

I Dreamed of Organic Gardening By Betsy Bearden

Lazy summer days make it tough for some of us to grow and maintain an organic garden. Finding the time and energy to keep those pesky insects from attacking our tender veggies without the use of harmful pesticides may seem a daunting task for some-I know it certainly is for me; but why would you want to approach it any other way? I love having fresh veggies in the summer, especially tomatoes. There is nothing quite like a fresh, home-grown tomato.

I would like to share with you some helpful hints without getting too technical or boring on the wonderful subject of organic gardening. A major hint for growing an organic garden and enjoying the fruits of its labor year round will be revealed to you at the end of this article. Don't cheat! But for now, it's been a long day, and I am exhausted from working in the garden for the most part of it. Sleep would be so good right about now, and I will try not to drift off before finishing this article. As I was saying, it is completely possible to grow a beautiful, healthy, organic garden without the use of harmful pesticides, and with the help of a few companions it could be more easily accomplished.

...Friends to help me in the garden...yes, friends. Oh, if only I weren't so tired! Let's see, where were we? I could have Wally tilling up the soil, Linda blasting the pesky insects with a water hose, Steven building a moat around the raised bed castle, and Brenda... riding a dragonfly, floating gently downward ...spreading the lime like stardust...

...Evening has fallen and someone is threatening our tomatoes. It's the lowly Baron Nematode, the root-knotter! Baron Nematode, that wiggly little worm, is trying to get to the root of our luscious tomatoes, and will surely wreak havoc upon the harmony within our organic kingdom.

Galloping quickly toward him is the evil Lord Sevin who has come to swiftly cut him down with his poison. Lord Sevin will kill Baron Nematode, but he will also make us sick, as well. He can pollute the water in the moat around the raised bed castle, making all the birds that drink from it, as well as all the good insects in the kingdom, very sick. Not to mention the precious dogs that live within our kingdom who lazily graze on the grass around the moat.

Raising his hand, Lord Sevin takes aim to spread his pollution as the tomatoes shiver with fright and rattle their gilded cages. "Save us, please-someone save us. We had rather be limed than slimed!"

Out of nowhere, Queen Marigold and King Nasturtium show up and plant themselves firmly into the soil. "Eat my dust, Sevin!" cried King Nasturtium, "you are not welcome here! Be gone from this place."

Crying out from beneath the soil, Baron Nematode begs Queen Marigold to spare his life. "I am here to protect my subjects from you, you little parasite. No mercy for you! Be gone!" she cried.

Every root-knotter nematode within the territory ran for the hills, because they knew they could not do battle against the powerful root protecting properties Queen Marigold and King Nasturtium held within themselves.

Rushing in to assist the King and Queen was Princess Dawn and her constant companions Miss Garlic, and Dame Red Hot Pepper. “We got together and mixed it up to protect all the subjects who dwell above the soil,” she said. “By spritzing our contents, in a very lady-like manner of course, on all the little veggies, no pesky bug, slug, or thug will stand a chance! Especially due to the odiferous nature of Miss Garlic, here.” Garlic reared her platinum head and shot Princess Dawn a rather nasty look. “You know I don’t mean any disrespect to you Miss Garlic, but after all, you *do* smell, cute as you are. And Dame Red Pepper, well, not too many will give you a second chance after they have taken a big honkin’ bite of you!” said Princess Dawn. “So, I say let’s celebrate; the subjects are safe; and they will be organically sound to be eaten when the time comes.” Looking around, she heard the sound of a cage rattling in the background. “Oh dear,” she said, “Oh *dear*, dear.” And with a spritz, she was off...

...Yes? Oh, my goodness, I must have temporarily dozed off. Sorry! Back to the discussion at hand. Companion planting and using plants that naturally deter pests is the way to go. Also helpful is mixing up a concoction of dish-washing detergent, hot pepper, fresh crushed garlic, and spraying it on your veggies. Most pests will not like this at all! They will quickly take flight and never come back. Well, hopefully. Anyway, if you will go back and find the first letter of each paragraph of this article, you will have found the hint for the best place to find not only fresh, organic vegetables and fruits year round, but also a wealth of written information on the subject of how you can grow your own organic garden. Sweet dreams!

TOFU JOES WITH BROWN RICE

1 container of extra-firm tofu
1 large onion, diced
1 can of your favorite canned Sloppy Joe sauce
1 can of diced tomatoes, 14.5 oz.

- Open tofu and drain in colander for about 10 minutes
- Cut the tofu into bite-sized cubes and sauté in oil until golden brown-about five minutes
- Add onion to tofu and sauté for about 3-4 minutes longer
- Carefully add Sloppy Joe sauce and canned tomatoes and turn flame to medium setting. Simmer for about 20 minutes, stirring frequently. This will allow the sugars in the tomatoes to caramelize and slightly thicken. How easy is that?

BROWN RICE

1 cup of brown rice
2 1/4 cups of water or vegetable broth/stock

- Place water or vegetable broth/stock into heavy stock pan and bring to boil

- Add rice and stir
- Turn flame to lowest setting and cover the rice
- Simmer undisturbed for 40 minutes then remove from burner and let sit undisturbed for five more minutes.

Now, that is how to cook perfect rice every single time!

Serve by slathering mayonnaise on a whole wheat bun, top with a generous heaping of rice, an equally generous helping of Sloppy Joes, and there you have it. There is nothing sloppy about these Joes!

Betsy Bearden is a published writer, and author of a self-published cookbook, *Normal People Eat Tofu, Too*. She has worked as a volunteer chef, and cooking class instructor at Kroger's School of Cooking in Alpharetta, Georgia, and as a reporter for *The Paulding Neighbor Newspaper*. You can reach her at betsybearden@bellsouth.net or visit her website at www.creativewrites.net