

Local Food Project at Airlie

Summer Skit Series 2008

Originally performed at the Small Space, High Yield Gardens workshop on July 2, 2008

Food Fight: A Gardening Morality Tale

Characters

Jeavons disciple

Solomon disciple

The Voice of Compromise

Props

Spade

Fork

Copy of *How to Grow More Vegetables*

Basket of strawberries

Copy of *Gardening When it Counts*

Ladder

Scene

A community garden somewhere in Suburbia

[*Jeavons disciple (JD) digs a narrow trench, sweats heavily, stops to consult How to Grow More Vegetables, then continues digging. The Voice of Compromise (VC) sits on a ladder nearby, watching over the scene. Solomon disciple (SD) saunters up carrying a basket of strawberries and a copy of Gardening When it Counts. SD watches JD.*]

VC: [*With arms spread.*] To forget how to dig the earth and tend the soil is to forget ourselves. Ghandi.

SD: [*Frowning.*] Excuse me, I couldn't help noticing how hard you're working. What are you doing?

JD: I'm double digging this garden bed. By removing the first layer of soil, loosening the second layer, then moving down the bed and transferring the top layer forward you can prepare a growing area that produces yields 2 to 6 times that of conventional agriculture.

SD: Wow, that sounds pretty good! But how long does that take? We have a ¾ acre garden here and only a few of us working.

JD: That 9 by 4 foot bed took me about...oh, 10 hours...but now I'm ready to tackle this next section.

SD: What? At that rate we won't be ready to plant until July and the season will be half over!

JD: Well, this is what John Jeavons says to do. [*Showing off book.*] Haven't you heard of him? He revolutionized contemporary gardening! By pioneering the GROW BIOINTENSIVE method and showing people how to increase production through close planting, he's introduced a solution to all of the world's agricultural woes.

SD: Oh, Jeavons, now I remember. He's the guy Steve Solomon proved wrong.

JD: What?!

SD: Yeah, Solomon used to garden with that method, but then he found out that all of those veggies squeezed in such a small space didn't taste as good or get as big as veggies grown with plenty of room to spread out. Intensive beds are too demanding and in the hard times that are coming people won't have the resources to maintain the soil fertility that the bio-intensive method requires.

JD: Hard times? What, like World War III? I've heard about this Solomon dude. Isn't he living the good life in Tasmania, isolated from any pressures the rest of us are feeling?

SD: Well, yes...but he's a genius at helping people garden better by improving their soil. By using COF—Complete Organic Fertilizer—a special blend of seedmeal, lime and phosphate, your veggies won't be lacking key nutrients that are essential for your own health.

JD: But didn't Solomon have a truckload of sandy loam dumped on his property so he wouldn't have to deal with his clay soils?

SD: That may be true...but at least he admits it! Solomon doesn't sugar coat anything. If you don't have the proper soil conditions, you shouldn't attempt to grow high demand veggies like peppers or celery because you won't succeed. That's better than convincing gardeners to spend their lives double digging in hopes of reaching some mythical yield of 31 times the average.

JD: It's not a myth! That happened once at the Ecology Action garden in California!

SD: Yeah, California. The land of milk and honey. And magical veggie fairies who come out at night and leave heaping baskets of squash on your doorstep.

JD: [*Gasp*] At least Jeavons looks on the bright side and isn't a complete doomsdayer!

SD: Solomon's a proponent of gardening when it *counts*! [*Thumping book's cover.*] And he doesn't care about what's popular. He doesn't blindly follow the methods practiced by Everyone Else!

JD: Maybe he should rethink that policy when Everyone Else is right! [*Both disciples grab strawberries.*]

SD: I'll show you who's right. [*Disciples wind up to hurl strawberries at each other. The Voice of Compromise hops down from ladder.*]

VC: Wait! [*Disciples freeze, arms in midair. VC eyes disciples, then looks at audience.*] It doesn't have to come to this, does it? Gardening's a peaceful activity, but with such strongly opinionated leaders, disciples are created on both sides of the fence. [*Grabbing How to Grow More Vegetables.*] Read Jeavons first and you'll believe the man's a true messiah. [*Picking up Gardening When it Counts.*] Then read about Solomon's method and you'll think you've finally seen the light. But why does it have to be only one way or the other? [*Standing between disciples, VC looks from one to the other.*] Why? [*They unfreeze and toss the strawberries, splatting VC.*]

JD: Who are you?

VC: I'm the Voice of Compromise and I'm here to help you two work out your philosophical differences about gardening.

SD: Where'd you come from?

VC: From that ladder over there and before that, the great garden in the sky. I've been watching you two and it's clear you've both been doing a little too much reading.

JD: What do you mean?

VC: You're both passionate about gardening and that's wonderful, but you've forgotten that growing food isn't about following one particular method or another. It's about paying attention...taking care...reconnecting with the soil...celebrating the harvest of delicious vegetables from plants that we've tended...and sharing that bounty with our friends and neighbors.

SD: You're right.

VC: Now, can't you both see the valuable lessons from these master gardeners?

JD: Solomon does have a point about gardening in dry climates. Intensive beds need regular watering, but if plants are spaced further apart they can more easily withstand drought.

SD: And double digging does seem like it creates a nice rich bed of fine, crumbly soil that veggies would thrive in.

VC: There, see? We can learn from both of these techniques and adapt them for our own unique situation. If gardening's really going to save the world, we can't let little disagreements like this turn into a food fight. Without working together we'll all just crumble to... dust in the wind. All we are is dust in the wind. [*Disciples join VC in swaying version of Dust in the Wind.*]

The End