Contaminated Compost

This warning comes from Laurie Getzendanner:

I just wanted to pass on the following info. Some farmers are using an herbicide (Forefront 3L or Aminopyralid + 2-4D amine) for weed control in the hay fields. Here, we use the used bedding and goat manure for mulch and fertilizer in our tomato gardens. For the first time ever, the leaves of my plants curled up dramatically and the plants became seriously deformed. Of the 130 or so tomato plants that I planted, 35 have managed to survive. They are all in groupings where apparently the soil is not contaminated. I took some damaged plants to the agricultural extension agency where I was lucky to meet the head man. He spotted the problem right away. My (hay) farmer confirmed that he does use this chemical.

Imagine, collecting manure to be organic only to poison the soil. It also makes you wonder how this may affect the goats.

Below is the information that the Ag. Extension man forwarded to me:

(…) Please know, that the active ingredient Aminopyralid used in some herbicides to control broadleaf weeds in fields many of which are used for forage crops has a long residual effect and takes a long time to breakdown in the soil. What does this mean? Well, if used as an herbicide of a forage crop feed to livestock following the label instructions, the active ingredient will pass through the livestock and remain active in the manure. Even when the manure has been composted over the course of a year the Aminopyralid remains active. So, if farmers and gardeners do not know that this herbicide was used to treat the hay that was feed the horses, they do not know that the composted manure is unsuitable for garden renovation. If contaminated manure is incorporated into the soil, the sun and microorganisms in the soil will eventually break the Aminopyralid down to where it no longer affects broadleaf plants. However, this process can take a year and in the mean time many broadleaf vegetables will not grow in the soil. The following vegetables are particularly sensitive to this chemical: Potatoes, Peas, Beans and other legumes, Carrots, Tomatoes, Lettuce, Spinach, Dahlias, and some roses.

So what can a gardener do if they have this problem? First they should know that if they can successfully grow any vegetables in this soil they are edible. The plant does not take up the chemical; the chemical just inhibits the way it functions. Second, the more the soil is cultivated and turned the faster the chemical will break down. Third, sweet corn can effectively be grown in the contaminated soil, since it is not a broadleafed plant; it is a type of grass. Lastly, periodically conducting a bioassay using the contaminated soil as a growing media and a sensitive plant will help you to determine over time whether or not the Aminopyralid is still active in the soil (…)