Lesson 1

The Universal Law of

PURPOSE

Lesson Summary

In this lesson you will:

• See a video of a garden the author has created which continually inspires her to work at making improvements

• Identify the major benefits that you will gain from growing your own fruit and vegetables.

• Understand the importance of having a dream to work towards and the purpose for that dream.

• Be introduced to the idea of personal and universal purpose.

• Explore a world-wide phenomenon that originated in Russia and has, as its underlying theme, the idea that everyone should cultivate their own small family-owned plot of land if peace and harmony are to be achieved.

• Place on file, information about your garden so that enquiries and questions can be answered with specific reference to the growing conditions in **your** garden.

Universal Purpose

Agriculture and food processing are the world's biggest and wealthiest industries. They are controlled by very few. Food processing companies have made government lobbying an art form. These companies have dictated research results by providing funding for "good' results. This is an industry that has used cheap non-renewable energy for granted as if it is an unlimited resource. Oil has been used for energy as well as being the raw material for food additives, packaging, fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides.

We work in the areas that have most to teach us. Those who work in commercial agriculture, chemical fertilizer companies and for food processing, packaging and distribution multinationals have to learn that large scale production, which is justified in terms of efficiency, is actually an extremely inefficient use of Earth resources. Such companies are profitable, only because they don't take into account the **real** cost of production (ruined soils, pollution, damaged oceans, huge quantities of non-recyclable garbage and food that is lacking in the essential nutrients needed to maintain good health).

The whole of western civilization has been on purpose. We have been travelling down the wrong road for nearly a century and we are at our destination. Through the process of doing things the wrong way, we have become aware of the consequences of handing over control of our food to government and big business. We have seen what happens when we don't care for that which is freely given and exploit it for financial gain without care for sustainability. We have had much to learn.

Now it is time to start doing things differently. It is time to take responsibility for our food supply. "Grow your own" is catching on which shows that the learning has not been wasted.

There has always been a time when Earth would come into alignment with Universe. That time is now. It may look as if the world is spiralling totally out of control but what we are actually experiencing is the storm before the calm: the surfacing of things that have, until now, been hidden and secret.

Since the beginning of time as we know it, we have, as humans, sought happiness through strategies of power, greed and control over each other and the resources of Earth itself. We are now experiencing the consequences of doing this. Earth is no longer able to cope. In time we will realise that the strategies of control and domination do not work. There are better ways.

Unfortunately, there are still some who are hanging on grimly out of fear that they may lose the advantages that they have gained. By hanging on, they are creating greater chaos. Chaos is the ultimate conclusion. In chaos, those things that have no longer any useful purpose will be destroyed. This is what we are seeing now: the destruction of those things that are no longer useful. It is a painful process.

In our search for happiness we have attempted to solve our problems by dealing with the symptoms of ill health, depression, unfulfilling work and unsatisfying relationships rather than seek out the causes of these problems. So too, society has attempted to fix the symptoms and because the symptoms are very profitable, they have given rise to the world we know - a world of big government, huge multinational corporations, corruption, greed and use of force and lies to subjugate the people on the one hand, and abject poverty, alienation, dependence and violence on the other. This dichotomy has become the reality with which we live.

One way to break the cycle is to take into our own hands the two things that we can be responsible for: our food and our health.

An answer for Sebastian

Sebastian, a young German Wwoofer (**W**illing **W**orker **O**n **O**rganic **F**arm) recently asked why I work so hard in my garden and what it is that drives me. It took me a couple of days to find an answer for him. My answer, when I found it, I explained in the following way: "Some people compose beautiful music. Some create magnificent buildings and landscapes. Others paint pictures. I work with my garden to create something beautiful which is also a source of magnificent food. I take the colours, shapes and music of nature and turn them into a living canvas. It is a never-ending process because it is always possible to make what I have co-created with nature into something of even greater beauty. What I create is a source of inspiration and great joy and is my legacy to the world. This is my "Garden of Eden" but it differs from the Garden of Eden of biblical reference in that I have been part of the creation process. The biblical Eden was given and nothing was required of those who were its caretakers, which must have been extremely boring for those who were the beneficiaries. I have taken several hectares of land and have consciously tried to improve them and to increase their value, not in monetary terms, but in terms of the land's ability to provide an abundance of life-giving food. I have consciously worked to make it better by increasing the mineral

and organic content and the level of micro-organic life in the soil. I believe that this is what is required if we are to produce health giving food so that mankind does not have to suffer disease and ill health. I have endeavoured to increase the bio-diversity of the land by growing a wide range of fruit and vegetables, and by planting many native Australian trees and shrubs, which attract birds and insects. My reward is the abundance that nature provides to those who work according to the laws of nature. I believe our role on Earth is to create "Heaven on Earth" and in this we are co-creators with the Universe. Our role in this co-creation process is to understand the rules of the natural Universe and to work within the framework of these rules.

