



LYNN VALLEY GARDEN CLUB

Established 1943

January 2019

### *President's Message – Anna Marie D'Angelo*

Happy New Year, everyone!!

There was no gardening to do during the last month or so, but that didn't stop me from filling the odd green waste bin after stormy weather. I know of several people who had to deal with floods in their basements, so I feel lucky that all I had was a messy yard to tidy. I don't know how much of a difference this makes to the water levels at my place but I had the drain tiles replaced with newer drainage about 10 years ago—not cheap!--and every summer I make a point of flushing out my main driveway drain with my sprayer on its strongest jet for at least an hour. (This is the one time the water police can get me.) This apparently does the trick of moving any sediment in the pipe along so it is not blocked at all. It is a relief to see rivers of water rushing into the drain, as is it is supposed to, during winter storms.

This meeting we will go over and vote again on the options for how we want to celebrate *LVGC's 75th anniversary* this year. Some members complained that they could not hear the options when we discussed them in the fall. We leaned towards doing something at our *Plant Sale* for public awareness and treating members to a trip to Van Dusen Gardens. T-shirts were also appealing. This year, we have invitations to visit Gerry's Garden and its neighbour, Loutet Farm, and there has also been discussion at the executive to take up an offer for the club to have a tour of the UBC Botanical Gardens. Don't know if we can do all our usual stuff too—bus trip to the Fraser Valley and members' garden tour—if we opt for the proposed local tours so member feedback will be welcomed on deciding what to do.

We had a goodly 50 members enjoy our Christmas party: it was nice to see so many come out on such a gloomy, wet night. It was the first 'event' at our new space and the extra room was appreciated. Thanks to all those who brought food bank items—it was quite a haul! — and also for the tasty contributions to the food tables. Thanks to Hospitality, the Executive and everyone who helped out. Hope all of you enjoyed the event. Anyone who has a suggestion for next year's Christmas craft, please contact me while it is fresh in both our minds. It would be nice to have something in place and not have to scramble in November when we are not quite in the festive mood to think about Christmas tasks. And lastly, for the dozen or so members who have not yet renewed their memberships, please do so at the January meeting. It is a lot of work for the Membership Committee if they have to go back and re sign up an existing member.



*"To plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow." – Audrey Hepburn*

### LVGC MEETINGS

3rd Thursday of each month (except July and August) at

**St. Stephen's Church**  
1360 E 24<sup>th</sup> Street

*Please note that meetings start promptly at 7:15 PM*

### SPEAKERS

January 17

**MICHAEL DENHAMER**  
*The Edible Garden Project*

February 25

**MARGARET NAKAHARA**  
*Orchids for the Home*

March 21

**JIM MORRIS**  
*Bonsai*

**April 11**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday because of Easter at St. Stephen's**

### Mailing Address:

Lynn Valley Garden Club  
P.O. Box 16053  
1199 Lynn Valley Road  
North Vancouver, BC  
V7J 3S9

<http://www.lynnvalleygardenclub.org>

## 2018 Executive

### President

Anna Marie D'Angelo

### Vice President

Penny LeCouteur

### Secretary

Jackie Morris

### Treasurer

Ginette Handfield

### Membership

Susan Huber

Sue Callahan

### Members at Large

Daphne Page

Doreen Dew

Hiromi Matsui

Linda Howe

## Committees

### Newsletter Editor

Maria Issa

### Plant Table

Norma Buckland

### Hospitality

Carole Cobbett

Susan Nicholls

Maggie Davis

### Sunshine/Door Prizes

Shirley Lawson

### Website

Aline Burlone

### Executive Meetings

1st Wednesday of the month

Next Meeting: Feb 6 7:30 PM

Chez GINETTE HANDFIELD

### Next Newsletter Deadline

February 13, 2017

If you have material to delight your fellow members - please submit it *via* the time-honoured routes or email to <mailto:lynnvalleygardclubnewsletter@gmail.com>

Thanks to all who contributed to this edition: and to Bruce Tennant, Anna Marie D'Angelo, Jenn Sydenham, Bonnie Noakes, Wayne Smith for photos!



## REPORTS

### VP Report

Hiromi has handed the VP/"hunter/gatherer for speakers" spot to Penny LeCouteur.

