

**ECO-JOURNAL**  
**ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION**  
**OF QUÉBEC (ASEQ-EHAQ)**  
**Spring (May 1<sup>st</sup>) 2019 Newsletter**



**Spring, a time of renewal and hope, is here!**

DEAR FRIENDS,

As many of you may know, April is our « Planet’s Month », since April 22<sup>nd</sup> is celebrated around the world as “Earth Day”. Few people know, however, that May is the Month of **Environmental Awareness** : particularly, “**May 12<sup>th</sup>** has been designated as International Awareness Day for Chronic Immunological and Neurological Diseases (CIND) since 1992. The CIND illnesses include Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME)/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS), Fibromyalgia (FM), Gulf War Syndrome (GWS) and Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (MCS)” (may12th.org, 2019). One should also add to this list Electromagnetic Sensitivity (EMS), also a very difficult condition.

In fact, this day has been specially chosen because it is the birth date (May 12<sup>th</sup> 1820) of **Florence Nightingale**, a most prominent feminine figure of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, considered by many as a pioneer and founder of the nursing profession. After returning from the Crimean War front, she herself severely suffered from FM. Her painful illness was “invisible”, and she was bedridden for quite a while, but she kept on “fighting”, remaining as active as she could and partaking in creating something greater than herself, all her life (womenandfibromyalgia.com, 2019).

She is a **symbol of huge courage and hope**, just like anyone who is challenged by a CIND and keeps on living, smiling, caring, loving, and being. Actually, if you suffer from FM or ME/CFS, and that you are also facing MCS and/or EMS, known under the umbrella of “Environmental Sensitivities”, please, know this: **YOU ARE A TRUE HERO**. You are sane, you are not alone, and this is not your fault. **You are so brave**. And this month is dedicated to you...

We are truly thrilled to come back to you with a new green newsletter, and for the upcoming editions (August 1<sup>st</sup>, November 1<sup>st</sup> and February 1<sup>st</sup>), we would be delighted to publish “your” success stories or experiences (even anonymously if you prefer), or to receive your comments. So, we are eagerly looking forward to **hearing from you!**

HAPPY READING!

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## EVENTS

**May 12, ES day – Online conference** titled “ENVIRONMENTAL SENSITIVITIES: AN UPDATE 2019”. Speakers: Dr. John Molot, Meg Sears Ph.D., David Fancy Ph.D.

**ACTIVITIES** - call us to register!

**Get together** in Saint-Sauveur – **June 15**. To talk about what you would like to see in the Newsletter and to have some fun!

**Workshops:** When the Environment Makes you Ill: Need to Understand, Need to Act!  
August 11, October 6 and November 17

**Ecosphere** – September 13 to 15 in Montreal: ASEQ-EHAQ will have a booth and will present one conference by Dr. John Molot and one workshop with Michel Gaudet.

**Potluck** get together and exchange with Dr. Barry Breger: December 7

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### **VOLUNTEERS REQUIRED FOR ECOSPHERE!**

We will be having a theme on environmental health. Your participation is welcome. Please contact us for details.

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### **JOB OPPORTUNITY FOR ECOSPHERE!**

September 13 – 15. Hours to be determined. To be present at the ASEQ-EHAQ booth (along with others) for the duration of the event. Must be scent free and bilingual.

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### **BOOKS OF INTEREST**

*12000 Canaries can't be wrong:* [www.johnmolot.com](http://www.johnmolot.com)

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### **ASEQ-EHAQ HAS NEW GROUP PAMPHLETS!**

Visit us at our events to collect your pamphlets, or ask for some via post to distribute in key areas (health stores, health professionals, clinics, etc.)

## About us...

The **Environmental Health Association of Quebec (ASEQ-EHAQ)** is a non-profit charitable organization operated by dedicated volunteers who firmly believe in and work hard **towards a real change in regards to Environmental Sensitivities (ES)**. Since its creation in 2004, the ASEQ-EHAQ has achieved governmental, institutional and civilian recognition. Our mission has always been, and still is, first and foremost, to provide help for those who suffer from ES. ASEQ-EHAQ brings crucial support and useful information to people with ES or their loved ones.

ASEQ-EHAQ also aims at soon providing **healthy and affordable lodging** (eco-housing) for those who suffer from ES and its related conditions (for more details, please see the “Ecoasis” project on our Websites ([aseq-ehaq.ca](http://aseq-ehaq.ca) / [ecoasisquebec.ca](http://ecoasisquebec.ca)), or call us: 514-332-4320).