My purpose in developing the "Healthy Growing" Training Programme is to inspire others to do as I have done: create their own "Gardens of Eden" and to reap the benefits that come from doing so. Before you read any further be warned that this is an extremely addictive process. Every step you take, you know you can do better so you work to find out how this can be done. As soon as you feel that you have all the answers, nature throws a curve ball and you realise that there is still more to learn.

What Benefits does a Garden Give?

The benefits are enormous and I can rely on these to boost my level of enthusiasm such that even the most mundane tasks don't become boring.

Physical Benefits.
Working outdoors, particularly on a sunny winter's morning, is a really healthy activity. Bending, stretching, pulling, walking, lifting and digging are all done for a purpose and I don't have to pay as I would if I joined a gym. By contrast, I get paid to stay fit. I receive a huge bounty of fresh fruit and vegetables, lots of oxygen and the sheer joy of being alive. The food I produce helps me to keep healthy, which is an enormous benefit.

Financial Benefits
The cost of food has increased sharply in recent months. Having my own garden and growing my own food is one way to reduce food expenditure.

The trend of escalating prices is unlikely to change any time soon. Higher oil prices affect all aspects of commercial farming, which uses very high levels of oil-based energy. Extreme weather conditions, such as flood and drought, the consequence of global warming, affect the supply and price of food.

Food Security Benefits
Food security is becoming a worldwide problem. In western societies shortage is not something we've had to think much about, but in many countries of the world it is literally a life or death situation if food crops fail. In some areas of the world, food shortages are much more serious than just having to re-think the household budget. Price rises are having a devastating effect on the world's most vulnerable.

Seventy million people in 78 countries depend on the U.N. World Food Programme. On March 13th, 2008, the U.N. Secretary General warned that millions of people were at risk of starvation as global stocks of food fell to their lowest levels in

decades. Global wheat stockpiles fell to a 30-year low and prices rose by 50% in the 12 months to July 2008. In some countries riots broke out in the face of rising wheat and rice prices. The situation has not improved.

Whilst it was not something we have heard much about, when Cuba was blockaded by the U.S.A. many people died from starvation because insufficient food was available in Cuba to feed the people. The same thing happened in Russia during the period after the wall came down. Had it not been for the food produced by many Russians in their own garden plots, many more would have died from starvation.

There are many reasons for food shortages including:

(i) Global warming and extreme weather conditions.
(ii) For hundreds of years we have used good agricultural land to build towns and cities.

(iii) Competition for food crops has increased because of the demand for corn and soy beans which are being used in the production of ethanol and bio-diesel.

(iv) Affluent Chinese and Indians have acquired a taste for western style food, putting increased pressure on supplies.

(v) Bee numbers are decreasing in many countries. A decrease in bee population lowers pollination levels, which means lower productivity.

(vi) Chemical fertilizers have destroyed the humus levels of our soils causing a decrease in the productive capacity of our farmland.

Family Benefits
Gardening is an ideal shared activity for all members of the family and the whole family benefits, not just from having fresh and nutritious food to eat, but also knowing where food comes from, how it is grown, and what is in it. Gardening as a shared family activity provides an ideal learning environment for children because there are so many activities involved. Building trellises and compost bins, planting new seedlings and trees, sharpening tools, picking fruit and vegetables are all activities that children can participate in.

Nature Benefits
As gardeners we are co-creators with nature. We cannot grow anything in a garden unless nature co-operates. Within our gardens we see the wonder of nature in action. One would have to be blind and totally cynical not to wonder at the miracle that allows a miniscule seed to turn into a plant that will produce a hundred beans or several cobs of corn. In our gardens we see the inter-relationship of all things and start to understand the relationship we all have with the natural world. Once this happens, we start to realise that in order to be successful as a gardener, it is easier to work within the framework established by the laws of nature, than to try and control it.

Our Self Esteem Benefits
There is absolutely nothing that beats the sense of accomplishment felt when you eat food that you have grown yourself or when you pick a perfect cabbage or cauliflower.

I have the philosophy that everything we create is a reflection of who we are. As we grow into more knowledgeable, responsible, creative and balanced people, I believe our garden reflects these changes. It provides us with a feedback system as to how well we are going within ourselves. No garden remains static. It is always a "work in progress" and improvements in the health and productivity of our garden is, I believe, a reflection of our own physical, spiritual and emotional "health".

Future Generations Benefit
When we take a longer-term view, we realise that we are building something for future generations when we become a serious gardener. It may be that we are improving the soil so that trees and plants will grow better in the future.

We may be planting trees that will provide fruit for generations to come. If we start using heritage seeds we are helping preserve the range of seeds that is available, rather than seeing them pass into oblivion because bigger producing hybrid varieties are preferred by commercial growers. I have just produced "First Fleet" lettuce. This is a variety of lettuce that was grown from seeds brought out on the First Fleet. These seeds have been grown in Australia since 1788. Knowing their history makes them significant. These are no longer "just" lettuce seeds and I consider it a duty to save the seeds.

