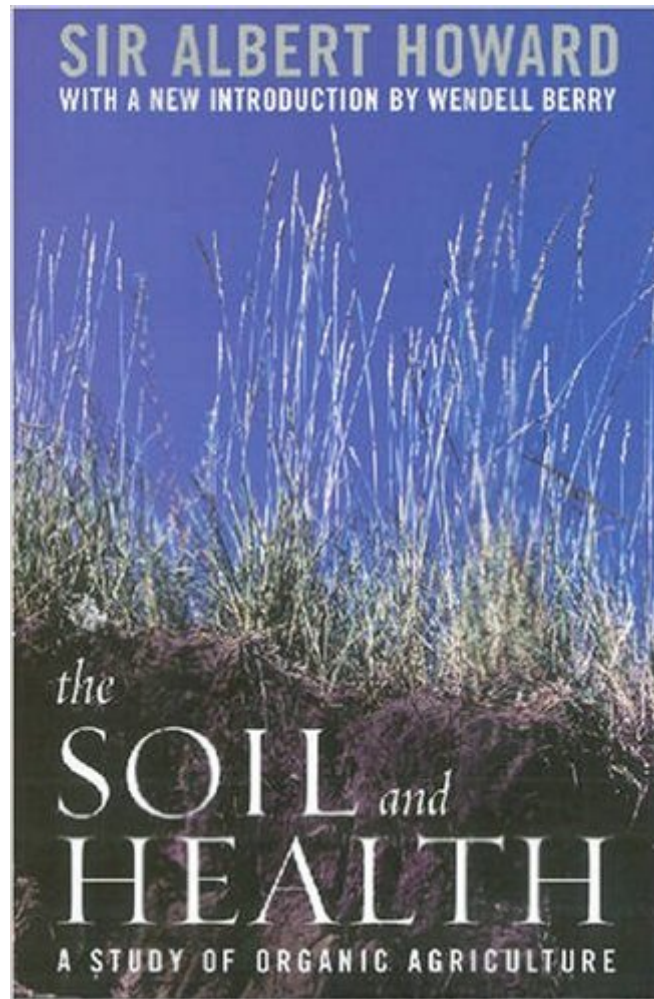


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The Soil And Health: A Study Of Organic Agriculture (Clark Lectures)



Synopsis

During his years as a scientist working for the British government in India, Sir Albert Howard conceived of and refined the principles of organic agriculture. Howard's *The Soil and Health* became a seminal and inspirational text in the organic movement soon after its publication in 1945. *The Soil and Health* argues that industrial agriculture, emergent in Howard's era and dominant today, disrupts the delicate balance of nature and irrevocably robs the soil of its fertility. Howard's classic treatise links the burgeoning health crises facing crops, livestock, and humanity to this radical degradation of the Earth's soil. His message—that we must respect and restore the health of the soil for the benefit of future generations—still resonates among those who are concerned about the effects of chemically enhanced agriculture.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The Soil and Health is a wonderful book that is equal parts agricultural science and environmental advocacy, with just a dash of kooky Nature worship thrown in. Howard was a conventionally trained agricultural scientist in the late 19th and early to mid 20th century who was employed by the British government to bring modern industrial agriculture, based on chemical fertilizers, pesticides, fungicides and herbicides to Britain's tropical colonies. Soon, though, he realized the value of more traditional agricultural practices from India and China, especially in keeping the microbial, fungal and invertebrate life in the soil healthy. If you believe in the value of organic agriculture, it is somewhat sad to see how little has changed since 1945. Howard confidently predicts in his book that organic

methods based on compost would soon sweep the globe. Things have changed some, though. We can now buy "organic" labeled products in most markets in America, and I believe that more people have an appreciation for the importance of treating the earth well. This book does an excellent job of establishing and reinforcing that appreciation.

Jared Diamond and others have written about how civilizations have destroyed themselves by exploiting their soils. Sir Albert Howard said the same thing, but he said it 100 years ago. Howard was the father of the modern organic, holistic farming movement. This book is incredibly readable and will change how you think about food, soil, and the fate of civilization.

As a long time reader of Wendell Berry, I have been fascinated to read this book that Berry claims to have influenced his thinking to such a great extent. Sir Albert Howard is a wonderful science writer, able to lucidly explain complicated biological processes and marshal all of his observations in the service of a coherent argument about our relationship to nature. I see deep truth in this book, and an approach to scientific thinking that never loses sight of our unavoidable ignorance or our ultimately spiritual destiny.

I remember many years ago in college that I was surprised by how much research is cyclical. Previous research is challenged by one generation and then rediscovered by the next generation. Much of what is written in this book is now being rediscovered as the latest organic farming and gardening methods. There is different technology today, but the new things being discovered differ very little from what is written in this book which is based upon hands on research that was done many decades ago.

[[ASIN:0813191718 The Soil and Health: A Study of Organic Agriculture (Culture of the Land)]Robert Rodale dedicated the September, 1948 issue of ORGANIC GARDENING as a memorial to Albert Howard. I made this note from that issue, "The purpose of this book is threefold: to record my own observations and reflections, which have accumulated during some forty-five years, on the occurrence and prevention of disease, to establish the thesis that most disease can be traced to an impoverished soil, which leads to imperfectly synthesized protein in the green leaf and finally to the breakdown of those protective arrangements which Nature has designed for us." Howard's preface. Also from my notes, "The quality of our food and health decreases each year. In 1995 the USA ranked 17th in life expectancy, in 10000 we ranked 24th.

Countries are not ranked 17th in life expectancy on the internet at WHO Statistical Information System. Dr. Christopher Murray, MD, PhD of Who has this to say, "Basically you die earlier and spend more time sidelined if you are an American rather than a member of most other developed countries" A God bless you to Wendell Berry for your introduction. I am still haunted by your UNSETTLING OF AMERICA; CULTURE AND AGRICULTURE which I read many years ago.

This is an essential book that all serious farmers and gardeners should read and have on their shelves. According to Wendell Berry, it is the book that has shaped his philosophy on agriculture more than any other.

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