### Treasurer's Report - Ginette Handfield

- The bank balance at the middle of December was \$9299.63
- In petty cash there was \$494.15.
- The LVGC total is \$9793.78
- We are exactly on track/forecast. The books will be going out for review.

### Membership Report for the start of 2019 - Susan Huber & Sue Callahan

As of the January Executive meeting, there were 108 paid-up members. If you are one of those who was a member last year, but has forgotten to re-sign up - this is your last LEAF. You have been warned. Susan will chase you one more time....

Guest attendance at meetings is now \$5. LVGC is happy to invite new members to come, check us out and join! A notice will go on the website and in the North Shore News.

At the next meeting, there will be a *Notice of Motion* about increasing the membership from 125 to 150.

### Plant Table - Norma Buckland

There will be no Plant Table at the January meeting, but after that, things should start shooting up pretty quickly.

### Hospitality - Carole Cobbett & Susan Nicholls & Maggie Davis

.... our ever-constant reminder to try and remember to bring your own mug to meetings!!!!  
[...and as you think of your own treats, think of something to treat the foodbank.-m]

### The Leaf - Maria Issa

LVGC is the "proud owner" of many Master Gardeners and those taking the MG course: it would be great if MG, or soon-to-be-MG, could contribute some notes to The Leaf - along the lines of: "in February you need to prep your garden like this..." or "It may still be too early to plant that *Veggimaxus indoorsii* ..." and other useful pieces of info for those of us who are flying by the seats of our (gardening) pants. You may have forgotten what it's like to *not* know - and you may assume that your info is redundant: IT IS NOT!!! IT IS IMPORTANT to the non-MG crowd. Please share your experience and expertise often. We are all happy to learn.

## REQUEST FROM THE EXEC

Does anyone have (or know of someone who has) a relatively recent laptop to donate to the Club? We are in constant disarray when it comes to speakers' presentations on datasticks, their own laptops, our loaned laptops, etc. It is a constant technological cliff-hanger: will the computer talk to the projector? Will the presentation happen or will it be an awfully embarrassing situation? If you have ideas, suggestions - or a \*\*laptop\*\*!! - please, please, please let the Exec know. Many thanks!



"If you have a garden and a library, you have everything you need." - Marcus Tullius Cicero

**SPEAKER**  
**Thursday, January 17, 2019**  
**MICHAEL DENHAMER**

Michael Denhamer is the Education Coordinator for *The Edible Garden Project* | *North Shore Neighbourhood House* and can be found at 225 East 2nd Street, North Vancouver, BC, V7L 1C4; Work Phone: (604) 987-8138 ext. 231

Email: [schools@ediblegardenproject.com](mailto:schools@ediblegardenproject.com); Website: [ediblegardenproject.com](http://ediblegardenproject.com)

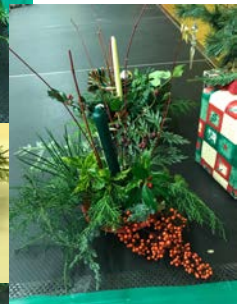
Michael will speak about the history of Edible Garden Project and Loutet Farm and what the mission is in both the local and larger community. He will then talk about building agricultural communities and their importance to healthy, resilient communities & food procurement in BC. The presentation will be about 45 minutes with 15 minutes of space for [LOTS! of] questions.



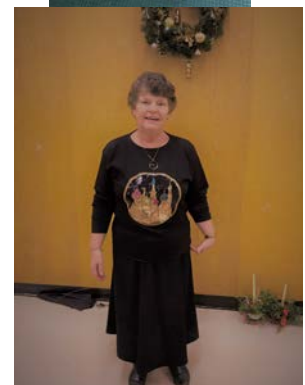
*Awww, so sad!! You missed our Holiday Party and Craft event - and missed all this fun!*

**TO THE PARTY ORGANIZERS:** In *Margaret Campbell's* words [*that I happen to agree with, 110%*]: "Thank you for a grand party - yes, I know it was supposed to be a "craft evening" but I enjoyed the party. This garden club is so alive and such fun to be with - thank you for your great leadership, and thanks to all those who contribute so much to make it all happen!" This was echoed by *Vanessa Tancock*, "It was a delightful evening with lots of good eats and good cheer. Bravo!" *Norma Austin* added: "It was a great party! Do you know who brought the **beet dip**? A few of us would like the **recipe**... or where to buy it."

