

The Hidden Half of Nature: The Microbial Roots of Life and Health

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A riveting exploration of how microbes are transforming the way we see nature and ourselves-and could revolutionize agriculture and medicine.

Prepare to set aside what you think you know about yourself and microbes. Good health-for people and for plants-depends on Earth's smallest creatures. The Hidden Half of Nature tells the story of our tangled relationship with microbes and their potential to revolutionize agriculture and medicine, from garden to gut.

When David R. Montgomery and Anne Bikl decide to restore life into their barren yard by creating a garden, dead dirt threatens their dream. As a cure, they feed their soil a steady diet of organic matter. The results impress them. In short order, the much-maligned microbes transform their bleak yard into a flourishing Eden. Beneath their feet, beneficial microbes and plant roots continuously exchange a vast array of essential compounds. The authors soon learn that this miniaturized commerce is central to botanical life's master strategy for defense and health.

They are abruptly plunged further into investigating microbes when Bikl is diagnosed with cancer. Here, they discover an unsettling truth. An armada of bacteria (our microbiome) sails the seas of our gut, enabling our immune system to sort microbial friends from foes. But when our gut microbiome goes awry, our health can go with it. The authors also discover startling insights into the similarities between plant roots and the human gut. We are not what we eat. We are all-for better or worse-the product of what our microbes eat.

This leads to a radical reconceptualization of our relationship to the natural world: by cultivating beneficial microbes, we can rebuild soil fertility and help turn back the modern plague of chronic diseases. The Hidden Half of Nature reveals how to transform agriculture and medicine-by merging the mind of an ecologist with the care of a gardener and the skill of a doctor.

20 illustrations

David R. Montgomery is a professor of geomorphology at the University of Washington and a 2008 MacArthur Fellow. He is the author of *The Rocks Don't Lie* and other award-winning popular science books.

Anne Bikl is a biologist and environmental planner. Her career spans the fields of environmental stewardship, habitat restoration, and public health. *The Hidden Half of Nature* is her first book.

Their website is dig2grow.com "A must-read for avid gardeners, those interested in bolstering our precarious food supply, or anyone remotely concerned about their health and the soil under their feet."

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Kirkus Reviews

"The Hidden Half of Nature offers a wonderfully fresh and exquisitely informed approach that could change how we relate to ourselves, our diets, our gardens and our world."

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Tim McNulty, Seattle Times

"[A] transformative read."

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Tom Philpott, Mother Jones

"Montgomery and Bikl argue that when we farm and when we eat, we're feeding a diverse community of microorganisms. This book is sure to become a game-changing guide to the future of good food and healthy landscapes."

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Dan Barber, chef and author of The Third Plate

"Amazingly detailed and well-researched. ... [The Hidden Half of Nature] lays out the beautiful connection between the microbial garden in our bodies and the microbial garden in the Earth."

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Sally Peterson, Oregon Live

"The Hidden Half of Nature draws a straight line from the microbes that live in healthy soil to those that live in healthy guts, skillfully blending the personal and the scientific. This is a must-read for anyone concerned with their own health."

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Amy Stewart, author of The Drunken Botanist

"One of the year's best books on gardens and health."

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Jim McCausland, Sunset Magazine

"The Hidden Half of Nature reads like a fast-paced novel but tells the true story of the workings of soils, and even our own bodies."

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Neil Shubin, author of The Universe Within

Other Books

Humanities Perspectives in Peace Education. In *Humanities Perspectives in Peace Education: Re-Engaging the Heart of Peace Studies*, scholar-teachers across a variety of humanities fields explore the content, methods, and pedagogies that are unique to their respective disciplines in contributing to the study of peace and justice. In recent decades, even as peace scholarship has burgeoned, many peace studies texts—including those that purport to be interdisciplinary in nature—have emphasized social science perspectives and, in some cases, have foregone exploration of the role of the humanities altogether in comprehensive peace education. While humanities scholars continue to stake out space for peace scholarship within their fields, no volume has attempted to collect the wisdom of multiple humanities disciplines in order to make the case for their critical role in authentic peace education. *Humanities Perspectives in Peace Education* addresses that shortcoming in the field of peace studies by exploring the ways in which the humanities are uniquely situated to contribute particular content, knowledge, skills, and values required of comprehensive peace education, scholarship, and activism. These include the development of empathy and understanding, creative vision and imagination, personal and communal transformation toward "the good" in society (such as the pursuit of justice, nonviolence, freedom, and human thriving), and field-specific analytical lenses of their own, among other contributions. Both teachers and students of peace will find value in this interdisciplinary humanities volume. Each chapter of *Humanities Perspectives in Peace Education* offers a deep-dive into a particular humanities field—including philosophy, literature, language and culture studies, rhetoric, religion, history, and music—to mine the field's unique contributions to peace and justice studies. Scholars ask: "What are we missing in peace education if we fail to include this academic discipline?" Chapters include suggestions for peace pedagogies within the humanities field as well as bibliographies and suggestions for further reading.

the breadth of the field of peace studies requires (increasingly) substantial supplementary readings. 13. Wood, *Invitation to Peace Studies*, vii. ... *The Great Tradition: Classic Readings on What It Means to Be an Educated Human Being*."