Finally, the ASEQ-EHAQ actively works to **protect the environment and human health** by participating in environmental research and by “creating awareness, support and education of the population” in regards to Environmental Sensitivities (ES), toxic products and pesticides’ hazards. As such, the Association “promotes **ecological solutions** and least toxic strategies”, in order to avoid or minimize exposures to known and suspected toxic substances, prevent environmental sensitivities from developing, and preserve our environment for future generations (for more information about our involvement, workshops and events, please visit our Website: [aseq-ehaq.ca](http://aseq-ehaq.ca)).

## A little reminder about ES

ES are a range of reactions to environmental factors at levels of exposure tolerated by many people. These environmental factors mostly include chemicals, biological agents, and electromagnetic fields. It encompasses a range of chronic conditions, such as **Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (MCS)**, **Electromagnetic Sensitivity (EMS)** and other sensitivities (such as food, light, or sound...), and they often occur with Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME)/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS) and/or Fibromyalgia (FM).

ES can be triggered by:

- **pesticides;**
- **smoke** – from cigarette, or wood;
- **petrochemical products** – such as gasoline/diesel, or heavy machinery/car exhaust;
- **renovation material** – like paint, varnishes or solvents;
- **fragrances** – including perfumes, personal and cleaning products, air fresheners, perfumed laundry products and fabric softeners;
- **printed matter and new products** – like a newspaper, or new furniture;
- **mould** – especially the toxic ones found in flooded or unhealthy housing;
- **wireless technology** – electromagnetic fields emitted by wireless or cellular phones, computers, Wi-Fi appliances, etc.
- **foods** – intolerances (like gluten) or artificial additives (like MSG);
- even some **medication...**

After **decades of major evidence** (like the Bhopal disaster in 1984, the Gulf War in the 1990s, or even September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001) and a fair amount of courageous research (in the fields of genetic and epigenetic, toxicology, neurosciences, biology, etc.), the origin of ES is still “debated”. However, it is gradually becoming seen as a chronic complex and legitimate environmentally related condition, with dire physical and psycho-emotional consequences.

In the international medical literature, it has been shown that, often, ES develop after an acute and sometimes traumatic toxic injury (from pesticides, for example), and in other cases, it develops gradually, insidiously, overtime. In both scenarios (which are not exclusive), it creates a **toxic overload** in the body. In all cases, there is a loss of what is called “environmental tolerance”, as a “tipping point” is reached, and the whole body, overburdened and injured by toxins at a cellular and organ function level, starts to react strongly to “offensive substances”. **All systems of the body are affected** by the inflammation that this creates: the central nervous system, musculoskeletal, respiratory, immunological, endocrinal, cardiovascular, digestive and genitourinary systems, even eyes, ears and skin. Symptoms are numerous and varied, and range from spasms, to different types of disabling pains, fatigue, eating and breathing difficulties or distress, racing heart, and cognitive impairments – such as “brain fog”, semi or total seizures, and many more.

### ***How are ES diagnosed and treated?***

Official, medical diagnosis of ES, at least in Quebec, is very difficult. However, there exist **international criteria to diagnose ES since the end of the 1990s!** In effect, in 1999 was established the *Consensus on Multiple Chemical Sensitivity* (MCS) by an international group of physicians and researchers. These criteria are:

- Symptoms are reproducible;
- The condition is chronic;
- Low levels of exposure (lower than previously or commonly tolerated) result in symptoms;
- Symptoms improve or resolve when incitants are removed;
- Responses occur to multiple chemically unrelated substances;
- Symptoms involve multiple organ systems.

In 2001, these diagnostic criteria were validated by University of Toronto researchers (McKeown-Eyssen & al.), who also determined **additional symptoms** common in people with MCS:

- Having a stronger sense of smell than others;
- Difficulty concentrating;
- Feeling dull or groggy;
- Feeling spacey.

As for treatment, internationally, what has been recognized as effective is a **multidisciplinary therapeutic approach**, that involves:

