

Yes, Give it a go!

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Have you ever grown anything? Yes, of the plant variety, flowers or vegetables?

In my last *Inside Life* article, "Getting a Handle on Stress" (Issue 1/06), I outlined eight tips on handling tension and stress. This time, I want to elaborate on number 5, "Learn how to relax and relieve tension." I suggested various exercises you could do, and one was "a bit of gardening".

I know this might sound rather foreign, or even boring 'old world' stuff, or just hard work or impractical. Especially to those of you who work long hours and who must fit in all of your tomorrows today! You don't know what you are missing, and gardening just might open up a hidden talent, together with a by-product of fascination and relaxation.

It doesn't matter if you have a decent patch of dirt, or live in an

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apartment. You don't need much space to grow a few flowers or vegetables, or even a strawberry plant. Yum – strawberries!

I love growing vegetables. I have a small raised vege patch – in fact it's only 2.7 by 1.7



Fruits of her labour: Gael McInnes, writer of the accompanying article, admires

metres, and as I write this, it's growing dwarf beans, snow peas, 4 tomato plants, silver-beet, radishes, parsley, capsicums and lots of lettuces – various colours, and all at varying stages of maturity. I try to have lettuces growing all through the summer and that means planting 6 every month. Tucked in between the tomato plants is basil, which not only complements tomatoes, but also is a companion plant and helps keep away the white fly (a pest). Another companion plant is the dwarf marigold flower. It not only keeps away pests, but also

adds colour.

Did you know that you can grow a tomato plant in a bucket-sized planter? It'll need staking as it grows. Lettuces, radishes, parsley, mint, basil or whatever are your favourite vegetables can be grown in tubs or trough type planters. Yes, I have done it, and with success too. It's really exciting.

The plants will need a little nurturing too, so they don't get stressed! Yes, same as us. Like watering every day, perhaps a plant food occasion-

ally and sunlight. Put them on the patio – even in high-rise buildings – just make sure they don't blow away!

I guarantee you'll get excited as you see seeds beginning to poke through the soil and grow into edible fruit. You will see creation at its best.

You were born with five physical senses; each one essential to your wellbeing, and a great way to experience them in another realm is through gardening.

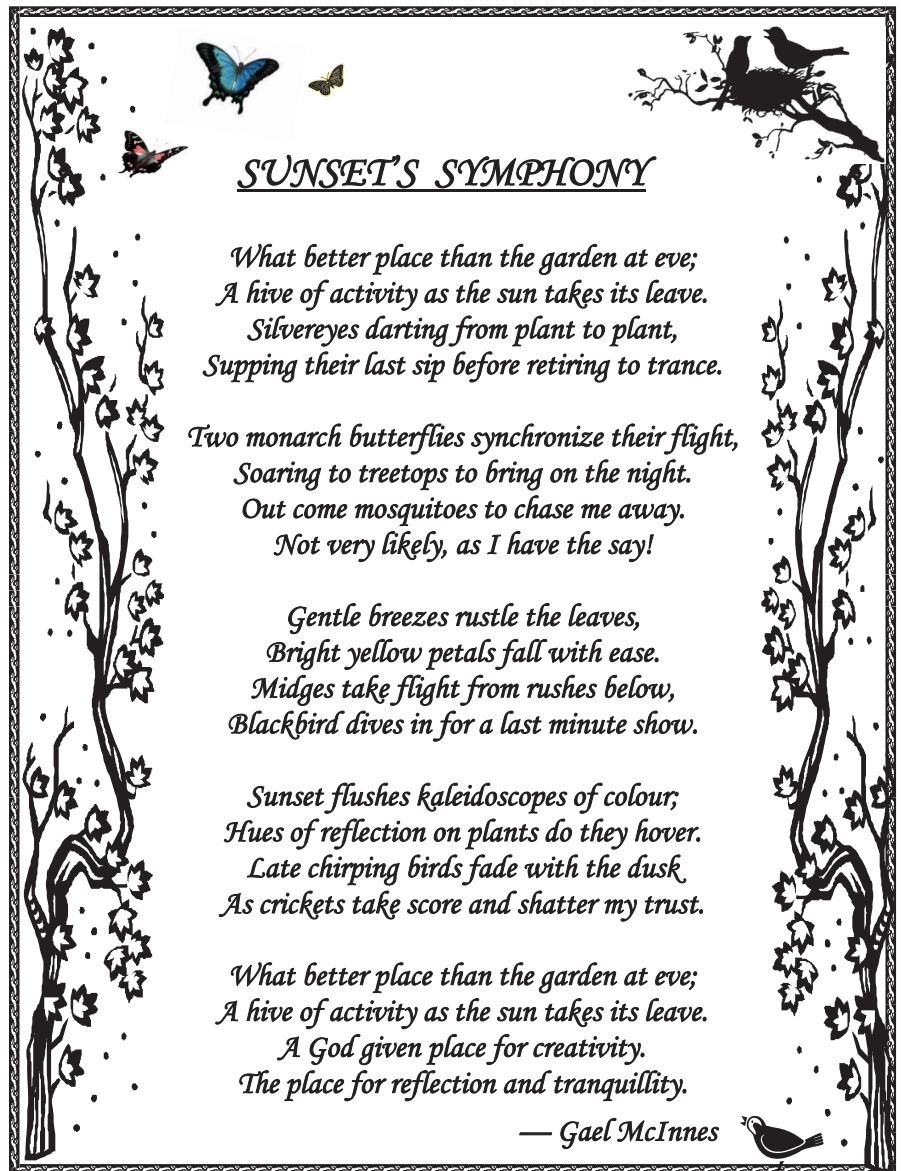
1. Seeing – What a thrill to see a tiny seed grow into a healthy plant! All those tiny leaves and fruit expanding before your eyes, every day. The colours, shapes – all individual. You'll even see butterflies, bees and possibly some pests – they come to seek, pollinate and maraud.