Communities Benefit
There are also a number of community benefits associated with growing at least some of our own food.

When we grow some of our own food we reduce the need to purchase fruit and vegetables that have been transported hundreds, and frequently thousands of kilometres from the farm where it was grown. Being conscious of the costs associated with transporting food means we become more aware of the importance of buying locally.
Recycling household waste to produce compost eliminates a cost to the community. It also helps to build organic matter in the soil, which is probably the most efficient way to reduce CO_2 in the atmosphere. Compost is about 58% carbon and some research studies show that if we could increase the carbon content of agricultural soils by just 1% to a depth of 5 cm. we would go a long way towards fixing global warming problems.

Remember Findhorn

If you're feeling a bit down because you don't think you have what you need to make a productive garden, remember Findhorn.

Findhorn is a world famous garden community that was started in the 1960's by Eileen and Peter Caddy on a sandy, cold, windblown peninsula in northern Scotland with no resources except "bushels of love and contact with another dimension of consciousness called the devic and elemental world".

Findhorn is a garden where 15 kg cabbages and 2 metre high delphiniums grow in sand as worthless as the nearest beach where previously only gorse and spiky grass grew. Neon bright flowers grow at latitudes further north than parts of Alaska. Roses cascade over roadways and cosmos plants stand 2 metres high. Trees, including larch, silver birch, dogwood and mountain ash grow erect and strong in spite of being rooted in soft sand and blown about by 60 mile an hour winds.

Findhorn started as the place where, when something was needed, all that required was to ask, and it was provided because Findhorn was a garden based on the law of attraction. It operated in complete faith that all needs would be met.

Findhorn was set up by Eileen and Peter Caddy in order that "the will of God be brought down to Earth to fuse with mankind in a new evolutionary leap beginning at Findhorn". Both are now dead but the centre still exists as a centre of spiritual enlightenment.

From Russia, a phenomenon that is spreading world wide

In the summer of 1996, a self-published book called "Anastasia" was offered for sale by its author Vladimir Megre, on the streets of downtown Moscow. The first print run of 2,000 copies sold out within weeks. Not long after, the book became a national, then an international best seller distributed initially by readers, before it was accepted by a single bookstore.

There are now nine books in the series, which has been translated into many languages, including English.

In the few years since this book was published, Russia has witnessed the birth of a powerful eco-village movement. The image of a way of life founded on the ideals of love, beauty and non violence, as presented by Anastasia, the central figure in the Ringing Cedars series, resonates so strongly with people's inner desires, that millions have been inspired to follow Anastasia's teachings, leave their jobs in large cities and move to one of the many eco-settlements that have sprung up all over Russia.

The Ringing Cedars series contain spiritual and practical revelations of enormous significance but the central theme is that growing food for oneself ensures a healthy and happy life. This is supported by the evidence of the Hunzakut, a group of people who live in a valley in northern Pakistan, who have practiced an agricultural system very similar to the one described by Anastasia. Eating food exclusively from their family garden plots, the Hunzakut have established a closed loop of information exchange between people and their plants and in the process have become one of the healthiest and longest living people on Earth, commonly living to over 100 years.

That the "Ringing Cedars" series originated in Russia is not surprising when you consider the economic facts of Russia's agricultural scene. Russia's primary statistical source, published every year, shows that over 35 million Russian families, amounting to 70% of the population, grow their own food on their own plots of land and collectively provide far more vegetables, fruit and even meat than the whole country's commercial agricultural system.

The "Anastasia" series is much more than a manual on food growing. To quote John Woodsworth, the Ringing Cedar's translator, it "offers a tremendous new insight into the whole interrelationship of God, Man, Nature and the Universe".

If you want to know more about "Anastasia" email books@RingingCedars.com.au or phone 1800 248 768.

Alternative Gardening Strategies

There are a number of different strategies you could use to develop your garden. These include conventional, organic, no dig, biodynamic, permaculture and the one I favour, nutrition farming.

Conventional

"Conventional" farming is the type of farming that has been mainstream only since the 1950"s. It is the product of big business and big marketing in a search for big profits. It came into being as a result of a huge over-supply of chemical production as a result of World War 2. Chemicals that had been used to make bombs and artillery shells, were converted to use as chemical fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides and fungicides and the manufacturers of tanks and war machinery changed to production of agricultural machinery: huge harvesters and tractors and earth moving equipment.

Initially, the change appeared to be beneficial. It was hailed as a "Green Revolution". Production increased dramatically. The chemicals applied to the soil rapidly broke down the organic matter within the soil, making nutrients available for plant growth.