- ✓ **Avoiding exposure to triggering agents or substances.** This can be at least partially achieved by living in a more natural setting and in an environmentally friendly way. Substantial improvements can be achieved by consuming **organic** and **natural** foods, breathing “pure air”, using **natural** personal hygiene and house cleaning products, ecological renovation products only, etc.;
- ✓ **Switching to an anti-inflammatory diet.** This has been useful for many, by simply avoiding all processed food, refined carbohydrates, artificial food additives, preservatives and MSG, gluten or dairies (often not tolerated), along with sugar and sweets (highly inflammatory). Instead, a healthy organic diet consisting of clean proteins (like fish, fowl, nuts, legumes), fats (like coconut, linseed, olive oils or ghee) and homemade broths, lots of veggies (preferably raw or juiced, like kale, beets, carrots, etc.), a few fresh (not dried!) fruits (like apples, berries, citrus, etc.), a little bit of gluten-free whole grains (if tolerated, like brown rice, quinoa, or buckwheat), plenty of fiber (like soaked flaxseed meal), fermented foods (like sauerkraut, rice miso, water kefir) and lots of pure water will provide the body with nutrient dense foods, reduce inflammation in the body, help it to detoxify and heal;
- ✓ **Detoxification and nutritional supplements.** In some cases, this has helped to improve the condition, while addressing coexisting issues such as chronic pain, irritable bowel syndrome, or others, all under the supervision of a qualified and recognized health professional;
- ✓ **Sleep.** Along with avoiding inadequate medication, it is important to maximize quality and quantity of sleep, in order for the body to heal... This can be a HUGE challenge, but doing everyday (according to the person’s capacity) a little bit of gentle exercise (like yoga, tai chi, qi gong, or just walking) in a healthy outdoor location, biofeedback, and implementing relaxation techniques (meditation, cardiac coherence or deep breathing) can really help;
- ✓ **Psychosocial and emotional support.** This aspect has been recognized as CRUCIAL. It means being acknowledged, understood, helped, and receiving **compassion**. Bonding with family members, friends, or a group of people facing the same challenge is very important – while at the same time, respecting what triggers or worsens the condition.

For **many more tips** in regards to the “management” of the condition, please see our **Resources** on our Website, especially the “Managing ES” section, which provides plenty of very useful tips and product brands to live better: [aseq-ehaq.ca](http://aseq-ehaq.ca). Our clear and short “*Seeds of Health*” document, about sleep, environment, exercise, diet/drugs and support, could also be of great help: [EnvironmentalSensitivities.com](http://EnvironmentalSensitivities.com).

## **What about prevalence and recognition?**

According to Statistics **Canada** (2016), **1,008,400 people** were diagnosed with MCS. In **Quebec** (2010), **179,000** individuals were similarly diagnosed. When all other sensitivities are added, though, and that we consider the probability of many more unreported or misdiagnosed cases, the actual number is much higher! Up to 80% of sufferers are women: just over half are between the ages of 40 and 64, a quarter are younger than 40, and the remainder are 65 years or older (ASEQ-EHAQ, 2019).

It is VITAL for people with ES to understand that this **disability**, like any other disability, must be accommodated under the law. It has been recognized as such by the **Canadian Human Rights Commission** and most provincial human rights commissions. According to this, people who suffer from ES deserve **recognition**, to be treated with **dignity**, and to be allowed proper **accommodation** for their condition, in order to avoid further suffering and most of all, social stigma and isolation (ASEQ-EHAQ, 2019).

In the past two decades, there has been some advance in research, official recognition along with popular awareness in regards to ES. For example, it has been recognized or acknowledged in **Germany and Austria** (2002), **Denmark** (2005), **Sweden** (2006), **Japan** (2009), and **Spain** (2011). In this last country, a group of health experts attached to a department of the Ministry of Health also published in 2011 a new consensus document with additional criteria defining ES. In the **United States**, for instance, the *Americans with Disability Act* of 1990 “supposedly” covers ES as a disability, but in the reality, the application of the Act varies, in spite of the long advocacy of the reputed American Academy of Environmental Medicine. In other countries, the hard fight for recognition continues... and worldwide too, since, as of yet, the **World Health Organization** (WHO) still doesn’t officially recognize ES in its international classification of diseases. In this regard, the **2011 international petition** for recognition of ES, signed by hundreds of environmental health experts, NGOs, foundations and organizations in the domain of environmental health and the environment, from 26 countries, is commendable.

As for Canada, in Ontario, some further progress has been made. In **2013**, a new collaborative, the **Ontario’s Centre for Excellence in Environmental Health** (OCEEH), under the guidance of world recognized ES specialist **Dr. John Molot**, presented to the Ontario’s Health Minister a proposal called: “*Recognition, inclusion and equity: Solutions for people living in Ontario with ES/MCS, ME/CFS and FM – The Business Case*”. In November 2014, the government announced it would:

- “really” recognize the conditions;
- work in partnership with the OCEEH collaborative;
- use the business case as the platform going forward.

