# Remineralizing the Landscape: Creating Fecundity in the Garden

by Owen Wormser

Landscape professionals each year put countless amounts of plants in the ground. Their success and their client’s happiness requires that these plants establish themselves quickly and then grow with vigor. Consequently, any experienced landscape professional attends to each plant’s requirements, working hard to make sure each plant gets exactly what it needs. This usually means focusing on fertilization and pH requirements while locating each plant in a spot where it will get the necessary amounts of moisture and light for it to feel at home. All these considerations are essential for establishing healthy plants.

However, attending to these planting considerations only addresses the bottom line of planting. The ecological gardener- professional or amateur- is generally intent on the bottom line (they have to be) but they are also focused on much more than that. In our minds further subtleties require attention. One such subtlety that is central to ecological design that constantly needs addressing arises out of the following question: How can the ecology of each entity fit into the ecology of the whole? This being said, let’s apply this question to the practical matter of putting plants in the ground.

Each plant is its own ecological entity, complex systems unto themselves- they transpire, they feed and they photosynthesize. The whole that they fit into is that which holds them- the soil. But while it is standard for each plant to get individual attention upon planting it is far less common to address the health of the soil as a whole. Yet, without a healthy soil layer, plant life is not sustainable in the true sense of the word. Without healthy soil to support them it is understood that plants will grow less while needing more fertilizers. Also they will be more susceptible to pests, diseases and extremes of weather. It is imperative that soil health be as robust as it can be in order to help plants be long-lived, resistant to outside disease and pests while being durable and strong. Most people would agree this sounds like a good idea. Sounds good, but all this begs the question: How does one bring about such healthy soil? While there are a number of aspects to consider in building healthy soil a central piece of the picture can be achieved using Soil Remineralization.

Soil Remineralization (SR) is an easy and affordable way to boost the health of soil, and thusly any plants supported by the soil. While fertilization focuses on getting only a few of the most essential nutrients to plants, SR uses rock dust to ensure that plants have access to almost all the trace elements and minerals that are essential for their health. When added to the soil, rock dust is digested and broken down by microbial life within the soil making it readily available to plants. These elements and trace minerals act as the building blocks that allow plants to perform essential functions (such as forming cellular nuclei). Although many trace elements and minerals are often present in the soil, SR offers a tremendous boost by making them available at a slow and steady release rate over a long period of time. By boosting microbial action SR increases earthworm activity which in turn aids in the building of hummus, reducing soil erosion while increasing storage capacity of the soil (this is a typical scenario with SR). Scientific research has shown over and over (as a resource visit: www.remineralize.org) that remineralization boosts the strength, longevity, taste and nutritional value of plants. It has been shown that SR augments any organic agricultural practice. In short, remineralization can take whole gardens, meadows, vegetable gardens, forests and any other ecosystem to new levels of fecundity.

It is important to know that SR is a simple process that can be easily achieved on any scale. You can begin the process of SR by locating a local source of rock dust. Throughout the industrialized world the aggregate industry stockpiles rock dust as a byproduct (within the industry it is known as “rock dust,” “rock flour,” “minus #200 mesh” or “float“). The nearest gravel pit is the best place to ask first. Not only is float readily available but it is very affordable (usually ranging from no cost to $8.00 a ton). This very fine rock dust can then be applied on top of the soil area that you want to remineralize. On a small scale it can be applied by hand while

commercially it can be applied with orchard sprayers.  Either way it is helpful if the rock dust is dry so that it takes on a powdery consistency (avoid breathing the dust).  In most cases this fine powder can be distributed using a lime spreader or a shovel. It can be applied liberally wherever there is plant life in your yard.  Since rock dust releases its minerals and elements slowly and because it is not a fertilizer there is no risk over application. For fun you might want to check the soil acidity before and after application- SR routinely counters soil acidity. (For more detailed info on sources and application please visit www.remineralize.org.)

Soil remineralization is a very effective strategy in pursuing healthy, full landscapes.  It’s effectiveness is an excellent example of how if one attends to the health of the whole as well as the parts one can create such health and vigor that inorganic compounds such as pesticides or herbicides become obsolete.