
Man Versus Nature

At a recent Heartland Regional Water Quality Conference, the evening speaker was Daniel Wildcat who is a natural science professor at Haskell Indian Nations University in Lawrence, Kansas. He discussed several concepts which I think have real relevance to our farming and gardening and lawn keeping.

On the Anniversary of Earth Day, the scheduled debate was Man versus Nature. There can be no debate, because you can not debate a part against the whole. Man is but one small part of nature. It is not about natural resources to be used and/or abused. It is about relationships to be respected with the natural world around us. Our respect for the earth, wind, water, plants, animals, minerals, space, etc.

Should this change the way we think about a dandelion? Yes. Does this mean that our yards and fields have to be choked with weeds? No. It is an attitude thing. When we see the dandelion do we ask, which herbicide will kill it as fast as possible? Or do we ask, what happened which created an opportunity for the weed to be there and how can I adjust the management to deal with it. I still may arrive at some use of the herbicide, but from a very different angle.

"Our traditional attitude in planning farm use for crop production is how do we change it to make it fit our needs", says Duane Beck, Director of South Dakota State University Dakota Lakes Research Farm and a longtime no-till advocate. To be in tune with nature we need to look at our land and say, *"how are these resources best suited to utilize in capturing the sun energy, water and nutrient resource."* In Southeast Nebraska many farm owners and operators have kind of came to this view through the back door. The plow and erode era of the 20's and 30's moved to terraces and disk and on to chisel plows. Today the practices of no-till, crop rotation, tile-outlet terraces, buffer strips, and stream bank protection are moving us a bit closer to a respected relationship with the natural heritage of our prairie land.

Just for fun I will include a Daniel Wildcat story about the tribal elder asked to testify in a case involving tribal land management in British Columbia. The plan was proposed by the Canadian Government based on the advice of a noted anthropologist from Quebec (which just happens to be a long way from British Columbia). The defense team brought in a 78 year old who have never been to court and rarely been to town.

The court started to swear him in as a witness, *"Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth so help you God?"* *"No"*, the man replied.

The judge asked if the witness wanted to testify or had some objection to being a witness. *"No"*, the man replied. The court repeated the swearing in statement, again the gentleman replied, *"no"*.

The judge asked what the objection was to the swearing in statement. The man replied, *"you are asking me to tell the whole truth, I do not know the whole truth, I can only tell you what I know."*

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