The OCEEH and its partners are still waiting for public funds in order to implement much wider and more efficient, innovative and science-based clinical and social services to more than 570,000 Ontarians suffering from these conditions (OCEEH, 2019).

Our fight continues, and we won't give up, even though it is very tough, since **“the problem with MCS is that it challenges the way we run our world.** It challenges the chemical industry in the same way that cancer research challenged the tobacco industry” (Ferrie, 2018).

**Recent research, articles and debates:**

“Recent insights into 3 underrecognized conditions: Myalgic encephalomyelitis-chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia, and environmental sensitivities-multiple chemical sensitivity”; Howard Hu, *Canadian Family Physician*, 64(6):413-415 · June 2018.

“Multiple Chemical Sensitivity: Review of the State of the Art in Epidemiology, Diagnosis and Future Perspectives”; Sabrina Rossi, *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, 60(2):1 · November 2017.

“Chronic, Complex Conditions: Academic and Clinical Perspectives”; John Molot, MD, FRCFP, 2013:

<http://recognitioninclusionandequity.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/academic-and-clinical-perspectives-final-october-22-2013.pdf>

“MULTIPLE CHEMICAL SENSITIVITY: New Insights Into Environmental Illness”; Helke Ferrie, *Vitality*, April 11<sup>th</sup> 2018:

<https://vitalitymagazine.com/article/multiple-chemical-sensitivity-new-insights-into-environmental-illness/>

“Can healthcare do better for people with multiple chemical sensitivities?”; Karen Palmer, Mike Tierney & Christopher Doig, *Healthy Debate*, February 3<sup>rd</sup> 2017:

[https://healthydebate.ca/2017/02/topic/multiple\\_chemical\\_sensitivities#comment-3063033](https://healthydebate.ca/2017/02/topic/multiple_chemical_sensitivities#comment-3063033)



## Healthy eating; spring news from Équiterre

**2019 science cannot be more clear: healthy eating for humans is also healthy for the planet.**

It was the EAT-Lancet Commission, which in early January, laid out the basis for this modern “planetary” vision of food. This commission on nutrition, spearheaded by the famous British science review The Lancet, has joined forces with organizations such as the UN, various environmental and citizen-led groups, and even the new *Canada’s Food Guide*, in bringing about a real revolution in food. A **“food revolution”** in two stages:

- Nutritional choices are one simple and effective way of making a sustainable transition to organic;
- A healthy diet should include not only fruits and vegetables and whole grains, but also protein derived primarily from plant sources.

Équiterre recognizes the accessibility and adaptability challenges in being able to make food choices that are good for our health and good for the environment. **Here are a few simple actions** that everyone, regardless of income, can take to achieve this!

### ACTION #1: AVOID THE LOSS OF NUTRIENTS

**Eat real food**, not empty-calorie, processed products. Équiterre makes this the first step toward a healthy diet. To do so:

- Avoid empty calories (ex.: commercial cereal);
- Consume food in their whole form (ex.: brown vs white rice);
- Choose products for their natural content (ex.: boiled potatoes, not chips).

### ACTION #2: CHOOSE LOCAL ORGANIC FOODS

In addition to meeting your nutritional needs, **choosing organic and local** means you can be sure that the food is full of freshness, flavour and nutrients, all while supporting local farmers who have decided to farm their land without the use of pesticides, synthetic fertilizers or genetically modified organisms (GMOs), and who market their products through local channels.

#### **Where to buy?**

- Farmers’ baskets: [equiterre.org](http://equiterre.org)
- Public markets: [ampq.ca](http://ampq.ca)
- Sustainable greenhouse growers/distributors, like Lufa Farms: [montreal.lufa.com](http://montreal.lufa.com)

#### **Low-budget tricks to access local organic food:**

- Regional solidarity markets and farmers associations: [equiterre.org](http://equiterre.org)
- Go organics first for fruits and veggies containing the highest amounts of pesticides, called the “Dirty Dozen” (EWG, 2019: [ewg.org](http://ewg.org) :
  - *Strawberries, Spinach, Kale, Nectarines, Apples, Grapes, Peaches, Cherries, Pears, Tomatoes, Celery and Potatoes*;
- Buy local organic foods from spring to fall, at times of plenty and harvest, then can and/or freeze them for a year-round access;
- Deal one-on-one with organic farmers or distributors to buy at a lower cost their “less esthetic” fruits and veggies;
- If possible, grow your own organic food! (see our next section)



### ACTION #3: CHOOSE LOW GHGs PROTEINS

**Protein from sources other than plants**, especially that produced in raising farm animals, is the primary source of greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) in the farming sector, which has a huge negative impact on climate change:

- Try to eliminate red meat, cheese, farmed fishes and seafoods, and pork;
- Consume organic fowl, eggs, dairies, and wild fish moderately (once a week);
- Eat mostly organic proteins from legumes (like lentils), nuts, tofu, tempeh, etc.

