

# Smart Stuff

with Twig Walkingstick



For the week of  
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### Hey Editor!

Steve Sears, certification administrator, Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association, reviewed this column.

Dear Twig: What's organic farming?

Organic farming, or "biological farming," doesn't use synthetic pesticides or fertilizers. Instead, the soil is enriched with manure, compost and cover crops. And pests, weeds and diseases are fought or prevented with a big bag of mostly non-chemical tools: resistant varieties, rotation, cultivation, mulch and more. (There are a few organic pesticides.)

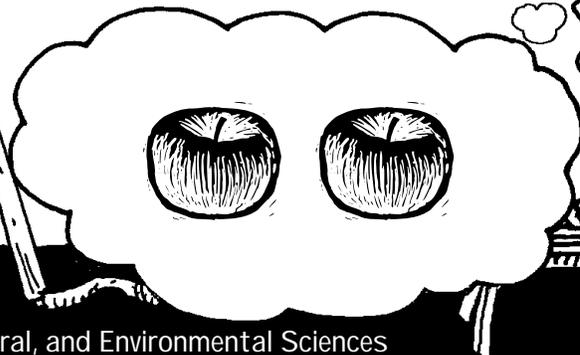
Organic matter in the soil — from manure, compost, etc. — is the key. It's full of nutrients that make crops grow. It helps the soil hold nutrients and moisture. And it supports all sorts of organisms — billions of them, from microbes to earthworms — whose actions, ideally, keep crops healthy.

Farmers who grow organically say they do it to help the environment (to reduce chemical exposure and increase biodiversity), to cut their input costs (manure, for example, is cheap or free) and to boost, they hope, their profitability (organic crops sell for more than their conventional counterparts).

But organic farming takes a lot of work. Yields may vary or be lower, because some crops are hard to grow without chemicals. And the cost to consumers is higher. So it's not for everyone.

Bottom line, what it gives people — both farmers and consumers — is a choice.

*Twig*



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