There was craft (Thanks Margaret N!!!!): "before" ... "during" ..... and "after" [pretty spectacular results!! - there are some very artistic LVGC people!]



...and did we mention "Xmas outfits"? WOW!!



... but, of course, the best was the "food" and the "fun" (and the food-bank donations! - thank you, wonderful LVGC!)



*We want to hear from you NOW if you have any good NEW ideas/suggestions for next year's holiday event - or how to repeat-but-improve a similar event next year (75<sup>th</sup>!!! - a big celebration). As they say, "panic early and often"!*



### *Shhhhhh! Rumour has it....*

1. West Coast Seeds will be donating a variety of year: you can use these to grow veggies for the LVGC few seeds happen to drop into your own garden...

2. Due to POPULAR DEMAND, *The Veggimates* arms twisted to do another "Seedy Workshop" on Coast Seeds, or indeed any others, started and well, and they can be persuaded, this **exclusive** place **right before** the February meeting. Fingers space! So at the January meeting Tom and the know:



veggie seeds again this **Plant Sale**. Of course if a that's just karma. may have their rubber how to get those West flourishing. If all goes **special event** will take crossed and watch this Veggimates would like to

3. Who is interested in attending a seed starting work shop just before the February meeting, starting at ~6:15PM?

4. Who is interested in growing vegetables for the garden sale?

5. Who would be interested in "babysitting" pre-grown plants from the April meeting until the sale (by April some of us will have run out of space and some plants such as pumpkins can still be started for the sale)

If you are unable to attend the January meeting but answer 'yes' to any of the above, please call Tom at [REDACTED] so we can get an accurate idea of how to proceed.



*"Gardening is cheaper than therapy, and you get tomatoes." - unknown*

## *There are some serious Green Thumbs among us:*



I'm in jealous awe – when “the big one comes” I'll starve, but not these guys:

**Wayne** is way ahead of digging up yellow missed the party but my choy in the greenhouse Next year I should start greens in August instead Tomorrow I'll start as I have a 20lb sac and



the rest of us and is 'tatties', writes: “I new spinach and are looking perky. my fall and winter of December. sunflowers for greens haven't given much



to the birds. I hope the spinach is still alive next month, I'm holding back some in the house. It seems very hardy on the deck under glass. It just thaws out after frost and is edible again.”

**Veggitate Bruce** was also bragging: “New Year's Eve and my daffodils are in bloom again.” Then he adds insult to injury, “These are tomatoes that I grew last year, and harvested in September. They are a variety called 'long keeper'. As you can see they were a festive decoration at my Christmas dinner.



*The Veggitates will “profile” a favourite vegetable each month: Here is the first!*



## *Vegetable of the month: “KALE”*

*- Yvonne Kabata*

Yes. Kale. I can just hear my fellow Veggitates, Tom and Bruce, clench their teeth by the very mention of this vegetable, and the first one yet to make it into this new column! “What a *faux pas*, Yvonne, really!!”

BUT, there is kale, and then there is kale. Let me explain. First of all, it is one of the few vegetables (along with a few sticks of leek and the everlasting sprouting broccoli), that still stands strong in the garden at this dark season of the year. Plus, it improves in taste and texture once it has been kissed by the first frost. The challenge, I admit, is keeping the aphids off during the warmer growing season. I find that if one keeps the plant tidy and picks the leaves regularly (including the many that do end up on the compost) the aphid infestation can be kept under control. Plus, doesn't it just look pretty, if nothing else? You can even grow it in amongst your flowers for a beautiful, bold statement.

But here is the real reason why I decided to grow kale again this year. To be more specific, why I am growing the



Italian “Lacinato” kale. This plant grows a lot more neatly than other varieties, and it has dark green, succulent, juicy narrow leaves. I use them shredded thinly in salads, or coarsely chopped along with some sautéed garlic cooked like spinach. Just imagine if one were to add some mushrooms ... But it really shines in a dish called “Rrrrrrribollllita” (you MUST roll the R when you speak it out loud). It is one of these traditional, rustic, simple Italian dishes, a hearty, thick soup or stew that is

entirely made of vegetables and some stale bread, and which gets its beautiful flavour by cooking it veeeery slowly. It is actually left overnight and reheated the next day - hence the name "ribollita", which simply means reboiled. I am attaching my current favourite recipe, which changes slightly every time I use it, and depending on what other vegetables I have at hand. But the "Lacinato" kale is a must and may not be substituted!

