

## Columns

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### You Bet Your Garden

Kerry Herndon



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Many Saturdays I drive from my home south of Miami to Downtown to attend MBA classes at the Florida International University campus. I need to arrive by 8:00 a.m., so sometime between 7:00 and 7:30 a.m., I'm on my way. This led to the discovery of a wonderful radio program at seven minutes 'til 8:00 a.m. every Saturday on NPR Now called "You Bet Your Garden," hosted by Mike McGrath and sponsored by Burpee. This show is available on local public radio stations at different times, but you also can get them from the website.

The broadcast is from Pennsylvania, so not extremely relevant to South Florida gardening—at least at first listen. I've learned so much about organic gardening and gardening in general it made me want to start a garden of vegetables again. Mike McGrath has a lot of great expert

guests dispensing all kinds of knowledge that any gardener can use. Recently, the inventor of square-foot gardening was on talking about how they've changed the recommendations for the soil in the garden. In the past, they recommended adding 6 in. of high-quality soil and mixing it with the first 6 in. of existing soil. Now they've found it's better to add the 6 in. to the top and not blend in the old soil.

It's clear that Mike McGrath is the real deal, a true expert in this area of all things that go in the ground and a great resource for all of us. Mike often refers to the answers A to Z on his website that's frequently updated. B is for bees and a lot of information about them and why you should support your local bees. A couple of weeks ago, there was a call about carpenter bees damaging a cedar barn. Mike had a complete solution that was just amazing to me right off the top, which means the guy just knows a ton of stuff. Lots of other stuff under B as well. M is for manure and the right way to use it (and the wrong way as well). The depth is just amazing and it's at your fingertips 24/7. It was from another You Bet Your Garden show that I learned about the repurposing of the *Bacillus thuringiensis israelensis* (BTi) for the killing of mosquito larvae. What a great product. It's a biological control that can be used anywhere there's standing water of soggy soil that breeds mosquitoes. I didn't know this product existed. It'll go into use at the nursery and my home this mosquito season.

This would be considered old-fashion media. Radio has been around for a very long time. Old media allows

for the discovery of different sources of information. The combination of old and new media is very powerful. Mike constantly refers to the information on the website so people can concentrate on the specific questions and information they need to solve their gardening problems. It goes beyond problem solving to education that prevents the problem from happening. Knowledge is power. There may be plenty of other sources for this kind of information, but I don't know about them. I had to be pointed in that direction from a compelling radio show. It was several shows before I took the plunge into the deep information available on the website. This has been a long labor over time for so many to benefit. If the answer isn't there, you can always email the site with your question. Each week there's a question of the week.

My experience with things horticulture and the general public is that people are afraid to buy because they don't know how to care for what they buy. How can we expand on the Mike McGraths of the world and bring it to ornamentals? How can we remove the fear? There's only so much that can be put on a care tag. **GP**

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*Kerry Herndon owns and operates Kerry's Bromeliad Nursery in Homestead, Florida. He can be reached at [kherndon@kerrys.com](mailto:kherndon@kerrys.com).*