

Appeals court says yes to organic hydroponics, plus the top pollinator-friendly stores



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COMING UP THIS WEEK:

Boost for Fertilizer
Urban Organics
Ruling for Organic
Hydroponics
Pollinator-Friendly Stores
Report from the Outpost

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USDA Has \$500 Million for Fertilizer Production

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced \$500 million in grants to increase American-made fertilizer production. In a press release, USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack noted, "Recent supply chain disruptions have shown just how critical it is to invest in the agricultural supply chain here at home."



The program will support fertilizer production that is:

- Independent, and outside the orbit of dominant fertilizer suppliers. Because the program's goal is to increase competition, market share restrictions apply.
- Made in America. Products must be produced by companies operating in the U.S. or its territories, to create good-paying jobs at home, and reduce the reliance on potentially unstable, inconsistent foreign supplies.
- Innovative. Techniques will improve fertilizer production methods and efficient-use technologies to jumpstart the next generation of fertilizers and nutrient alternatives.
- Sustainable. Ideally, products will reduce the greenhouse gas impact of transportation, production and use through renewable energy sources, feedstocks and formulations, incentivizing greater precision in fertilizer use.
- Farmer-focused. Like other Commodity Credit Corporation investments, a driving factor is providing support and opportunities for U.S. agricultural commodity producers.

You can learn more [HERE](#).



Organic Farming in Urban Areas

The USDA and Oregon Tilth are presenting a webinar next week on “Challenges and Opportunities in Organic Urban Agriculture.” Tune in on Tuesday, October 4 at 3:00 p.m. EST.

Organic producers of all sizes and across all landscapes must follow the same national standards to meet the requirements of USDA organic certification. However, certified organic farmers and farmers using organic growing practices may have different production and market opportunities and challenges when growing in an urban environment. This webinar will explore research in this field, as well as perspectives from farmers on growing organically in urban spaces.

Webinar info [HERE](#).



Appeals Court Rules in Favor of Organic Hydroponics

The U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in favor of the USDA and hydroponically grown produce that's certified organic. Several plaintiffs, including the Center for Food Safety sued the USDA for allowing hydroponically grown plants to be certified organic. When a judge upheld that the USDA reasonably interpreted the law, the plaintiffs appealed to the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals.

The appeals court allowed the rulings to stand, saying that the text of the law does not expressly ban hydroponic crops from being organic.



You probably know this controversy well by now. Many organic growers strongly believe that soil is an integral part of “organic” growing, and they’ve fought hard against the USDA on this subject. (Hydroponics aren’t considered organic in most other countries around the world.)







It appears organic hydroponics are here to stay in the U.S.. Dave Chapman, who helped spearhead The Real Organic Project and was also one of the plaintiffs in this case, posted [this reaction](#) to the ruling.



Pollinator-Friendly Grocery Stores?

Friends of the Earth (FOE) just released their annual [Bee-Friendly Retailer Scorecard](#), in which they rank major U.S. grocery stores on their efforts to protect pollinators.

Giant Eagle ranked #1, with a grade of B. Walmart was second and Whole Foods third, both with B-. Costco and CVS rounded out the Top 5.

Retailer	Grade	Points
 Giant Eagle	B	102
 Walmart	B-	94
 Whole Foods*	B-	88
 Costco	C+	75.5
 CVS	D+	51.5
 Aldi	D+	47.5

The biggest way FOE says retailers can help the cause is to increase their organic offerings. Only two companies—Trader Joe’s and Whole Foods—have organic comprising more than 15% of their sales. According to FOE, 12 of the 25 retailers on their list have created policies addressing pesticides since 2018. But in their report, they state, “Yet action across the sector falls far short of what is needed to create a healthy resilient food system for pollinators and other critical biodiversity as well as people, from farmworkers to eaters.”

These 25 companies control an enormous share of the market, and thus what they do has a huge impact. But I have to say, I’m also wondering about the little independents, or, in my case, the “small” employee-owned grocery chain with 8 locations in Montana. How are they doing?

Report from the MT Outpost

The aspens just turned the corner toward their brilliant yellow. I still have a few tomatoes hanging on and trying to ripen. The front porch sports two freshly planted mums, courtesy of Ferry Morse. And the bears have come down out of the mountains, breaking into trouble up and down the valley as they prepare for winter.

Tourist-dependent businesses are beginning to close their doors for the season after a rough summer here following the Yellowstone floods. Which makes me ache for those in Hurricane Ian’s path. Recovery from any natural disaster is so much longer than a news cycle ever shows. People and businesses struggle for months and years. You’re in our thoughts, and please let us know how we can help.

Until next time,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jennifer".

Jennifer Duffield White

jwhite@ballpublishing.com

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