The longer-term effect has been to strip the land of its fertility and people. Huge quantities of NPK (nitrogen phosphorous and potassium) and Super Phosphate were applied to the soil in a form that was highly unstable and easily leached. More and more chemicals were applied as production levels decreased.

As the humus levels declined so too did the health of the crops being grown on the land. This necessitated the introduction of a range of poisons designed to kill insects and viruses that were destroying the plants and to kill the weeds that competed for the limited nutrient resources available to crops.

As a consequence of conventional farming practices, carbon dioxide levels in the air have increased dramatically as the carbon, that was once stored in the soil as organic matter, has been released into the atmosphere. Practices such as repeated ploughing, burning crop stubble and monoculture have accelerated the decline of soil fertility. Organic matter in agricultural soils worldwide, have declined from an average of 5% to less than 1%. Soils with humus levels below 1% are officially classified as "dead". They cannot sustain soil life.

Waterways and ground water have become polluted by the leaching of the chemicals from the soil into the groundwater.

Big farming has produced huge problems, not the least of which has been the rapid decline in nutrient value of food value in food. Food produced on large-scale farms since the year 2,000 has less than 20% of the food value of food produced prior to 1950 and very few of the trace elements needed for good health. It is this fact, which possibly explains the rapid rise of diseases such as cancer, diabetes, heart disease and obesity, which are the "plagues" of our times.

Organic

Organic farming is "old style" farming where the nutrients from both animals and plants are recycled. This is the "picture book" farming depicted on film and television. It involves cultivation

of a variety of crops and the raising of animals, sometimes in barns, when the climate is very cold.

Land rotation is practiced so that farmland is used, sometimes for grazing animals then for growing crops. Fallowing, leaving the land unused for a period, is practiced as a method for restoring soil fertility.

In Asian countries, organic farming has incorporated the recycling of human waste. The success of this system is demonstrated by the cultivation in Asia of rice and vegetables on the same land, without any deterioration in the fertility of that land. Green manure crops are grown and ploughed into the soil to replace organic matter. In some areas, where weather conditions are favourable, two crops of rice are grown annually on the same land and this has been the practice for thousands of years. Sloping land is terraced to reduce runoff and to retain water for rice production.

Organic farming is much more labour-intensive than conventional farming and most organic farmers produce a variety of animals and crops. A small area of land is cultivated by each farmer and the family unit is important because the family supplies the labour needed for both sowing and harvesting as well as maintenance.

Organic farming is much more productive than conventional farming when comparisons are made in terms of production per hectare, but less productive in terms of production per person.

Chemical fertilizers and poisons are not used in organic farming and use of chemical fertilizers is not acceptable. There is no systematic programme for building and maintaining fertility. That is left to the individual farmer's initiative. Organic certification in Australia is in the hands of several groups and is a very costly process. The role of organic certifiers is to audit farming practices, certify growers and ensure that only food produced on the farm that has been certified, is sold as organic.

No dig

No dig gardening is organic farming on a small scale designed for small plots of land and the desire for very high levels of continuous productivity. It is ideal for city gardens.

No dig involves the building of soil fertility with huge inputs of humus: lawn cuttings, composted household waste, paper and cardboard, animal manures and straw. Optimally, the garden is raised above the ground and is built up with layers of organic matter.

Plants are sown where there is room for them to grow so that, at any one time, there will be a variety of vegetables being grown and they will be at different levels of maturity. The intention of "no dig" gardening is to ensure a supply of food for a family's needs.

Bio-dynamics

For biodynamic farmers the creation of healthy soil is the foremost consideration. Some organic and natural fertilizers may be used during the establishment phase of a biodynamic garden. Additionally, farm-sourced preparations are used to enhance soil structure and nutrient cycles as well as plant growth. These are called Biodynamic Preparations and are numbered from 500 to 507. They are used in conjunction with established agricultural practices such as composting and

manuring, crop and pasture rotations and tree planting. Preparations are designed to work directly with dynamic biological processes and natural cycles such as the moon cycles, which biodynamic growers believe are the basis of soil fertility. Rudolf Steiner developed the preparations used in biodynamic farming in 1924. They are not fertilizers themselves but greatly assist the fertilizing process and are used in very small amounts. As an example, cow horn manure preparation is used to enliven the soil, increase the microflora and availability of nutrients and trace elements.

Pests and disease control is generally managed by developing the farm as a total organism. Practitioners may make use of specific products for weed and pest control. These are made from the weeds and pests themselves.

Permaculture

Permaculture, an abbreviation of permanent agriculture, is an approach to developing human settlement and perennial garden systems that mimic the relationship found in natural ecologies.

The difference between a permaculture system and a natural eco system is that within a permaculture system the great majority of species is intended for use by humans and their livestock.

Permaculture techniques are borrowed from organic agriculture and sustainable forestry and horticulture and the land management systems of indigenous people. Permaculture's main contribution to agricultural practice is the development of a set of organizing principles including zones, layering, polyculture and guilds.

