




Shumei

Natural Agriculture



“Nature can teach us
everything.”

— *Mokichi Okada*



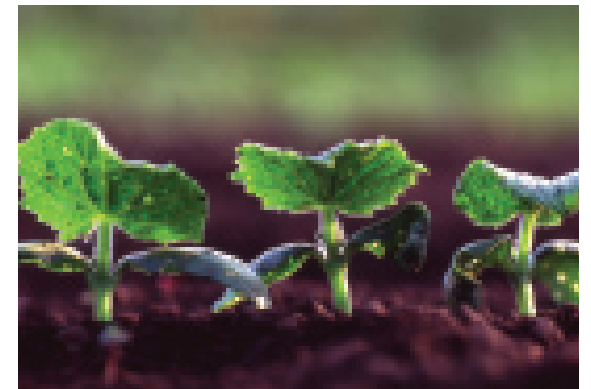
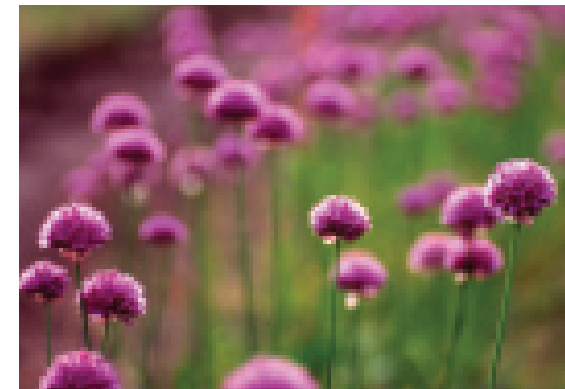
“The principle of Natural Agriculture is an overriding respect and concern for nature.”

A PHILOSOPHY OF HARMONY WITH THE EARTH

The Natural Agriculture movement, which is growing around the world, was developed in Japan in the early decades of the 20th century by Mokichi Okada to foster a renewed understanding of the harmony that exists among the natural elements of the earth. Mokichi Okada conducted extensive research in the development of agricultural practices that would yield the most productive and beneficial results for nourishing the human body, mind and spirit.

“The principle of Natural Agriculture is an overriding

respect and concern for nature,” stated Mokichi Okada in his article, A Great Agricultural Revolution. This respect leads to minimum intervention in the growing processes. While many modern agricultural practices are based on a belief in the need to control and manipulate that growing process, Natural Agriculture sees greater benefit in supporting and working in partnership with the natural forces. It understands the relationship among all the elements involved in the natural growing processes – light, soil and water – and it fosters a deep awareness of the contributions of each element. In today’s consumer society, people have



lost the understanding of the interconnection of all life and thus have not understood how harming one part of an ecosystem will cause damage to another; and how the use of chemicals in food production will ultimately pollute waters and soil and destabilize the whole natural balance. The manipulation of nature has taken an enormous toll on human health and the well-being of the planet. Natural Agriculture seeks to restore the vital and sacred relationship between humankind and the environment.

The practice of Natural Agriculture is based on a highly developed philosophy of life and is intimately tied to the physical and spiritual laws that govern the universe. It is more than a system of food production - it is a way of life.

SUPPORTING THE NATURAL PROCESSES

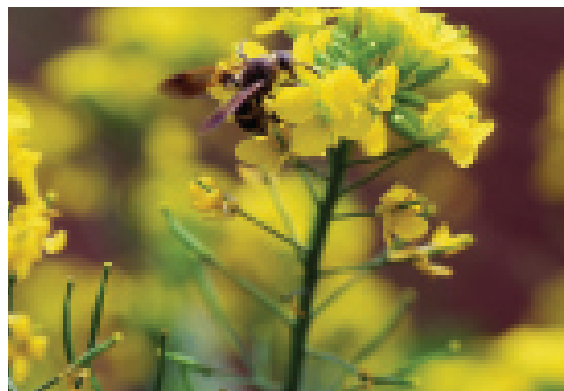
The principle of respect for nature is based on the perception that consciousness guides all life

processes. This consciousness extends to all that grows. Natural Agriculture recognizes that plants, like other elements of nature function best when left in their pure, natural state. Thus it recognizes the purity of the soil, which contains all the elements needed for healthy plant growth. Natural Agriculture does not add any foreign elements to the soil. If properly cared for, soil provides better nutrition for plants without the addition of chemical fertilizers that inhibit the soil’s natural ability to enrich itself. Similarly, seeds are respected for their natural purity and are not manipulated for specified ends.

Extensive experience has shown that this approach leads to crops that are healthier, stay fresh longer and are better tasting than those produced by conventional agricultural methods.

A plant grows amid a myriad of relationships that include neighboring plants, insects and animals. All of these elements make up the natural environment

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of the plant, which is affected by its interaction with each one. This is the nature of interdependence. The plant and all the elements surrounding it are interconnected, complementing one another, composing an interdependent ecosystem. Unknown to us, the surrounding ponds, rivers, trees, woods and mountains all contribute to the plant's natural environment and growth. The effect of the sun, rain, wind, changing seasons, annual weather conditions, and the region's climate all have to be considered as part of a plant's place in nature. The energy and heat received from deep within the earth, and from the sun and other planetary bodies, also impact its growth and composition. Equally important is its relationship with the farmer, the one who plants the seed and tends the growing plant. According to the philosophy of Natural Agriculture, plants respond to the thoughts, emotions and deeds of the people who care for them. The more conscious the farmer is of the

interrelationships within nature, the more he or she is able to play a part in fostering the balance and harmony needed for healthy plant life.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ORGANIC AND NATURAL AGRICULTURE

Organic and Natural Agriculture have much in common. Both seek to safeguard human health and the health of the environment by avoiding the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Organic agriculture employs the use of organic additives, while Natural Agriculture does not utilize organic pesticides, herbicides or organic fertilizers, including manure. Natural Agriculture does use compost composed of leaves and grasses from the surrounding vicinity to keep the soil moist, soft and temperate, rather than as a nutrient. It also teaches that nature has its own way to revitalize itself, therefore, additives are not necessary. The soil has all the nutrients needed for healthy crops and the



condition of the soil improves on its own. In addition, Natural Agriculture does not recognize any insect as a "pest." The Natural Agriculture method promotes a more comprehensive understanding of the role of insects and how to maintain their balance so they do not become excessive and damage plant life.