2. Smelling – Even vegetables have different smells, and certainly flowers do. Some pleasant, some not so pleasant.

3. Feeling – Shape, texture, sensations – all different – some furry, prickly or smooth.

4. Hearing – I haven't heard a plant cry out yet, but some 'weep' from the ends of their leaves, and I have heard that plants thrive on being talked to. Yes, I talk to mine, encouraging them and telling them how great they are! My small courtyard is alive with many a bird and insect and they get their feed too – mainly pests.

5. Tasting – This is the best part. What a delight to taste the fruit of your labours. Oh, so fresh, and the taste divine. No insecticides or pesticides sprayed all over them. Bought vegetables will never taste the



SUNSET'S SYMPHONY

*What better place than the garden at eve;
A hive of activity as the sun takes its leave.
Silvereyes darting from plant to plant,
Supping their last sip before retiring to trance.*

*Two monarch butterflies synchronize their flight,
Soaring to treetops to bring on the night.
Out come mosquitoes to chase me away.
Not very likely, as I have the say!*

*Gentle breezes rustle the leaves,
Bright yellow petals fall with ease.
Midges take flight from rushes below,
Blackbird dives in for a last minute show.*

*Sunset flushes kaleidoscopes of colour;
Hues of reflection on plants do they hover.
Late chirping birds fade with the dusk
As crickets take score and shatter my trust.*

*What better place than the garden at eve;
A hive of activity as the sun takes its leave.
A God given place for creativity.
The place for reflection and tranquillity.*

— Gael McInnes

same again. Will save you a dollar or two as well.


All too often we take our five senses for granted. Gardening is a great way to experience these senses in a different domain, and with daily nurturing of your plants you are actually de-stressing your body as well. You take your mind away from the stresses of the day – tend to “another’s” (your plants’) needs and get to see and taste the end product. How good is that?

The biblical book of Isaiah (58:11) states “The Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy you with all good things ...and you will be like a well watered garden, like an ever-

f l o w i n g spring.” (*The Living Bible* version.)

Perhaps a “bit of gardening” on the side is what you need.

Yes, give it a go!



Gael McInnes, who lives in South Auckland, is a recently retired nurse and midwife, experienced in holistic care. Gael worked in diverse health arenas and taught at tertiary level.