Phosphorus, a Natural Resource That Could Be Sustainable

We consume a lot of resources. Gasoline, coal, water, phosphorus, oil, and rare minerals are the six most used natural resources. We consume them on a daily basis. Our usage of these resources is completely unsustainable, so unsustainable scientists believe we will run out of the building blocks of life within the next 100 years. Many countries will be facing drastic water shortages as well as major gas and oil shortages.

Phosphorus is a resource with a sustainable solution. It is one of the major additives in synthetic/chemical fertilizers such as Miracle-Gro used to fertilize fruit and vegetable. In this sense, our use of phosphorus to keep the world's food supply alive is beneficial, but the way that we mine phosphorus is completely unsustainable.

Phosphorus is contained within rocks and is currently accessed by blowing them up. Think about how crazy that is! We blow up rocks to get phosphorus, and to top that off, there are only three countries in the world with rocks that contain phosphorus – the United States, China, and Morocco.

We are destroying mountain ranges like the Appalachians. Yes, we are blowing up mountain ranges to get phosphorus. Then the phosphorus is added to a synthetic fertilizer in such high concentrations that often ends up burning the plants it was supposed to nourish, defeating the purpose of using it in the first place.

Another damaging effect of chemical fertilizers (all of which have phosphorus in them) is that they kill the beneficial life in our soil. While phosphorus is a valuable nutrient for plant

growth, currently accepted practices will eventually render the soil infertile.

Thankfully there is a better way and this solution is completely sustainable. The solution comes from two crops that are already being grown for animal feed all over the world: organic alfalfa and organic soybeans.

Organic alfalfa and organic soybeans are phosphorus rich cover crops. Cover crops are used as part of a successful organic management system as they are grown solely with the intention of being tilled under (rather than harvested) in the late fall/early spring (depending on winter weather patterns).

Cover crops break down and contribute nutrients naturally found within them back into the soil. Cover cropping is a full circle solution. You plant the crops you are intending to grow for the year, these crops take resources from the soil to support their growth, and then you plant cover crops at the end of the growing season to return those spent resources to the soil.

Cover cropping with your own organic alfalfa or organic soybean (or purchasing an organic alfalfa meal or organic soybean meal powder) is the perfect solution to create a sustainable phosphorus source. There are many other sustainable ways to get beneficial nutrients to your plants. Honestly, who wants to blow up rocks and destroy the natural beauty of our planet to gain access to nutrients like phosphorus when we can plant our own sources and can keep the natural beauty of this planet intact.

Sources:

- *Top 7 Genetically Modified Crops* – Margie Kelly
- *The six natural resources most drained by our 7 billion people* – The Guardian