So, if by now you think you might be tempted to grow some kale again after all (and you don't have to tell anybody), you will find some plants at our next plant sale (unless of course Tom and Bruce are hiding them)!

## *Ribollita*

### **Ingredients:**

- 1/2lb dried cannellini beans \* (1 1/3 cups) plus you can add dried peas, some lentils and/or barley
- 3 Tbsp good olive oil
- 1 onion
- 3 carrots
- 2 celery sticks
- up to 4 garlic cloves
- a few sprigs of thyme
- 1 tsp salt (yes, very little salt!)
- 1 potato (about 300 gr)
- 1 *bunch* "Lacinato" kale

- 1/2 head savoy cabbage (about 3/4 lb)
- some Swiss Chard
- 1 Tbsp tomato paste or 1/3 cup diced canned tomatoes or 1 fresh tomato \*\*
- 4 to 6 slices of 1-day old bread, I prefer the rustic kind
- freshly ground black pepper

\* Do NOT use canned beans. This recipe will not work unless you use dried beans.

\*\* Not too much tomato as we don't want the tomato flavour to become overpowering.

### **Method:**

Place the **unsoaked!** dried beans in the smaller pot with at least 4 cups of cold water (or more if needed) and just 1/2 teaspoon of salt. Turn on the heat to medium and bring to a gentle boil, then turn to lowest setting and cover. Keep simmering until cooked, about 3 to 3 1/2 hours.

In the meantime, chop carrots, onion and celery. Peel and dice the potatoes, cut remaining vegetables into 1/2 inch slices or cubes. Set aside.

In a larger pot heat the olive oil and sauté the carrots, celery, garlic and onion over medium-high heat, until golden in colour (7 to 8 minutes). Stir often to avoid burning. Add the thyme leaves, another 1/2 teaspoon of salt, the remaining fresh vegetables, tomato paste (or whatever you use), the cooked beans, and an additional 4 cups of water (or more if needed). Cook over low heat for about 1 hour.

Cut the bread into slices, crust on, and add it. Cook for another 5 minutes. Now let the soup rest overnight. Reheat the soup the next day, boiling for a few minutes over low heat. Sprinkle with freshly ground pepper and drizzle some high-quality olive oil over it before serving. *Buon appetito!*



... and while we are on recipes - here is Anna Marie's *Spinach Dip*: BUT WHO HAS THE **BEET DIP** RECIPE?????

I have replaced the sour cream with Greek yogurt--as we become more ingredient-aware-- and it is still delicious. I don't hollow out the sourdough round any more but I do use sour dough slices. My daughter came up with the idea to squeeze the water out of the cooked spinach using a ricer. Works like a charm!

- 1 cup mayo;
- 1 cup sour cream or Greek yoghurt;
- 1 10 oz frozen spinach, cooked, chopped
- 4 green onions, chopped
- 1 small can of water chestnuts - finely chopped
- 1 pkg Knorr vegetable soup mix
- 2 round sourdough loaves, one sliced

### **PREP:**

- Mix ingredients together
- Let sit in fridge - several hrs; or overnight
- Cut top off loaf,
- Hollow out
- Fill with refrigerated mix
- Serve with sliced loaf.



"We can complain because rose bushes have thorns, or rejoice because thorn bushes have roses." - Abraham Lincoln



"Rosas haun spinas, saun el'  
Mias spinas haun rosas, che bel!" - Romanche proverb

For those of you dreaming of warmer climes:



## Cork

– Jennifer Syndenham

Here is a photo of a cork oak. Cork oaks grow in Portugal and are the only tree in the world that can have its bark removed and still survive. The bark is still harvested by hand, and takes about 7 or 8 years to grow back. They number the sections of the tree - 1, 2, 3 *etc* to show which segment was removed in which year. When we were driving through, we initially thought that there had been some kind of grass fire that had singed the bottoms of the trees because the trunks look so black from a distance!

