetic nervous system is one of the main divisions of the autonomic nervous system (ANS). The ANS, in turn, is the component of the nervous system that is responsible for balancing and regulating all of the internal organs and glands, which occurs unconsciously. The parasympathetic system specifically is responsible for controlling the processes of the body that occur when the body is at rest. Finally, brain wave monitoring of individuals wearing the Silent Nights patches has shown that the patches calm brain waves patterns, bringing deeper more restful sleep.

The results of my insomnia study were striking:

- 72% to 88% of the subjects experienced significant improvement in sleep!
- 72% had NORMAL daytime sleepiness (ESS test)

- 80% had improved quality of sleep (LESQ test)
- 88% had improved length of sleep (PSQ Test)

There are a number of additional scientific studies on other LifeWave products, making this one of the very few companies actually doing the research essential to prove efficacy for these subtle energy approaches to health. In order to remain neutral for potential future research, I have resisted the urge to become a distributor.

For more information about the Silent Night sleep patches and other LifeWave products, contact Jim Ricker at (520) 954-2290.

Author: Dr. Norman Shealy is one of the world’s leading experts in pain management. He was among the first physicians ever to specialize in the resolution of chronic pain. A pioneer in developing

safe and effective treatments such as Biogenics, he founded, in 1971, the first comprehensive pain and stress management facility in the country, The Shealy Institute, respected world-wide for its innovative and successful rehabilitation approaches. Over the years, Dr. Shealy’s intensive pain and stress management research has resulted in numerous pioneering treatments. His published works total over 275. His seminars and workshops are given worldwide, and attended by physicians and laypersons alike. He has acted as consultant to leaders in every specialty, including the personal physicians of Presidents Kennedy and Eisenhower.

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Stock photography

## GREEN SOUPCON

Every eight months, nearly 11 million gallons of oil run off our streets and driveways into our waters - the equivalent of the Exxon Valdez oil spill.

"America's Living Oceans"  
[Pew Oceans Report, 2003]

## Seasonal Gardening

Continued from page 5

that you are amending with it regularly. Learn all about these and other gardening topics when you grow with the Community Gardens of Tucson.

We have new community gardens opening all over Tucson. There is sure to be one near you.

Author: Gene Zonge is the President of the Community Gardens of Tucson ([www.communitygardensoftucson.org](http://www.communitygardensoftucson.org)), a local nonprofit organization devoted to providing gardening space and expertise to Tucsonans.

## Six reasons to not scrimp on sleep

A recent survey found that more people are sleeping less than six hours a night, and sleep difficulties visit 75% of us at least a few nights per week. A short-lived bout of insomnia is generally nothing to worry about. The bigger concern is chronic sleep loss, which can contribute to health problems such as weight gain, high blood pressure, and a decrease in the immune system’s power, reports the *Harvard Women’s Health Watch*.

While more research is needed to explore the links between chronic sleep loss and health, it’s safe to say that sleep is too important to shortchange.

The Harvard Women’s Health Watch suggests six reasons to get enough sleep:

**1. Learning and memory:** Sleep helps the brain commit new information to memory through a process called memory consolidation. In studies, people who’d slept after learning a task did better on tests later.

**2. Metabolism and weight:** Chronic sleep deprivation may cause weight gain by affecting the way our bodies process and store carbohydrates, and by altering levels of hormones that affect our appetite.

**3. Safety:** Sleep debt contributes to a greater tendency to fall asleep during the daytime. These lapses may cause falls and mistakes such as medical errors, air traffic mishaps, and road accidents.

**4. Mood:** Sleep loss may result in irritability, impatience, inability to concentrate, and moodiness. Too little sleep can also leave you too tired to do the things you like to do.

**5. Cardiovascular health:** Serious sleep disorders have been linked to hypertension, increased stress hormone levels, and irregular heartbeat.

**6. Disease:** Sleep deprivation alters immune function, including the activity of the body’s killer cells. Keeping up with sleep may also help fight cancer.

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