



Food security: Moving to a local harvest

By: JoAnne Henderson (published in the Thunder Bay Chronicle-Journal, August 26, 2006)

Our gardening season is so short and intense in this part of the country that we move at a blinding speed through the phases of garden preparation, planting, weeding, harvesting and processing. There is little time to catch our breath in between, let alone enjoy any of the three seasons that we are whizzing through.

Day-long trips into the surrounding region to pick wild strawberries, blueberries, raspberries, saskatoons, hazelnuts, and mushrooms are sandwiched in between all of the work with planted gardens.

I have heard both urban and rural fellow gardeners say that, really, to provide enough food for one's family, gardening is a full-time job during this fast-forward of the seasons.

Perhaps this observation shouldn't be made public. It is not really the best way to 'hook' would-be gardeners who entertain the notion of getting off the corporate wagon and assuming control of at least some of their lives by doing something as basic as growing one's own food.

For some families, growing one's own food involves personal ethics; for some, it is culture, and for some, it is survival. Some families would depend on various charitable agencies for food without the family garden. These people do not need to be convinced that growing one's own food is worthwhile.

Most people do not fret about food security. We can afford to buy our food – can't we?

The previous 12 months have featured several "spikes" in the cost of gas. Many of us complained bitterly, demanded government action, and vowed to change our driving practices.

Rumours of higher gas prices prompted people to flock to gas stations. It was no fun to be in lineups and, in some locations, gasoline was not available. It is one thing to face high gas prices; another thing to face a prospect of no gas at all. It made no difference how much money a person had; the gas wasn't there.

This experience had varying impacts. Some denied that it happened, or dismissed it as a once in a lifetime problem. Others experienced a deep and profound fear, perhaps for the first time. They allowed the possibility of a world with restricted fossil fuel use. Some did nothing while others took their first steps to change the way they live.