[Here is a picture of a cork tray in my kitchen – Maria]... and from Wikipedia:



*Quercus suber*, commonly called the **cork oak**, is a medium-sized, evergreen oak tree in the section *Quercus* sect. *Cerris*. It is the primary source of **cork for wine bottle stoppers** and other uses, such as cork flooring and as the

cores of cricket balls. It is native to southwest Europe and northwest Africa. In the Mediterranean basin the tree is an ancient species with fossil remnants dating back to the Tertiary period. It grows to up to 20 m (66 ft), although it is typically more stunted in its native environment. The leaves are 4 to 7 cm (1.6 to 2.8 in) long, weakly lobed or coarsely toothed, dark green above, paler beneath, with the leaf margins often downcurved. The acorns are 2 to 3 cm (0.79 to 1.18 in) long, in a deep cup fringed with elongated scales.

In the Portuguese town of Águas de Moura is located the Sobreiro Monumental (Monumental Cork Oak), a tree 234 years old, 16 metres (52 ft) tall and with a trunk that requires at least five people to embrace it. It has been considered a National Monument since 1988, and the Guinness Book of Records states it as the largest and oldest in the world.



## Some things to ponder:

1. *What benefits do I get for having joined the Lynn Valley Garden Club?* [... besides the great speakers, parties, food, tours, treats, workshops, soil, seeds, gardening info, friendships, plants, plant sale, pots, pig poo...?] Judith Brook reminds us that YOU ALSO GET SOME% OFF at a range of garden and gardening-related places. You do have to ask – and don't be shy about it – “I'm a member of the Lynn Valley Garden Club. Do you have a discount for us?” Then, as if by magic, the discount appears. Not always – but more often than not – and every little bit helps.

2. *Is the EGG TOAST?* This seems to be a rather existential question, (and really interesting!) but if you have ever wondered, the answer is in this link. <https://newfoodeconomy.org/death-of-the-industrial-egg-cage-free-law-just-plant-based-alternative/>

A functional hot link will be in the cover email. However, if you still have insomnia – you may also wish to ponder what every other dyslexic, existentialist, agnostic insomniac worries about at 3AM? (*answer elsewhere in the Leaf*).

3. *Whodunit?* At the Christmas party, as Bruce and Maria were chatting, **Bogna dropped the knife**. We looked at each other and said, “Wouldn't that be a great start to a Garden Club Murder Mystery?” Soooo: if you send me some useful items, I'll see what we can do about writing a collaborative murder mystery: remember those games we used to play at birthday parties? Write a boy's name; fold the paper to cover, pass to the next person; write a girl's name, fold, pass; he said, fold pass; she said.... *etc*. In that vein: Maria would need from you **Victim, Murderer, Means, Motive, Opportunity....**



The *North Shore News* carried a lovely article about Gerry's Garden. <https://www.nsnews.com/lifestyle/home-garden/north-vancouver-senior-transforms-local-space-1.2277849> Gerry McPherson, 96, started Gerry's Garden, located at Loutet Park at Rufus Avenue and 14th Street. In the wake of his son's sudden death due to cancer in 2007, MacPherson took out his grief on the weeds, clearing the formerly unused space and beautifying it for the community at large to enjoy. LVGC has been offered a tour of both Gerry's Garden and Loutet Farm - and the Exec is now working on the logistics. A few excerpts from Erin McPhee's article are quoted below.

"Despite the fact that Gerry claims to have no gardening background - "The only thing I know down there is a dandelion," he jokes - and highlights of his professional career include placer mining in the Yukon, working for Boeing helicopters, and running a marina with his brother in False Creek for more than 20 years - the site has been completely transformed for the better.

"What is was like before was impossible. It was a little path. ... It was all morning glories and devil's club and he cleared all of that out, by hand, by himself, and from one end to the other," says Molly McPherson.

Over the years the weeds have been replaced by a variety of plants, shrubs, trees and other landscaping elements and the space has a more formal look, complete with trails and walkways. "

Other volunteers have stepped in as many are concerned about providing a place for pollinators. Community members looking for more information on how to get involved in Gerry's Garden, can connect via [facebook.com/gerrysgardenNV](https://www.facebook.com/gerrysgardenNV).



