

By Bob Schultz

What does “sustainable” mean? I have been afferent different ideas but I don’t believe any of them. Sustainable is when you cut some trees down, mill them into lumber, build a building and replant the harvested trees with new seedlings. When the building has outlived its usefulness, and the planted seedlings are big enough to harvest and build a replacement building, that is sustainability.

What is a conservationalist?

A conservationist is a person who believe in preserving soil, water and the troposphere. A conservationist uses household food leftover, yard waste, paper and any other degradable items to turn them into compost to be used to make the property more fertile. A conservationist, if he needed buildings for his farm, would move building from a property where they were going to be demolished to his property where they would be utilized in another life and saving natural resources. A conservationist going into a restaurant will take his food that he can’t eat home with him and eat it the following day. A conservationist would think carefully about making a trip somewhere and and decide to stay home and not use irreplaceable resources for a superfluous notion. A conservationist would not be afraid to wear clothing with a frayed collar or a small hole in the pant leg. A conservationist would repurpose or recycle his old belongings. I’m getting darned tired of writing conservationalist!

Rober Rodale founded the Rodale Institute and published the “New Farm” magazine, which I subscribed to for many years. He was pushing his beliefs in organic farming an the health benefits of eating organic food. During a taping of the Dick Cavett show, he stated the benefits of the organic lifestyle. He claimed that unless he was run down by a sugar-charged cab driver, he would probably live to be 100. He had a heart attack and died on the set at age 72. Maybe he should have eaten more Twinkies. George DeVault was part of the Rodale Institute and claimed Louis Bromfield as an organic farmer. Not entirely true, although Bromfield strongly believed in increasing organic matter of the soil, he also believed in the use of commercial fertilizers to accelerate the soil-building process.

Many people believe that all soils in their original condition were very fertile. Not always true and quite often false. Am sending a soil sample result from Oshtemo loam out of an undisturbed forest. Very low readings. Podzol soils, especially on upland areas, are not that fertile.

I have pretty well covered everything on Brookside Farm except politics and religion. An old gray-beard tole me when I was a young pup that a man’s politics, his religion and the kind of tobacco he chews is his own business. That rules out any discussion on those issues.

You are probably very busy and don’t have time to read, but here are two good books, Eating Dirt is the biography of Charlotte Gill, a tree planter. She estimates she planted over one million trees. A very interesting read. The other book was written by Sepp Holzer and is about land reclamation. Sepp is Austrialian and he worked extensively in Spain and Portugal bringing back to life land that was undergoing deforestation. His biggest weapon was water management using ponds and reservoirs to capture the heavy winter rainfall.

This is the last letter I’m writing to you. You will have to find someone else to give you tidbits of advice – preferably someone who knows what he is talking about. When you read this sentence, try to bring your inner self to a peaceful and tranquil attitude before you read the last sentence.

You can threaten, you can cajole, you can wheedle, but you are not going to get the Master Farmer plaque back.

Happy Trails,

Bob Schultz