### ACTION #4: DEVELOP YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF “EATING WELL”

Eating healthy also involves adding to your **culinary knowledge** - learn where food comes from, how it is produced, and how to prepare, cook and enjoy it:

- Have a look at Équiterre recipe cards that showcase over 50 Quebec fruits and vegetables ([equiterre.org](http://equiterre.org));
- Learn to cook using new foods, such as sprouts;
- Explore different ways to prepare all parts of a food, like using radish tops to create nutritious salads;
- Discover micro and macrobiotic diets, fermentation, superfoods, etc.

**Are you ready to become  
a 21<sup>st</sup> Century food revolutionary?...**  
**Go! ☺**

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**“LET’S TAKE ACTION TO BAN HARMFUL PESTICIDES IN OUR ENVIRONMENT!”**

In 2015, the pesticide “Roundup” (glyphosate) has been declared a carcinogen by the International Agency for Research in Cancer (IARC).

This is why Équiterre calls for **glyphosate ban** in Canada – please sign the petition [HERE!](#)

## Get your green thumb going!

What better way to have access to fresh, good and healthy organic veggies and fruits than to grow them yourself? Either if you live in a city or a town, or if you live in the countryside, you have different options. And always remember: small is beautiful, and go slowly, just like Nature!

### **You live in a city or a town?**

For the past decade, urban agriculture has exploded in Quebec, and many other places of the world too! So, there are many alternatives.

#### **Community gardens**

This option allows you to obtain a garden plot, that you may share with your family, partner, roommates, or friends. The plot is allocated by the borough you live in, and managed by a local volunteer committee. For example, Montréal's community gardens program now has 97 community gardens. The boroughs (18) have managed the program since the municipal reorganization in 2002. In some boroughs, a gardening instructor visits the garden regularly to give advice to gardeners. Some boroughs also offer adapted gardens for persons with reduced mobility. Materials provided include soil, a water source, tool shed or toolbox, tables, fences, sand, sometimes compost, and flowers. **Each person is responsible for taking care of her or his garden plot.**

Gardeners exchange on an informal basis, or during meetings or chores, or celebrations (like harvest festival). Provincial and city regulations in regards to pesticides use by particulars (owners or tenants) or in public spaces and gardens are tighter than before... However, pesticides (and synthetic fertilizers) prohibition in community gardens is sometimes difficult to enforce by the managing volunteer committees. That's why some local environmental organizations provide workshops in these gardens, to create awareness among the members and offer them some eco-tips in regards, for example, to natural "pests" management, fertilization and pollination.

#### For more information:

Montréal: [ville.montreal.qc.ca](http://ville.montreal.qc.ca)

Québec: [ville.quebec.qc.ca](http://ville.quebec.qc.ca)

(Or call #311)

Please note that the City of Québec now has a funding program for organizations and citizens groups who wish to create a shared garden (on private property). This program aims at making gardening available to a greater number of citizens.

#### **Collective gardens**

This option allows you to be an active member of a collective garden, and as such, to organize and partake, according to your capacity, into its different tasks, activities and celebrations, and to share its harvest. Most collective gardens offer gardening animation and support, along with healthy and budget-wise collective cooking activities.

To become a member of a collective garden, you must contact the garden of your choice, or the community organization that manages it. Just like in the community garden, all materials are provided. In this case, however, seedlings and seeds are often also available for free, or at a very **low cost**.

Collective gardens are community, food security and health oriented, and as such, they are all **ecological** (organic). They also bring together different people (some who are isolated), and as such, they are socially, economically and culturally beneficial. They create **solidarity**, foster community use of green spaces and promote an agriculture respectful of the environment. In the whole province of Quebec, since 1997, no less than **20 networks** of collective gardens have been created. And since 2006, Quebec's Collective Gardens Group (RJCQ) aims at strengthening those networks and supporting the organizations dedicated to community development through collective gardening.

