



“Organic Radish Award”

This year, Georgia Organics will be presenting a best practice award for a school district working with sustainable and/or certified organic farms, highlighting and teaching organic growing practices, and incorporating sustainably grown or raised foods in school meals and activities.



Frequently Asked Questions for the Award

1. What is “sustainably grown and raised food”?

For the purpose of this Award, sustainably grown and raised foods include foods that are USDA Certified Organic, Certified Naturally Grown, and grown or raised using organic production practices.

- a. **USDA Certified Organic:** Organic certification is regulated by the USDA. Farms with organic certification are legally able to sell, label, and represent their products as organic. Certified farms use growing methods, pesticides, and fertilizers that are approved by the National Organic Standards Board. The NOSB defines organic agriculture as an ecological management system that promotes and enhances biodiversity, biological cycles, and soil biological activity. More information on organic certification can be found at: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/organic-certification>
- b. **Certified Naturally Grown:** Certified Naturally Grown is a peer-review certification to farmers and beekeepers producing foods utilizing organic methods and excluding synthetic chemicals and genetically modified organisms. More information on Certified Naturally Grown can be found at www.cngfarming.org.
- c. Food grown or raised using organic production practices which generally:
 - i. Use natural occurring substances and prohibit or strictly limit synthetic substances
 - ii. Use fertilizers of organic origin such as composted plant materials and/or manure and bone meal to amend soil
 - iii. Emphasize soil health
 - iv. Rely on biological pest control such as beneficial insects and companion planting
 - v. Grow a diversity of crops and rotate crops regularly

2. How do you know for sure a farmer is growing organic food?

Purchasing food from a farmer with a USDA organic certification ensures you are purchasing organic food produced in accordance with the strict standards of that certifications. Only farmers that are Certified Organic can legally market their products as organic.

3. How do I determine if we are growing food organically in our school garden, school farm, and/or school greenhouse?

Most schools do not certify their gardens, greenhouses, or farms as Certified Organic. You can determine if faculty and students are growing using organic methods by asking the following questions:

a. What do you use to fertilize your crops?

Crop nutrients and soil fertility in organic systems are managed through crop rotations, cover crops, and application of plant and animal materials such as compost, and/or nutrient or soil amendment that are included on the [National list of allowable synthetic substances for Organic Certification](#). More information about organic fertilizers, can be found at [here](#).

Organic systems do not use synthetic fertilizers that are not approved for the National Organic Program and do not use sewage sludge as an amendment.

b. What do you use to control pests (insects, weeds, invasive plants, algae, fungus)?

Organic systems use management practices as their first line of defense against pests, weeds, and disease. These practices include crop rotation, sanitation measures to remove disease vectors, weeds, and pest habitats, and site-specific plant species adapted to an area or resistant to prevalent pests, weeds, and diseases. When pest problems do arise the first method of control is through mechanical or physical methods such as introduction of predators or parasites of the pest, development of habitat for natural enemies of the pest, non-synthetic controls such as lures, traps, and repellents, mulching with biodegradable materials, mowing, livestock grazing, hand weeding, heat or electrical means, and plastic or synthetic mulches that are removed at the end of the growing season. When these methods are insufficient, organic growers may use an approved substance from the [National List of Synthetic substances](#) and document the use of that item.

c. What types of seed do you use?

Organic systems use Certified Organic seed, untreated seeds, and/ or seeds saved from organically grown plants. Organic systems do not use genetically modified seed or treated seeds.

4. Our schools have hydroponic, aquaponics, and/or aeroponic growing systems. Do these count as organic?

Hydroponic, aquaponic, and aeroponic systems can be considered organic for this award if they are maintained with organic methods. Fertilizers, herbicides, pesticides, and fungicides used in these systems must be [Organic Materials Review Institute](#) approved. Certified Organic seed, untreated seeds, and/ or seeds saved from organic plants are used. Pest management for organic hydroponic, aquaponic, and aeroponic systems follows the same guidelines as school gardens, greenhouses, and farms utilizing organic growing methods (see above).