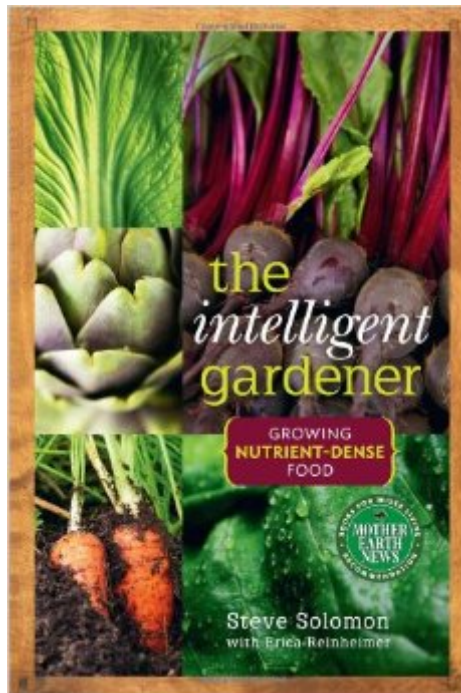


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# The Intelligent Gardener: Growing Nutrient Dense Food



## Synopsis

Vegetables, fruits, and grains are a major source of vital nutrients, but centuries of intensive agriculture have depleted our soils to historic lows. As a result, the broccoli you consume today may have less than half of the vitamins and minerals that the equivalent serving would have contained a hundred years ago. This is a matter for serious concern, since poor nutrition has been linked to myriad health problems including cancer, heart disease, obesity, high blood pressure, and diabetes. For optimum health we must increase the nutrient density of our foods to the levels enjoyed by previous generations. To grow produce of the highest nutritional quality the essential minerals lacking in our soil must be replaced, but this re-mineralization calls for far more attention to detail than the simple addition of composted manure or NPK fertilizers. The Intelligent Gardener demystifies the process while simultaneously debunking much of the false and misleading information perpetuated by both the conventional and organic agricultural movements. In doing so, it conclusively establishes the link between healthy soil, healthy food, and healthy people. This practical step-by-step guide and the accompanying customizable web-based spreadsheets go beyond organic and are essential tools for any serious gardener who cares about the quality of the produce they grow. Steve Solomon is the author of several landmark gardening books including *Gardening When it Counts* and *Growing Vegetables West of the Cascades*. The founder of the Territorial Seed Company, he has been growing most of his family's food for over thirty-five years.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Near the end of his new book, *The Intelligent Gardener*, long-time garden guru Steve Solomon makes a significant point: "There is no place on this planet that remains free of toxic residues." He then suggests we would be far better off if we quit worrying so much about toxicity and, instead, concentrated on growing and eating nutrient dense food. I've been able to follow, and participate to a degree, in Mr. Solomon's metamorphosis from expert "organic" gardener to expert "nutrient dense" gardener. Solomon, in my opinion, has long been ahead of the pack as evidenced by his books "Growing Vegetables West of the Cascades" and "Gardening When It Counts." Through his early gardening experiences and from starting the Territorial Seed business he devised his Complete Organic Fertilizer (COF) which was an attempt to balance garden soil. COF is still a good way to go for people who don't wish to go any farther and the formula is easily found on the internet. (Also in *The Intelligent Gardener* pps. 84-85). In the last half dozen years through association with Michael Astera's Nutrient Dense Project and a re-study of the work of scientists like William Albrecht and Victor Tiedjens, Steve Solomon has become a convert to the concept of "nutrient dense." The concept of nutrient dense food is pretty simple. The gardener works over time to balance the soil with the proper mix of minerals. The result will be soil that encourages the life forms (worms, bacteria, etc.) that help with soil symbiosis and soil that provides the nutrients plants need to grow properly. Balanced soil will mean healthier plants, resistant to pests. Balanced soil will result in food that is nutrient dense, providing us with the vitamins and minerals we need to be healthy.

So, whenever I'm thinking of buying a book, I read the negative reviews first. They are much more revealing than the positive ones--frequently they are revealing not so much of the book's quality or content as they are of the assumptions readers bring. And so it seems to be with Solomon's books. I know this review is kind of long--the next paragraph plus the last one are my quickie summary review; if you want more specifics read the 3rd paragraph too. If I could give half-stars, I'd give this 3.5. The information is useful (albeit really dense in places...but we're talking about soil amendment recipes here, so, you know) but it's not entirely practical especially if you're low on capital at the outset. What specifically was useful? Solomon's basic argument is that plants contain nutrients derived from the soil, ergo if the soil is low in nutrients so are your vegetables. Plants are more than N, P, and K. They may look ok, you may even have good yields, but with modern soils they are not as nutritious as they should be. Now this may not be an earth-shattering revelation (although many reviewers are surprisingly resistant to the concept...see below), but Solomon couples it with some suggestions on how to test your soil nutrient levels, how to improve them (this is where the big expense may come in, depending on your situation), and also challenges gardening orthodoxy that

suggests that veggies will be nutritionally perfect as long as they're organic. The reason I deducted 1.5 stars is that after reading the book one may not be in a position to apply what they learned; which maybe is not the author's fault, but it could arguably have been addressed in the book...

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