## *Gardening could be the hobby that helps you live to 100 - found by Norma Ferguson*

<http://www.bbc.com/capital/story/20181210-gardening-could-be-the-hobby-that-helps-you-live-to-100>

By **Jamie Feldmar**, 10 December 2018, *Capital Generation Project*

Dan Buettner has studied five places around the world where residents are famed for their longevity: Okinawa in Japan, Nicoya in Costa Rica, Icaria in Greece, and Loma Linda in California and Sardinia in Italy. People living in these so-called "blue zones" have certain factors in common - social support networks, daily exercise habits and a plant-based diet, for starters. But they share another unexpected commonality. In each community, people are gardening well into old age - their 80s, 90s and beyond.

Could nurturing your green thumb help you live to 100?

### **Mood elevator**

It is well-known that an outdoor lifestyle with moderate physical activity is linked to longer life, and gardening is an easy way to accomplish both. "If you garden, you're getting some low-intensity physical activity most days, and you tend to work routinely," says Buettner. He says there is evidence that gardeners live longer and are less stressed. A variety of studies confirm this, pointing to both the physical and mental health benefits of gardening.



*Okinawa in Japan has one of the world's highest concentration of centenarians (Credit: Getty Images)*

In recent Dutch study, researchers asked participants to complete a stressful task, then split them into two groups. One group read indoors and the other gardened outdoors for 30 minutes. The group that read indoors reported that their mood "further deteriorated", while the gardeners not only had lower levels of the stress hormone, cortisol, afterwards, they also felt "fully restored" to a good mood.

Australian researchers following men and women in their 60s found that those who regularly gardened had a 36% lower risk of dementia than their non-gardening counterparts. Preliminary studies among elderly people suffering from cognitive issues (such as dementia and Alzheimer's) report benefits from garden settings and horticulture therapy. Sunlight and fresh air, for example, help agitated elders feel calmer, while the colours and textures of various plants and vegetables can improve visual and tactile ability. There is no panacea for growing old but, the science suggests, gardening does appear to improve our quality of life as we age.



## Let nature nurture you

It's not just about health effects, either: the social benefits of gardening can also increase longevity. Dr Bradley Willcox of the University of Hawaii studies centenarians in Okinawa, which has the world's highest ratio of centenarians, at approximately 50 per 100,000 people. Many residents maintain small personal gardens well into old age.

*Some research, including studies conducted in France, have shown that farmers are healthier than non-farmers (Credit: Alamy)*

He says that gardening helps with other essential, if somewhat more ephemeral, factors in increasing longevity. "In Okinawa, they say that anybody who grows old healthfully needs an *ikigai*, or reason for living. Gardening gives you that something to get up for every day." On top of that, explains Willcox, Okinawans value the concept of *yuimaru*, or a high level of social connectedness. "Getting together at a local market, bringing your produce and sharing your latest creations from the garden is a big social activity," he says. "That certainly helps people feel grounded and connected."

A sense of connection to other people is important, but so too is the individual connection to nature. One Harvard University study showed that people who were surrounded by lush greenery lived longer with a lower chance of developing cancer or respiratory illnesses.

Doctors in Scotland can now prescribe a walk in nature to treat a variety of ailments, including reducing blood pressure and anxiety, and to improve overall happiness. Gardening – even on a small plot in an urban area – is a simple way to incorporate more nature into your daily life.

Finally, there is also a dietary component to longevity that gardening can help with. Researchers have demonstrated a link between the "Mediterranean diet" – rich in vegetables, fruits, whole grains, legumes, nuts, fish and olive oil – and slower aging.

Willcox says the fundamental principle of eating an abundance of fresh vegetables, ideally from local gardens and markets, is important to longevity, whether the diet is technically Mediterranean or not. In Okinawa, for example, most people grow vegetables such as bitter melon and sweet potatoes in their gardens. "When you eat vegetables that you've grown yourself, it changes everything – they taste more delicious, and it really makes a difference in the health qualities (vitamins, minerals, phytoactive compounds *etc.*) of the food itself," says Willcox. Buettner, the "blue zones" expert, recommends a diet of "90% plants, especially greens and beans", and points out a simple truth: gardeners are more likely to plant what they want to eat.

