

# Mindful Planting: Cultivating Inner Wellness

## Organic Gardening and Shopping

### Starting with the seed: Why is organic gardening important?

- **Toxic synthetic pesticides and fertilizers place the environment at risk**
  - Reduced biodiversity, chemicals kill plants
  - Degrades the health of the soil and water quality
    - Impacts long term ability to grow
  - Places the ecosystem at risk, (pollinators), threatening sustainability
- **Although seeds that have been genetically modified can offer pest resistance and higher yields, there are several reasons their use should be avoided**
  - Cross pollination and evolution of superweeds that are resistant to herbicides.
  - Loss of natural biodiversity, making crops prone to disease and/or climate shifts.
  - Harm beneficial insects (butterflies, spiders, ladybugs, etc.)

### Tips for getting started with an organic garden:

- **Soil Health: Use composting, organic soil and fertilizer**
  - **Look for the Organic Materials Review Institute Seal (OMRI)** seal, a nonprofit organization that reviews fertilizers, pesticides, and other inputs to ensure they meet USDA organic standards
- **Non-GMO Seeds:**
  - Look for "Certified Organic" or "Non-GMO Project Verified" labels
  - Select heirloom and open-pollinated varieties, which are naturally non-GMO

### Garden to table: Why buy organic foods?





- Reduce your exposure to synthetic pesticides, herbicides and heavy metals that have been associated with multiple long term health impacts
- Avoid consumption of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO), although deemed safe, long term health effects are currently unknown
- Antibiotic use is prohibited with organic meats, minimizing exposure to antibiotic-resistant bacteria
- The nutritional quality of organic fruits and vegetables is better

## Does everything I buy need to be organic?

- No! Focus on foods known to contain high levels of pesticides
- Generally, fruits and vegetables with thin skins are more susceptible to pesticide contamination. Many of these thin-skinned fruits and vegetables are classified as “The Dirty Dozen” and consumers should purchase as organic
  - Dirty Dozen: strawberries, spinach, kale, nectarines, apples, grapes, peaches, cherries, pears, tomatoes, celery, potatoes
- The “Clean Fifteen” is a list of fruits and vegetables with thicker, less penetrable skins that are safer when purchasing non-organic alternatives
  - Clean Fifteen: avocado, sweet corn, pineapple, frozen sweet peas, onions, papayas, eggplant, asparagus, kiwi, cabbage, cauliflower, cantaloupe, broccoli, mushrooms, honeydew melon.

## How to identify organic labels at the supermarket and avoid false claims:

- The word “Organic” is a legal certification regulated by USDA. There are four categories that are approved for use on food labels:

<p>100% Organic</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All ingredients, including processing aids, is certified organic</li> <li>• These products will have the USDA Organic seal and/or certifier logo or statement (CCOF, California Certified Organic Farmers, etc.)</li> </ul>
<p>Organic</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 95% or more of ingredients are certified organic.</li> <li>• Can also have the USDA Organic seal and/or certifier logo or statement</li> </ul>
<p>Made with Organic Ingredients</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 70-94% or more of ingredients are certified organic.</li> <li>• Organic ingredients (up to three) can be listed on the packaging</li> <li>• USDA Organic seal is NOT allowed but a certifier logo may appear</li> </ul>
<p>Less than 70% Organic</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organic ingredients can only be listed in the ingredient list</li> <li>• Neither the USDA Organic seal or certifier logo may appear</li> <li>• No “organic” claim can be made on product labeling</li> </ul>

### Sources/Further Reading:

<https://www.ccof.org/news/how-to-read-organic-labels/>

<https://www.ewg.org/foodnews/summary.php>

<https://www.usda.gov/about-usda/news/blog/tips-starting-organic-garden>

<https://www.almanac.com/organic-gardening-basics-how-start-organic-garden>

<https://www.gardening4joy.com/creating-and-maintaining-an-organic-vegetable-garden-part-one/>