

# *In the Garden Weekly*

NEWSLETTER OF THE PORT ESSINGTON GARDEN CLUB

AUTUMN 2008

## Gardening for fur and fitness

By Carolyn Barkling-Madd

**T**HERE'S NO NEED to pay for expensive gym membership any more. You can get all the exercise you need in your own backyard. Gardening is good for you! It doesn't just offer kilojoule burning exercise through using all the major muscle groups, it also increases flexibility and and strengthens the joints.

You don't need to spend the whole day in the garden toting topsoil and digging out dead trees – just 30 minutes of moderate exercise a day is all you need to improve your health and prolong your life longer. Even broken into short bursts of just eight minutes of exercise at a time is enough, provided you reach a total of 30 minutes a day.

### More than just fruit and veg

A gardening work out brings more benefits than just a crop of fruit and vegetables for the table. You can:

- Shed some excess weight
- Lower your blood pressure and cholesterol levels.
- Reduce your risk of heart disease and diabetes.
- Prevents or slows osteoporosis
- Improve health and live longer
- Reduction in stress, because gardening offers complete distraction from other worries bothering you

### Backed by research

Barbara Answorth, in an article in the *Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise* journal (1993, pages 71-80), worked out how much exertion was needed for different kinds of garden exercise. (see the table below).

*Garden Exertion table*

Garden Activity	Other activity	Exertion needed
Watering the yard, standing	Knitting, sewing	1.5
Seeding a lawn, applying fertilizer	walking for shopping	2.5
Trimming shrubs or trees	Moderate walking	3.5
Raking yard, planting seeds or shrubs	bicycling moderately	4.0
vs		
Weeding and cultivating garden, planting trees.	cleaning, golf	4.5
Clearing land, laying turf	Softball or baseball	5.0
Mowing with a hand mower, shovellings	aerobics class, swimming	6.0

We already know how relaxing gardening is, but now Barbara Answorth's study proves you can replace other exercise regimes with every day gardening.

*continued on page 2*

## Strawberry growing

By Rodney Barkling-Madd

Choosing the best variety for our climate is the secret to growing good berries and producing an abundant crop.

*Fragaria vesca*, the variety known as Fraises des Bois' is one of my favourites. It has white berries, so it doesn't attract the birds, which means there's no competition for the fruit! Despite the lack of red colour, it's a juicy, aromatic, delicious little berry. You'll never find this one in the supermarkets— it's far too fiddly to pick and too delicate to transport. And it likes our cool weather.

Another *Fragaria* variety that I like is 'Alinta', which was actually developed in Australia. It has lovely big berries, orange red in colour, and very tasty. A more energetic plant, it can reach 20 centimetres in height.

A 3rd variety to try is Cambridge Rival, which is said to have the sweetest, most intense, flavour of all the strawberries on the market today. It's also quite a vigorous plant.

All 3 varieties will produce fruit throughout the summer and into early autumn. Like all strawberries, they like a nice rich soil, with plenty of organic matter, and regular watering, especially in windy or hot weather.

Strawberries can look lovely in special terracotta strawberry pots and will also grow well in hanging bags. See page four for our special phot feature, showing you how to plant a strawberry pots.

Once you have eaten your home-grown strawberries, you won't ever buy them in punnets again.\*

## Gourmet spuds.

By Pete Privet, BSc

Space for growing potatoes can be found in even the smallest vegetable garden. They don't need a lot of work, but will reward you with plentiful crops –you'll get at least ten spuds from each seed potatoe you plant, as well as a glorious flavor. Plant in early winter for a generous sumer crop.

If you decide to grow some of the special heirloom tomatoes, you will also experience a range of flavours, shapes and colours that you would never find in the shops. Try Sapphire for a surprising purple potatoe—just think of the look on the kids' faces when you serve purple mash with the chops! Or you might prefer to stick with an old favorite, the King Edward, first grown in 1902. It makes the best roast potatoes you will ever eat, and one nursery claims you will get a yield of nearly twelve kgs or every eight seeds planted. I call that a good result.\*

## Kids Corner

By Skye Barkling-Madd

Kids can win a special prize this year at our annual garden show. Its for growing the tallest sunflower. Will you beat the world record? The tallest sunflower ever reached 7.76 meters tall. It was grown in the Netherlands in 1986. Sometime sun flowers grow taller than a house and you need a ladder to pick them!. People try to grow big flowers too—the biggest ever was grown in Canada. It measured 86 centimetres across it's bright yellow face.\*