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Plant Diseases Aren't Caused By A Lack Of Pesticides

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When I first started teaching organic gardening, I was told not to draw parallels between plant diseases and pests in the garden and human diseases, for fear of offending people.

It was one thing to teach people that plant diseases attack only unhealthy plants, but to hear most human diseases attack unhealthy people can be just too much to take, especially since most of us have someone close who has had one of the major diseases, and it could come across that I was faulting them for getting the disease.

But since that time, I and especially my wife have studied many facets of health and nutrition, and now in our minds it just goes without saying that most human disease - cancer, heart disease, etc. - is the result of lack of human health. It's become so evident we don't even think about it anymore.

Of course, that's not to say it's necessarily a person's fault if they are afflicted by one of these diseases. There are some factors that are largely beyond our control, such as pollution and genetics.

Or maybe we've just been taught that our education system, government, free market and doctors would take care of our health without ever learning that they won't. Or maybe our body has some kind of imbalance that there is no way of measuring or figuring out.

So part of this is all a mystery and beyond our control, and I'm not saying you have to be noticeably unhealthy to contract an illness. I have close friends and family who were perfectly healthy by conventional standards before becoming ill. It's very important to me to be clear that I'm not picking on them.

What I am trying to get at is that there are factors many of us can control. I do a lot of things to ensure I'll be as healthy as possible for as long as possible. I grow/eat fresh/organic/healthy foods, filter my drinking water, exercise every day, cultivate loving relationships, avoid stress as much as I can, and so on.

I know there is still a chance I'll face one of these diseases when I get older, and certainly towards the very end of life as our body becomes less vital there is a greater chance of illness setting in, but I've drastically increased the chance of living a long, healthy life with these healthy habits.

And most important, what I'm really trying to get at, is that if I do get a disease, I'll know it's not the disease's fault.

If cancer gets a chance to take hold and develop into a tumor, I know that cutting it out or using radiation or chemicals won't do a darn thing to address the reason it was there in the first place. All it will do is make me sicker. If my arteries get clogged up, I know blowing up balloons inside them won't stop them from getting clogged elsewhere.

Now that I'm involved in the nutrition world with Heather, I meet more people who see this all as obvious,

too, yet haven't made the connection to the garden. Their faces light up when I explain it, "Of course it's the same with plant diseases and pests."

That's why I talk about landscape health management versus disease management so often. It's just so cool to learn about how creating healthy soil and plants gets rid of diseases and pests by focusing on the real causes. It's even more fun when you work at it for a few years and make it happen.

Sometimes I feel that as a species, we've forgotten the similarities between plant and human health. On the other hand, I also feel we actually know more than we ever did since we've learned so much about these subjects in the last century.

And perhaps we all have to figure it out for ourselves. Sir Albert Howard did. During decades of experiments at the beginning of the 20th century, he said "healthy, well-fed animals reacted towards the disease exactly as improved and properly cultivated crops did to insects and fungi ? no infection occurred."

The point of all this is that if you want to be healthy, it's a good idea to lead a healthy lifestyle. If you want to have a healthy organic garden, free of plant pests and diseases, and overflowing with nutrient-dense food, it's a good idea to create healthy soil and healthy plants.

What I'm trying to get across is that we need to understand the cause of the disease, which is some kind of imbalance in our body or our plants, in order to supply the right solution. Most of the time, the solution does not involve dousing our bodies or our gardens with toxic chemicals.

Human disease isn't there because your body has a lack of radiation, and plant diseases and pests aren't there because your garden has a lack of pesticides. We need to focus on creating health.

I see now this is too big of a topic to tackle in a blog post, but I've written it now, so there you go. Any thoughts? Feel free to let me know below.

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