## Farming for a longer life?

If gardening is good, is farming even better? Many of the lifestyle factors associated with longevity – such as living in the country and getting lots of exercise – apply to farmers as well. Some evidence suggests that farming is one of the healthiest occupations. One Australian study showed that farmers were a third less likely to suffer from a chronic illness, and 40% less likely to visit a GP than non-farm workers. Researchers from the US compared mortality rates among farmers against rates for the general population and found farmers less likely to die from cancer, heart diseases or diabetes. And studies in Sweden and France have also showed farmers are healthier than non-farmers.

Dr. Masahiko Gemma of Waseda University in Tokyo studied self-employed farmers in the central province of Saitama, who were found to have a longer life expectancy than non-farmers and work later into life. Many of Gemma's respondents were part-time farmers or retirees, and he describes many of their responsibilities as "similar to the work of maintaining a garden". "Small family farms are common in Japanese agriculture," says Gemma, explaining that his survey did not include farmers working for large-scale corporate operations. He found that self-employed farmers enjoyed statistically significant and positive changes in psychological and physical conditions before and after engaging in light farming activities. "Our guess is that farming work contributes to the maintenance of good health and spirits," he says.

*Researchers have demonstrated a link between a diet rich in vegetables, fruits, whole grains, legumes, nuts, fish and olive oil with slower aging (Credit: Alamy)*

## Reality check

Although Gemma's findings are heartening, not all farming resembles the traditional, low-tech Japanese model he describes. Agriculture is an industry in most of the Western world, and



farmers can experience difficult or dangerous working conditions, high debt and increasingly automated processes. "The reality of what agriculture is like, at least in America, is staring at a computer for as long as everyone else, running systems for broiler houses or hog containment facilities, or sitting in your air-conditioned combine watching videos while you go across monotonous GPS precision-guided fields," says Thomas Forester, a New York-based food policy consultant to research organisations and UN agencies.

It's difficult, then, to view farming as a magic bullet against aging. Neither farming nor gardening will ultimately guarantee a longer lifespan. But some of the lifestyle factors associated with both – namely going outside, engaging in light physical activity and eating a healthy plant-based diet – just might.

In the end, it's all about balance. "I use the analogy of a chair," says Willcox. "Diet, physical activity, mental engagement and social connection are the four legs. If you don't have one of them, you fall out of balance, and it can shorten life expectancy. Longevity isn't about one single factor – it's about not working too hard to share a constellation of them all."



#### *Some interesting links:*

An outfit called "Friendly Organics" has the *Leaf* on its hit list. It's a commercial enterprise so I'm reluctant to pass on all the stuff they send me. However, two items may be of interest:

Cornmeal as weed preventer: <http://www.friendlyorganicscanada.ca/blog/cornmeal-for-weed-killing-and-pest-control>

And other surprising!! uses for potatoes: <http://www.friendlyorganicscanada.ca/blog/surprising-uses-for-the-humble-potato>

#### **EVENTS:**



#### **Van Dusen Gardens: Seedy Saturday**

*Saturday, February 23, 10 am - 4 pm*

Join us on Saturday in the Floral Hall.

*Brought to you by the Vancouver Master Gardeners*

Meet Seed Vendors

Free Lectures

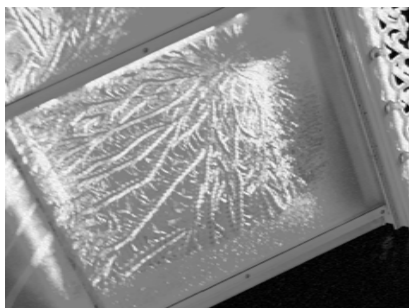
Learn how to grow from seed!



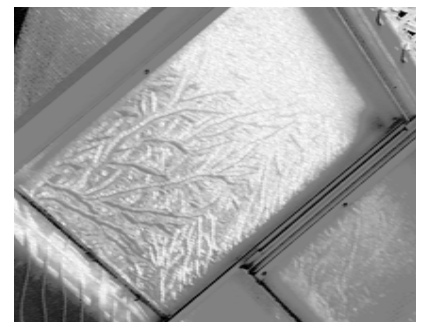
CARBON FOOTPRINT CALCULATORS: see hotlinks in cover email.



*Ice patterns on Doreen's greenhouse:*



*"In the depths of winter, I finally learned  
that in me was an invincible summer." -  
Albert Camus*



... and the existentialist ponderable:  
*"Is there a dog?"*