Zones are defined in terms of frequency of use and/or plant and animal needs. As an example, herbs, which need to be harvested daily, should be located close to the house. Bananas require large quantities of water, so they are best suited to badly drained or low lying areas. Bananas will grow alongside other water-loving plants and may grow in association with animals like ducks and water fowl.

Layering allows a diverse community of life to grow in a relatively small space. An example from a real life garden in New South Wales includes a canopy of ice cream bean trees, a middle strata of plum, peach, mango and mulberry, a shrub layer of sage and woody herbs and ground covers such as sweet potatoes, and taro. Vines such as passion fruit and kiwi fruit grow over and through the trees.

Poly-culture is the cropping of multiple crops in a single space: rows of tall trees are interspersed with rows of smaller trees or ground crops.

Guilds are groups of plants such as corn, beans and squash, which grow well together or groups of plants, animals and micro-flora, which support each other.

Nutrition Farming

Nutrition farming concentrates on the production of nutrient dense food. This form of farming owes a great deal to the work of Dr. William Albrecht who, in the 1920's studied the best agricultural soils in the world and realised that the mineral content of all of them was the same, in the same balance and included a full complement of trace elements.

Nutrient dense food is unpalatable to insects and diseases so little attention is given to pest and disease control because it is not necessary.

Nutrition farming aims to replicate the mineral balance of "best" soils by the addition of natural fertilizers which are specifically formulated to complement the mineral content of the existing soil and bring it into balance as well as adding a full range of trace elements. Trace elements are catalysts that support a wide range of processes taking place within plants and in the soil itself. Nutrition farming stresses the inter-relationship that exists between soil mineral content and balance, a healthy micro-organism population in the soil and high levels of organic matter.

As a nutrition farming practitioner, the aim is to lift the levels of organic matter in soil thereby providing a soil environment which will encourage a large and varied population of micro-organisms and soil creatures. This eliminates the need to "rest" the soil, to restore fertility, because retaining and improving soil fertility is a primary goal and once this goal is achieved it is possible to harvest 2 and even three crops per year from the same piece of land without any loss of soil fertility, because replacement of minerals and humus is a continuous process.

What do you already have?

When you think about building your garden, you realise that the "ideal" would be to have flat or gently sloping land, with a northerly aspect if you live in the southern hemisphere and with a southerly aspect if you life in the northern hemisphere. It would have fertile soil, lots of water and a guarantee that insects and pests will not visit.

Unfortunately, this form of utopia rarely exists unless you have unlimited funds to spend. What you have actually got, is likely to have at least some problems that will require innovative thinking, quite a bit of work and possibly some investment.

The good news is that 95% of your inputs in terms of what plants require, is provided FREE. Ninety five percent of plants are made from water, oxygen, nitrogen and carbon all of which come from the rain and the air. This is a very generous gift, but it is not one that can be taken for granted. There is work to be done, before you can take advantage of it.

Sunshine provides the energy to turn simple minerals into complex matter. These are nature's gift to you.

The work you have to do is to provide the other 5% of inputs and to get it right in terms of balancing the mineral elements and the soil's organic matter. Finally, it is your job to give your workforce (the soil micro-organisms and macro-organisms) a good home: soil that is moist, aerated and has a full complement of minerals and organic matter.

Starting Point

To give you an idea of what we started with, the following is a description of our "garden". I call it a "garden" because it is unlike any farm you are likely to see. It contains a huge variety

of native and introduced trees including some very precious ones including rosewood, cedar and silver ash. We have a huge strangler fig tree which could be hundreds of years old. At any one time we will be growing about 20 or 30 different vegetables and we also have more than 30 different fruit and nut trees including quite large avocado, tamarillo and lime orchards. We have some herbs and flowers.

Location: Our property is located about 100 kilometres from Queensland's capital city which is called Brisbane. We are situated on a plateau in what is called the "Hinterland", about 40 kilometres behind the Gold Coast. On a clear day we can see the sea and at night the lights of Surfer's Paradise are visible. Part of our property drops about 100 metres over the plateau's escarpment so we hear the thunder of waterfalls after rain as our creeks turn into raging torrents and cascade over the escarpment. Below the steep cliff is an area of tropical rainforest.

History: Tamborine Mountain was originally covered with forest with some particularly valuable timbers. This was cleared in the early 20th Century and the land was used for dairying for about 100 years. When we purchased it in 1994, part of it looked like parkland: grass and scattered trees. We subsequently found that the soil was badly depleted because it has been used as a dairy farm and much of the soil nutrients had gone because little had been done to maintain soil fertility. The property is 10 hectares in size. Half of it is rainforest.

