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## **Organic Farming And The Swath of Death**

The future of organic farming may be playing out in a tiny town in California.

Alan Bornt farms organic spinach on 450 acres near the town. He uses no pesticides or herbicides.

The problem? Gnats.

Gnats, average size of 1/16 to 1/8 inch long, black bodies, clear wings, are a type of very small fly.

The 550 residents of Jacumba say the gnat population is out of control. Millions of the intensely irritating creatures swarm the town and surrounding areas. They make life miserable, flying into eyes, ears, swarming around everything. Sitting outside to relax and read the paper, or to sip a beer, is impossible, the residents claim.

The residents place the blame squarely on Bornt and his organic farm.

One of California's major universities studied the problem and concluded that Bornt's farm was responsible for more than 80 million gnats. The county required him to place over 1,000 gnat traps, but the traps haven't worked as well as expected.

Now a new plan has been formulated: alternating rows of alfalfa and corn forming a 100-ft "swath of death" for the gnats. The alfalfa and corn will adjoin the organic spinach crop. But they will be sprayed with conventional pesticides. The alfalfa and corn will lure the gnats and the pesticide will kill them.

The plan was conceived by James Bethke, who serves as a farm adviser with the University of California.

For Bornt, the stakes are high. If the plan doesn't work, the county is threatening to shut down his organic farm for good.

Posted by Green Man in General at 02:48