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WHAT'S IN YOUR SEED?

You probably recall your first study of biology or botany in elementary or middle school, and learning that seed are found in the ovule or fruit of flowering plants. The ultimate function of plants is to produce seed, to perpetuate themselves. Seed or fruit supply us with nutrients that were first acquired from the soil by the roots of the parent plants and which were then transferred within the plants to the seed and fruit. Seeds, produced by plants, help sustain human and animal life.

Seed contain the genetic code that enables the passing of traits from one plant generation to the next. You may recall that phosphorus is essential to development of the genetic code and energy transfer processes in all plant and animal life. Potassium is crucial for protein development and regulation of water relations in plants. Medical professionals and nutritionists recommend a diet high in potassium from fruits, vegetables, and legumes for optimum heart health.

To receive adequate nutrition, healthcare professionals advise that we eat a balance of foods from different functional groups. Cereal grains, including wheat, rice, rye, barley, oats, and corn...legumes such as soybeans, peas, and beans...and nuts are all a critical part of the food pyramid. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has recently redefined the food pyramid. You can visit it at : >www.MyPyramid.gov<. USDA has also provided nutrition information at its website: >www.nutrition.gov<. It lists the mineral nutrient content of foods we eat. Much of our ability to produce textiles for clothing also depends on the fibers produced on cotton seed. Many types of seed are not directly consumed, but are processed into products such as flour, protein meal, vegetable oils, and other food and feed ingredients, which we may seldom recognize as key components in our food products.

The quantity and quality of the seed our society relies on for sustenance has a foundation dependent on adequate nutrition of the parent plants. So, it stands to reason that a well-nourished, healthy plant should result in seed that contains protein, carbohydrates, fiber, oil, vitamins, and mineral nutrients. Because our health and prosperity depend heavily on the ability of plants to acquire adequate and balanced nutrition, we should be keenly aware of the need to replace the harvested nutrients. Nourishing the soil, to at least replace harvested nutrients, will provide for more sustainable agricultural and horticultural production systems. Know the quantities of nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium removed in the harvest of your crops by visiting the PPI website: >www.ppi-ppic.org/nutrientremoval<.

This production knowledge and actions taken to provide balanced plant nutrition will help feed and clothe a growing world population.

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