For more information:

*Quebec's Collective Gardens Group*

(RJCQ – Regroupement des jardins collectifs du Québec): [rjcq.ca](http://rjcq.ca)

For ALL community, collective, educational or other types of urban agriculture initiatives, please see the user-friendly and detailed map created by “Cultive ta ville” (bravo!), Quebec’s portal of urban agriculture: [cultivetaville.com](http://cultivetaville.com)

### **Balcony gardening**

Gardening on your balcony may be an option for you, especially if you live in a the city or a town. The only conditions? Along with your **motivation**, consider as essential some good **sun** exposure (at least 5 hours a day) and... some time to **water** your plants! The best ecologically friendly and productive containers to use for this purpose are “**smart pots**” ([urbainculteurs.org](http://urbainculteurs.org)). They are lightweight, durable, unbreakable, very easy to store, and they “breathe”, so that they help plants fully develop their roots. They come in many different formats, and some can even be hanged!

And if your budget doesn't allow for this, please know that many people have created impressively nice gardens on their balcony with all sorts of **recycled containers** (holed at the bottom, to let water drip) or even old fabrics. A little Google search will show you amazingly creative and dense vertical and horizontal balcony gardens!

A good light **soil mix** for balcony pots is half potting mix or coconut coir, half compost (look for quality organic products), that allows for proper drainage and rooting. You could also water your plants every two weeks with **organic** fish emulsion and/or liquid algae **fertilizers** (*Acadie* brand, for example). If you are a beginner, you may consider the same **tips** as for the raised garden beds (see below): favor fast growing, productive, simple and resistant green friends.

You may want to cover a wall with small pots of different aromatic herbs, make some French green beans (ex.: *Blue Lake* heirloom is prolific) climb on your balcony posts, hang plenty of “flower boxes” along your balcony rail and fill them with good, ‘quicky’ and ‘toughy’ arugula that you’ll trim (bigger leaves) all summer, put here and there some pots with cherry tomatoes, swiss chard, kale, and many more! For ideas and suggestions, or more info: [urbainculteurs.org](http://urbainculteurs.org) (or call: (418) 694-7047).

### **Raised garden beds at home**

Raised garden beds do exist and/or are sometimes possible in the yard of apartments or other types of buildings, but depending on how you will build those boxes, beware of soil contamination in this **urban setting**. So, if you are interested by this type of project, please investigate about the history and prior use of your space! This being said, they are easier and safer to create if you live in the **countryside**. Raised garden beds are simply shallow boxes, usually and ideally made out of natural (untreated!) cedar wood planks, filled with soil.

The best width is 4 feet, which allows you to work on both sides easily; height can range from 12 to 36 inches, depending on budget, available materials and the plants you intend to grow (for example, deep-rooting plants would need 24” high beds and more); and length varies according to your space (and, once again, your budget). **Raised garden beds are ideal** if the soil is poor, clay-ridden, sandy or rocky, or compacted. They also bring much **higher yields** (because the soil is rich and loose), and they allow you to garden **longer** (earlier in spring and later in the fall) because they are warmer and better drained. They are **efficient** in terms of space, plant protection, work load (being higher makes them more accessible, and mostly weed-free), and they are beautiful!

The first step when creating raised garden beds is to determine their **location and size**. Natural light is vital, so observe from spring to fall how Mr. **Sun** shines on your lot. South orientation is the best to maximize growth. Then, comes the question of the soil. If your **original soil** is really bad, or that you simply want to go the easiest way (which is fine!), then you should build your beds above and separate from that soil.

In order to do so, you will need to put a **membrane** at the bottom of your beds – either a geotextile or cardboard (available in rolls). **Geotextile** will last longer, so it is better for very bad soils, or soils where you had to get the grass removed (because you do not want neither root nor seed of this powerful invader to colonize your beds!). However, **cardboard** is natural and will decompose over time, so if your soil is “average”, and not “grassy” nor “weedy”, this option is interesting because eventually your raised beds’ soil will mix with and enrich the (previously aerated) original local soil, allowing your plants for an even deeper growth!

The **soil mixture** could be the following: organic gardening top soil (1/2), compost (1/4), and ideally light organic matter (1/4), such as shredded dry leaves (maple is the best!), which come free, or coconut fibre (coir). If you have a patch of forest on your property, adding a few buckets of its indigenous rich soil or **humus** to your mix will bring plenty of micronutrients, beneficial bacteria and fungi. Finally, to calculate **how much soil** you will need, you must simply multiply length X (by) width X height.