Latitude: 28° South

Climate: This is a sub-tropical area. Temperatures are moderated by altitude as we are situated 525 metres above sea level. The property is exposed to south-easterly winds, which blow from the sea and reduce temperatures in summer. The altitude and exposure to the sea winds also mean we have excellent rainfall, averaging 1552 mm annually. Mean temperature for Tamborine is 22°C and temperatures rarely exceed 35°C or go below 0°C. Temperatures are typically 26°C during the day in summer. There is lots of sunshine. Frosts are rare but do occur once or twice every couple of years. Most rainfall occurs during summer. The worst aspect of the climate is the occasional tropical storm with heavy rain and high winds. When rain occurs as heavy downpours, water runoff causes a lot of damage.

Sunshine: Summer days have sunshine for 14 hours per day. In winter we have about 10 hours per day. Some of the vegetable garden is shaded for several hours per day during the winter and receives only 4 or 5 hours of sunlight. Some areas lose afternoon sunshine in summer.

Groundwater: Our most valuable asset is our groundwater supply, which is virtually unlimited. We irrigate all gardens with spray irrigators and have about 700 irrigation points for trees. The water quality is excellent and has a pH of 7.2.

Wind: Drying westerlies sometimes occur in summer and at such times we have to increase watering. The most damaging winds come from the southeast. Their effect is lessened by large trees, which are located south and east of the gardens. When winds are very strong, they can cause damage.

Animals: Our property adjoins a very large national park and we have scrub turkeys and the occasional small kangaroo as

visitors. Provided we keep the garden soil balanced and well fertilized, the scrub turkeys do little damage. The other animals on the property are hares, which can cause damage. They have been known to eat young trees right down to the roots. Again, this is kept in check by keeping the soil in balance. We regard damage by animals as an indication that we need to do something to upgrade soil balance. We also keep a few sheep. Their job is to mow the grass between the avocadoes. They're not very well trained and sometimes they forget that they are supposed to eat the grass and eat the avocadoes instead.

Soil: The plateau is volcanic in origin and has very deep, red volcanic soil with few rocks. It is extremely clayey. It looks very fertile but because of its age, it is actually deficient in many minerals and particularly calcium. When we first tested the soil, it had a 5.3 pH, which is low. We have brought this up to 6.4 and try to maintain it at this level.

Vegetation: The usable area of the property is covered in kikuyu and couch grass. There are a great variety of trees, which are a feature of the property. A stand of giant white gums near the front gate, create a foreground for dramatic sunsets.

Weeds: We probably have the most varied and successful weed population you could wish to find. Weeds come in all shapes as sizes. One particularly nasty one has sharp thorns and a beautiful red orange fruit that looks a bit like a tomato. Tobacco trees grow so fast that they're six feet tall before you've even noticed they're there. Fireweed spreads from the neighbour's property and has to be pulled out every year. Wandering Jew and Singapore Daisy have a way of taking over areas of ground that are not being used as gardens.

The dominant weed on the property is called a "farmer's friend" because it produces millions of seeds per plant all of which have a hook by which they attach themselves to anything or anybody who brushes past. This is an extremely efficient way of being spread all over the property by the unwary carrier. Lantana takes over any area of land, which is not mown regularly. Dandelions grow profusely in all areas that have not been cultivated.

Labour: In the beginning, I found I could work for an hour before needing to sleep for three. Gradually, however, I built up stamina and developed a few muscles and now I find it possible to work for five or six hours at a stretch even though I have been on this earth for more than my allotted 3 score years and ten!

Labour is the factor that most limits our growth and productivity. Initially we did all the work ourselves, but as our production increased we needed help.

Fortunately an international programme exists where we can get unpaid help in return for providing food and accommodation to travellers. Usually the people who use this programme are on their gap year between school and University, or have just finished University and spend a year travelling before starting work. They come from all over the world. Most are totally inexperienced and they have to be supervised. They work part time, usually four hours a day. We could not manage without them.

In recent years, we have had some part-time paid help to supplement the work that is done by the Wwoofers.

Knowledge: When I first started, my knowledge was limited to watching a few TV garden shows and growing up in a family where most of our vegetables came from the garden. Years earlier, I had been fascinated by the concept of permaculture and had read widely on this subject.

For the most part, my knowledge has been acquired through the process of finding out why, when things didn't grow as I think they should. Over time, I have developed a range of strategies that seem to work and these have provided the basis for the principles underlying this programme.

Tools: We inherited a very old Kubota tractor when we bought the property. This pulls a slasher and carryall. We still have the tractor, which is now much the worse for wear having been backed into by a neighbour who was building our packing shed. It still goes and is serviced regularly. The original slasher died of old age and was replaced with a new one. We have worked our way up from a very old ride-on mower with limited horsepower to a 25 horsepower mower with power steering and a wide cutter. It hauls a cart and is used every day. My only regret is that I didn't get a really good mower to start with. Our other vital tool is the chainsaw, which is in regular use.

