

Enhancement of Horticultural Crops for Improved Human Health: Introduction to the Colloquium

Jack E. Staub and Philipp Simon

U.S. Department of Agriculture—Agricultural Research Service, Vegetable Crops Research Unit, Department of Horticulture, University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI 53706

Irwin Goldman

Department of Horticulture, University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI 53706

Horticultural crops for human health—perhaps the connection is so obvious for horticulturists that it is overlooked. That connection certainly is missed, or misunderstood, by much of the consuming public. Yet horticultural crops are a primary dietary source of essential nutrients, such as vitamins C and A, folate, and protein. Furthermore,

horticultural crops provide many nutritionally less well defined, yet important, components of our diet, such as fiber and antioxidants, which help protect us from the development of cancer and cardiovascular diseases. Transgenic technologies also open up the possibility of administering oral vaccines as an inherent component of food.

The purpose of this colloquium is to review several known contributions of horticultural crops to human health and to look toward opportunities to expand these contributions in the future. Plant breeding, biotechnology, postharvest handling, and processing will all play a role in carrying out these improvements, and horticulturists will be the ones to bring them to consumers.

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