Here are some tips:

- To **avoid compaction**, don't step or lean on the soil in your raised bed;
- The best plants to grow are those with **shallow roots**: vegetables, herbs, annual and perennial flowers. If you wish to grow berry bushes (like raspberry: not recommended for beginners, because of the tending they need), consider a minimum bed height of 24";
- Avoid **mixing** annuals (like tomatoes, beans, lettuce, etc.) with perennials (like sage, chives, rhubarb, etc.) in the same box. If you do choose to mix, make sure to avoid invasive perennials (like peppermint) and place those in a specially dedicated area where they can thrive without taking control of your garden;
- **Preserve the life** and vitality of your soil, by regularly adding compost (the best one is organic and homemade – ‘gardeners’ black gold’), densifying cultures (for example, planting plenty of baby arugula between tomatoes plants, which also preserves moisture); and covering your beds with mulch (the best is true bale straw) before winter;
- If you are a **beginner**, favor fast growing, productive, simple and resistant green friends.

A first garden suggestion might be:

1. Begin with only two beds (remember: small is beautiful, and go slowly);
2. In the early spring (beginning of May – if possible):
  - plant radishes and mustard and/or lettuce (from seeds) in half of the 1<sup>st</sup> bed, and in the other half, plant lots of arugula (from seeds);
  - in the 2<sup>nd</sup> bed, plant half perennial fine herbs of your choice (from small plants), and half kale and/or swiss chard (from seedlings);
  - in the corners of your two beds, plant Marigold flowers (annuals), to protect your plants from some insects;
  - in the center of the 2<sup>nd</sup> bed, plant one *Agastache fennel*, a beautiful native aromatic and medicinal plant (carminative) that will attract many friendly pollinators;
3. At the beginning of summer (mid-June):
  - clear and harvest some of the (baby) arugula, then plant there, in the midst of the remaining arugula, no more than 2 or 3 cherry tomatoes plants (the “sweet 100” variety is delicious and quite prolific);
  - they need sun, space, and will grow quite high once mature (up to 6 feet), so make sure they won't “shade” your other veggies;
  - it is also wise to limit yourself to a few plants, since they need staking (with bamboo sticks, for instance), pruning, and daily watering, but they will yield a lot!

4. By the end of June, you can harvest the radishes and some of the (baby) mustard or lettuce in your 1<sup>st</sup> bed, and plant from seeds, in the midst of the remaining mustard and lettuce, green and wax beans (short, not climbing);
5. At the beginning of July, you may clear and harvest some more arugula (in your 1<sup>st</sup> bed), and plant there, in its stead, some little bouquets of basil (from seedlings) in between your tomatoes plants, which will help these grow healthy;
6. During the summer, you may harvest some lettuce and mustard by trimming their larger leaves (also regularly clip their nascent central stalk to avoid bolting or “seeding”), cut twigs of nice aromatic herbs, pluck some more arugula and even plant new one (from seeds) if you want to, in order to have a whole season supply;
7. All through the end of summer and fall, you’ll have a nice tomatoes, beans, swiss chard and kale harvest.

**So, is your green thumb tingling a bit yet?  
We hope so!**

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## Spring is all about cleanses

This season, what about cleaning and giving a boost of vitality to your beloved body? Interested? This recipe might just do the trick for you ;-)

### **DELICIOUS SPRING DETOX SALAD RECIPE**

#### **Ingredients\*:**

- 5 average size beets
- 5 average size carrots
- 1 black radish
- 1 red onion
- 12 red radishes
- 1 teaspoon of fresh ginger
- 1 lemon (juice)
- 1/3 of a cup of apple cider vinegar (or more, as per taste)
- ½ a cup of extra-virgin first cold pressed olive oil
- 2 tablespoons of grey sea salt (or more, as per taste)
- 1 tablespoon of turmeric (powder)
- 1 teaspoon of grounded black pepper
- Fresh arugula (washed and drained)

*(\*If possible, please choose local organic ingredients – especially for the veggies!)*

**Kitchen ware and tools:**

- 1 small peeling knife
- 1 peeler
- 1 big chopping knife
- 1 manual fine grater
- 1 lemon juicer
- 1 culinary robot
- 1 big stainless bowl
- 2 big salad mixing spoons
- 1 salad bowl cover (a plate, ideally)

**Time and servings:**

30 minutes, **BUT** you will obtain about a dozen servings of a ready-to-eat salad for a whole week! This salad tastes better and is healthier if left to “marinate” for a while... The best time to prepare the salad is in the afternoon; then, cover the salad bowl, let it stand on your kitchen countertop at room temperature (away from sun) for 24 hours, and after that, refrigerate the rest (into its covered original bowl). The mix will be good for at least 7 days.

