

Lawrence P. Miller, in his letter (*BioScience*, 22:637) unfortunately perpetuates the ignorance of many non-organic farmers. There *are* such things as organic fertilizers. Organic fertilizers are organic materials which serve to maintain the humus of the soil *while* breaking down to inorganic nutrients. Apparently Miller, like many others who promote the use exclusively of inorganic fertilizers, is not aware of the value of humus in agriculture. Humus—organic particles in the soil—help hold water and provide air spaces to prevent compacting. As a result, inorganic nutrients—whatever their source—are more readily available to plants and need not be present in such excessive amounts as to result in leaching into streams and excessive costs to farmers.

Miller also perpetuates another myth—smelly manure is the only organic fertilizer and so there isn't enough for practical use. Other organic fertilizers include materials from city garbage, sewage sludge, and many industrial wastes, all of which are all too abundant. In limited quantities, they could still be used to alleviate the need for excessive application of inorganic fertilizers. And none, including manure, need be smelly if *composted* properly before use.

Miller says there is no evidence that healthy plants are more resistant to attack. Perhaps this is true of predator attack, but most of us are aware that healthy humans, for instance, are more resistant to disease. Why should this be untrue for plants? Miller, himself, then goes on to make a statement unsupported by evidence that plants with good nourishment (notice his change in terminology) “taste good” and are more likely to be more attractive to predators. Come now!

Perhaps if Miller were to learn the *facts* about organic agriculture and be a bit more careful when he shops, he might see organic gardening and farming in a different light.

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BioScience 23 275 (May 1973)