Apart from the mowers and the tractor, we use hand tools to do most of the jobs: forks, hoes, picks, rakes, pitchforks and small garden trowels.

Equipment: Having a virtually unlimited supply of water, we needed the equipment to use it efficiently. The bore pumps 60 litres of water per hour and has the capacity to do more. Our first major investment was the installation of an automatic irrigation system to water the trees. This was later upgraded by the addition of a fertigation system so that we can fertilize our trees through the irrigation system.

The vegetable gardens have spray, sprinkler and drip feed systems depending on our thinking at the time they were installed. We also have a fertigation system for the vegetables. Unlike the one for the trees, this one is not automated and it takes a whole day to fertilize the vegetable gardens, switching the various irrigation lines on and off every half hour.

You cannot *not* be on purpose

Our chosen activities provide us with clues as to our purpose for being on Earth at this time. We choose to work in areas that have the most to teach us. If you are being drawn to work in your garden, it is likely that there is a reason for this. Gardening has something to teach you.

You are not likely to know what that "something" is until after you have completed what you are now setting out to do. That's how Universe works. We never find out why we do the things we do until after we've done them. It is a great lesson in trust. Those who choose to spend time working in gardens generally have something to learn about caring for that which is freely given, rather than exploiting it solely for gain and without care for sustainability.

Our life's purpose is always to learn something that we don't yet know. We learn through the experiences we have on Earth. We set up the experiences of our life so that we experience whatever it is we need to learn about. What most people don't realise is that clues to our life's purpose are always there if we care to look. I was born in the city and have lived in cities for

most of my life, but as a child I spent a great deal of time on a sheep farm. My most vivid memories of childhood involve that farm. As an adult, when I came back into a rural setting, I felt totally at home. It was as if I was exactly where I needed to be.

Of course, if you've never questioned whether or not your life has a purpose, it is unlikely that you will have recognised the clues you have been given even when they have been handed to you on a platter. It is only when we start searching to answer questions such as "Why am I here on Earth?" or "Is there something important I am supposed to do in this lifetime?" that we recognise the clues.

It seems to me that we only really start searching to find our purpose after we've tried everything else.

In nature, all 92 elements have at least one specific purpose. The world as we know it has been built by a vast number chemical and biological interactions involving these 92 elements. They are building blocks used in the construction of micro-organisms, plants, animals and people. Each organism, no matter how seemingly insignificant, has a function and a purpose. That purpose can be judged good or bad. The product of each function affects surrounding soil, plants and animals.

From this we have to accept that since every micro-organism has a purpose, then surely, every human also has a purpose.

Everything in nature is constructed in accordance with a particular pattern. The human body, for example, follows the pattern of the Fibonacci series. Patterns at one level of generalisation exist at all levels. The pattern for a branch of a tree will be the same pattern that applies to the whole tree.

We understand the concept of patterns better when we realise that everything on Earth is holographic: each cell contains within it the pattern of the whole universe. Each properly functioning cell contains within it all the elements that occur on Earth and each of those elements has a function within the cell.

I know I cannot **not** be on purpose. When things are not as I would like them to be, it is because there is something I have still to learn. Getting an unwanted result is how I learn, because it is only when things go wrong that I stop to ask: "What is it I don't yet understand?" or "How can I do this better next time?". Thinking this way allows me to accept the mistakes I make.

The power of having a vision

My husband and I purchased "Castelen", the property we own, and came to Mount Tamborine with the intention of building and running a training centre. "Castelen" was chosen specifically with this in mind. My husband and I both had careers in training. He was General Manager of what was at the time, Australia's largest private training organization. I had developed a number of personal development courses, which were highly successful and I worked as a trainer and course developer. We thought it would be a wonderful idea to develop residential training programmes and run them in an idyllic setting.

It took me several years to persuade my husband that this was what we should do. He wanted to stay in the city. Part of my persuasion strategy was to develop a plan of what we would build, how it would look and how we would structure our training programmes and the number and sizes of our groups. I

produced a very substantial and detailed document outlining my ideas and providing a vision of what we would achieve.

When we finally moved to Mt Tamborine things didn't work as we had envisioned. My life took a path very different from the one I had planned. We started a garden, which in time became a full time, income producing business. We set up a co-operative local market for organically grown fresh food. My husband became heavily involved with local community activities.

Once we had achieved a level of success and knowledge in this new and totally unexpected area of gardening, we started training on a small scale. People were interested and many came to our part-time courses. Many of our students were from Mt Tamborine, and over time they became friends and suppliers to the Green Shed market that we established eight years ago.

The idea of building a training centre resurfaced after we had been living here for twelve years. The training programmes we were running were very popular and, although the idea of building a training centre was always in the back of our minds, it had been put aside as a "dream" rather than as a reality.