**Preparation:**

1. Wash, peel, chop and fine-grate (with a robot) the beets, carrots, and black radish  
*Watch out! Alternate the chopped veggies while grating them, so they can blend nicely;*
2. Pour the grated veggies into the big stainless bowl;
3. Wash, then thin-slice the red radishes (12) along with the red onion, and put aside;
4. Peel and fine-grate (manually) the fresh ginger;
5. Pour the sliced radishes and onion along with the grated ginger in the big bowl, and mix well with all the colorful veggies;
6. Squeeze the lemon with the juicer and add its juice to the veggies;
7. Add the rest of the seasoning to the veggies: the apple cider vinegar (1/3 of a cup), the olive oil (½ a cup), the salt (2 tbsp), the turmeric (1 tbsp) and the grounded black pepper (1 tsp), and mix thoroughly with two big salad spoons;
8. At room temperature, let the mix stand for 24 hours (see *Time and servings* instructions);
9. The following day, add a handful of some fresh arugula to your daily serving(s) of the marinated veggies mix, and ENJOY! Don't forget to put your salad mix into the fridge afterwards (see *Time and servings* instructions).

BON APPÉTIT!



## WINDOW ECO-CLEANING RECIPE

Cleaning windows will never have been so easy... and so healthy for you and the environment! For cleaning windows after winter, there is NO NEED for any commercial, fluorescent, stinky and unhealthy glass cleaners! Here is how...

### MATERIAL

- 3 clean medium size and smooth cotton rags
- 1 old dry tooth brush
- 1 dustpan manual broom
- 1 small cordless hand vacuum (if available)
- 1 small squeegee
- 2 clean medium size buckets (#1 and #2) half-filled with hot water
- 1 cup of white vinegar
- 1 footstool (if necessary)
- 1 paper mask (if needed)

### STEP 1: PREPARATION

- Prepare all your materials
- Add the white vinegar to your water bucket #1 (by the time you use it, it will be warm)

### STEP 2: DUSTING + SCREENS

- Put on a paper mask before dusting, if needed;
- Pass a B on both sides of each window to remove the dust – this rag (1<sup>st</sup>) will be for “dusting” only;
- If you have **removable windows screens**, and you live in the city with no backyard nor balcony:
  1. first, pass your manual **broom** on the screens;
  2. second, pass your dry **dusting rag** on the screens;
  3. then, **remove** the screens, put them away from the windows, and with *another* damp rag, using the vinegar water from your bucket #1, clean the meshes and frames as good as possible – this rag (2<sup>nd</sup>) will be for “cleaning” only;
  4. if you need to rinse and wring out your “cleaning rag”, use bucket #2, then, soak your rag and wring it out again from bucket #1 (with vinegar), so that your “cleaning water” (bucket #1) will remain quite clean all along;
  5. if you have a balcony, or that you live in the countryside, it would be much better and easier for you to dust and clean your screens **outdoor**;

- Once all windows have been dusted on both sides and screens put away (dusted and cleaned), **remove all remaining dust and debris** from the bottom of the windows, using your old dry tooth brush (especially in those corners!), your manual broom, your dry dusting rag, and for the final touch, a small cordless hand vacuum. If you do not have access to such vacuum, you can remove the dust and debris with your “cleaning rag” (...and don’t forget: wetting in bucket #1, rinsing dirt in bucket #2, then wetting in bucket #1, and so forth).

### STEP 3: WASHING AND DRYING

- You will want to consider **washing only one side of one window panel at a time** for a no-rush, nicely done job, using the footstool if necessary;
- With your wet “cleaning rag” (using the vinegar water from your bucket #1), **wash** thoroughly all parts of one window panel’s side (glass, frame and bottom), then rinse your rag into your bucket #2, and put it aside;
- Soak and wring out your small squeegee into bucket #1 (with vinegar), then use the wet spongy side of your squeegee to **scrub** the window (glass), and immediately after, use its blade to remove the water film, drying your **blade** following each stroke with your wringed-out “cleaning rag”;
- Finally, use your last rag (3<sup>rd</sup>) to **dry** any remaining trace of water in the window and its frame;
- Just like for the “cleaning rag”, **rinse** and wring out your squeegee in bucket #2, then, to clean another window panel, soak it and wring it out again from bucket #1 (with vinegar), in order to keep your “cleaning water” (bucket #1) as clear as possible;
- If you have many windows, you may have to **change** once the water from your buckets, and possibly use a 4<sup>th</sup> “drying rag” if the 3<sup>rd</sup> one has become to damp.

GOOD LUCK WITH YOUR ECO-CLEANING!

**Happy spring, dear friends!**

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