MOVING BEYOND AGRICULTURAL TECHNIQUES

One of the goals of Natural Agriculture is to bring physical, mental and spiritual benefit to people. It stresses the importance of eating fresh, locally grown food because of the vital energy this food provides. Food that has

been shipped from long distances loses important nutritional value. Furthermore, there are important health benefits to be derived from eating what can be seasonally grown in one's own locality.

As a philosophy and way of life, Natural Agriculture involves more than agricultural technique; it is a way of thinking about nature. It involves developing a more intuitive relationship with the natural world, and it means listening, respecting and responding to, rather than dictating, the needs of nature. It leads to the development of a lifestyle in harmony with nature and subsequently in greater harmony with oneself and one's community.

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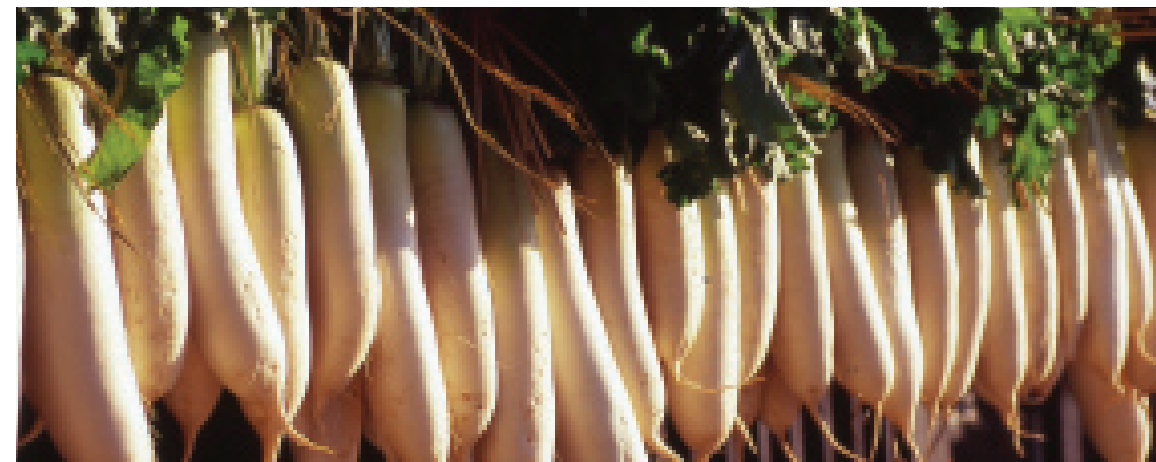
THE FARMER-CONSUMER RELATIONSHIP

Mokichi Okada perceived agriculture to be an art, created by the human hand and heart. The farmer has a unique position in restoring and maintaining the balance within nature, and this ability is essential for Natural Agriculture's success.

Through the practice of Natural Agriculture the producers and consumers of food develop a special relationship based on a support system of deep appreciation and gratitude. The exchange of gratitude within a community becomes a key element to its success. Over time, consumers come to realize

their relationship to the soil, seeds, rain and crops. And as the farmer works the soil, he or she is mindful of the consumers who will eventually eat the produce. This process of exchange forms a bond that benefits each person in the chain. The farmer/consumer relationship is a vital link which, when fostered, can lead to a much healthier, more wholesome and aware mode of living, as well as a greater understanding and appreciation of community.

Natural Agriculture also encourages each individual to participate in the growing of food. If we have even a small parcel of land, we can start a small garden, and if not, a planted pot will help connect us to the growing process. But for



those who cannot do this, visiting and supporting a local Natural Agriculture or organic farmer is a way to begin.

RENEWING OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH FOOD

In recent years food security has become an issue of great concern to the general public and policy makers alike. Climate change and the need to wean from an oil-based economy and agricultural system are causing many people to call for a more sustainable system of producing food. Over the last decades, the explosion of agribusiness has shifted the focus of food production to high profits, mass production and making food a commodity, rather than a life sustaining resource. Until modern times, food production was the responsibility of the community, at the center of community life. The separation of food production from the community has not only affected the health and well-

being of society but has further distanced us from the natural cycles of life. The rise in diet-related illnesses, such as diabetes and obesity as well as new strains of disease, such as mad cow disease are an indication of this.

Global leaders today speak of a food crisis, but the deeper crisis we face is one of the consciousness with which we approach food. The culture that has developed around food production and consumption has divorced most people from the growing of food and from nature itself. If we are to address this problem successfully, we must form a spiritual collaboration between humankind and nature and encourage communities and individuals to get involved once again in the sustainable production of food. This is a critical step in renewing our relationship with nature - with the forces on which we depend for our sustenance and life. It is a vital step in ensuring the future well-being of our communities and our world.

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people who live in it...”

— *Mokichi Okada*



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