I have no idea what sparked the idea that it was time to proceed with our training centre, but it suddenly became a real possibility. Plans were drawn up. Council approval was sought and, after a year long delay, approval was gained. While waiting for this to happen, much development occurred. We put in a dam and extended the road over the creek to the building site. We had electricity cables put in. Building has not commenced, because at the time this programme is being developed, there is a financial crisis and we are waiting for building prices to drop. We do not doubt for a second that the training centre will, in time, become a reality.

During a clean up, the plans I had described in such detail more than 14 years earlier, surfaced again even though they had been totally forgotten in the intervening years. Imagine my surprise when I read them and discovered that we now had a real-life plan which was exactly what I had described 14 years earlier. Nothing had changed. This had happened in spite of the fact that I had completely forgotten that I had ever written down my plans.

Obviously, the work we had done during the years between coming up with the original idea, and actually bringing it to fruition had been needed. I have a feeling that it is part of my purpose for being on Earth at this time. The only thing is that what we will be teaching, the subject matter of this programme, is somewhat different from what we would have taught had we developed our training centre years ago.

Making your plans a reality means taking time to make them vivid in your imagination. Doing this is the same as giving the subconscious mind a set of instructions. The subconscious mind is very powerful. It can make miracles happen as long as you have chosen the miracles you want to experience and those miracles are in alignment with your purpose.

Review

Task 1

Before you go any further, you need seriously to consider what is your motivation to build a garden. To have a garden and produce some or all of your own fruit and vegetables, takes serious commitment. It takes time each week. It will mean an investment of money to build your soil, water your garden, buy your seeds and acquire the necessary tools. If you want to make some money by growing fruit or vegetables for sale, it will take even more time and an even higher level of commitment.

Take a few minutes to write down why it is important for you and possibly for your family, to start a garden.

This is a statement of your purpose. If you cannot find sufficient really powerful reasons to start.....**don't.**

The things that motivate me to create a garden and grow fruit and vegetables are:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Task 2

Develop a vision

The key to making your dreams come true is to give your subconscious mind a set of very detailed instructions. Your subconscious mind, which is far more powerful than your conscious mind, will then do whatever it takes to fulfil your instructions. The subconscious cannot distinguish between something that is real, and something that is vividly imagined. When you programme your subconscious by telling it "I want" it will give you exactly that: a "want". If you tell it that you "have" it will work to provide that for you.

Vividly imagining your garden and writing it down **as if it is already achieved** will help it become a reality. Make your description as vividly detailed as you can. Describe what you **see** when you have your garden. Describe what you **taste** when you eat your fruit and vegetables from the garden. Describe how you **feel** working in your garden on a glorious, sunny day. Describe what you **hear** when you are in your garden. This is step 2 towards making your dream a reality.

Use the sentence starters provided to help you create your vision.

My garden is.....
In my garden I have.....
In my garden I grow.....
When I am working in my garden I feel.....
People who see my garden say.....
The things I love most about my garden are.....
About myself and my achievements I feel.....
I am happy because.....

The people who benefit from what I do in my garden include....
Help is provided by .....

Task 3
Starting Point

It is now time for you to look at what you already have. Use the headings below to help you develop a description of your starting point.

Location: _____

Altitude: _____ **Latitude:** _____

Land use history: _____

General description of Climate: _____

Summer temperature range: _____

Winter temperature range: _____
Frosts: _____ Snow: _____
Length of growing season: _____
Hours of sunshine in summer: _____
Hours of sunshine in winter: _____
Rainfall Amount: _____
Rainfall distribution: _____
Rainfall description: _____
_____
_____
Other water resources: _____

Landform:
Slope: _____
Aspect: _____
Size of available area: _____

Wind:
Direction: _____
Velocity: _____

Animals
Domestic: _____
Native: _____

Soil:
Texture: _____
Depth: _____
pH: _____
Fertility: _____

Vegetation:
Number, size and variety of trees: _____
_____
Grass: _____
Weeds: _____
_____

Finance:
How much I am prepared to invest on my garden per month?
_____

Labour:
How much time am I prepared to commit each week? _____
Are others involved or is this my own project? _____
If others are to be involved, what is their role? _____
If others are to be involved what is their time commitment likely to be? _____
How much am I prepared to pay someone to help? _____

Knowledge:
What do I do well that will help me with my garden project?
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

What skills are others prepared to offer?
_____
_____
_____
_____

What sources of information are available to me?

_____
_____

Tools:

What tools do I have already?

_____
_____
_____
_____

How much am I prepared to invest on tools I'm likely to need?

_____

Equipment:

What equipment do I have? (eg water tank, pump, shed)

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

How much am I prepared to invest on equipment?

_____

Additional information that I need to take into account includes:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Email the information from your review task in this lesson to "Growing Healthy" at Buckleyg @ Bigpond.net.au. We will refer to this information when you have questions or are seeking solutions to specific problems.