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## The future of growing food

By Marie LeBlanc on October 28, 2015

Posted in Economy & Business, Education, Environment, Health & Safety, Our Neighbourhoods, Science & Technology



Is this the future of food production?

On its journey from the Stargate Universe (SGU) TV series, to NASA's Kennedy Space Center, while in the process of being shipped off to Kuwait, the Volksgarden@Supra™ has made it into the hands of Winnipeggers, providing the opportunity to grow fresh food indoors all year long under the harshest of weather conditions.

While inventor Ted Marchildon was in Winnipeg preparing a large shipment of the Volksgarden@Supra™ to Kuwait in the Middle East, he introduced the concept to Don Woodstock, who was a Green Party candidate for Winnipeg Centre in the federal election.

"I literally jumped at the idea." said Woodstock after Omega Garden™ offered to loan two stacks of the Volksgarden@Supra™ to Woodstock's office at 637 Portage Avenue to try it out and for the community to come and see the potential.

"It's a solution that is locally manufactured here (in Canada) and they were going to ship it to Kuwait," Woodstock says.

"I decided if they have the contract with the rich and famous why not have it here? I wanted to create a way to

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### PHOTO OF THE DAY



On the bandwagon: a sign of the times at a local donut shop. No word yet on official bagels or perogies. PHOTO by Greg Petzold

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### RIVER CITY 360

have it here in Winnipeg where the people need it the most," says Woodstock, whose vision is to provide a sustainable community where one can access fresh, affordable food all year round.

Woodstock has since brought the idea of the Volksgarden@Supra™ to the attention of the Centre for Aboriginal Human Resource Development where they are examining the technology.

"Right now, Winnipeg Centre is the pilot project for Omega Garden™ for food sustainability," Woodstock says. "Now that we have harvest we will watch it regrow."

Woodstock has donated the other Volksgarden@ to the Seven Oaks School Division Wayfinders Program which runs various school programs.

He says in the next two or three weeks he will be getting a few more from Omega Garden™ so he can introduce it to others in the community.

"With winter coming there is a real need," Woodstock says.



Ted Marchildon (left) with Don Woodstock in front of Volksgarden@Supra™. PHOTO: Marie LeBlanc

Marchildon says the technology can be used to grow fresh vegetables, fruit and flowers indoors, anywhere in the world without concern for the weather. The plants are in a controlled, pesticide free environment.

Currently using high output fluorescent lighting, Marchildon is looking for T5 format LED retrofit lighting to fit inside each unit.

One can snip pieces of plant and eat on the go all day long. Marchildon says, "People are stacked up so why not stack up farming in the city or anywhere in the world."

Recently, Marchildon spoke to The Weather Network about his invention:

In development in British Columbia since 1999, Marchildon says his ideas "originated while doing Tai Chi walking around in an eight directional compass circle as I was balancing something on my head."

The stacked, slow rotating cylinders create a faster growing rate because plants gain strength fighting against gravity.

Growing at an exponential rate, within an area as small as two feet in diameter and three feet in length, one can grow 80 plants per unit.



Listen to audio stories from **River City 360**, a project of The Winnipeg Foundation, in partnership with Community News Commons and 93.7 CJNU-FM.

## LOCAL HEROES



### Winnipeg's women of distinction honoured

By Jenna Marie on May 3, 2013

Nearly 1,000 people gathered for the 2013 Women of Distinction awards, hosted by Olympic medallist Susan Auch.

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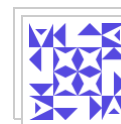
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## CNC CITIZEN REPORTERS



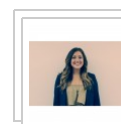
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## Omega Gardens - YouTube.flv



"We are making a shipment to Kuwait right now; these guys are a combination of farmers and bankers, which is really interesting," says Marchildon with excitement.

"We just sent them 60 units for people that don't have the farming options that we have. They don't have the water to waste, and they are in the desert," he says.

"This summer in Kuwait I think the temperatures were over 50 degrees Celsius, so most things can't survive that. We are looking at possibly even going under the sand."

His Kuwaiti clients sent some images of where the growing units will be housed. "The buildings they are putting them in go as far as the eye can see."

Marchildon says "Volksgarden® were on the [Stargate Universe](#) (SGU) TV series, which lasted a couple of seasons.

"It was in a laboratory and apparently the spaceship had been in the cosmos for millions of years and they made these gardens look like old steel oxidized stuff, but they were really my plastic Volksgarden@s," he says.



Omega Garden technology was featured in Star Gate Universe TV series.

Marchildon has been approached by NASA's Kennedy Space Centre, which is interested in using Volksgarden® for experimentation. The technology was also featured in the movie *40 Point Plan* and at Expo Milano 2015 – Belgian Pavilion. Marchildon has taken his designs throughout the world.

Marchildon has invented various designs including the Volksgarden®, Volksgarden@Supra™, Farmdominium™ with YouGrew™/UGrew™ service provider model in its conceptual stage. You can view these at [www.omegagarden.com](http://www.omegagarden.com)

"With this new technology, you can be your own farmer, a gentle farmer," says Marchildon.

For people who live in northern and remote locations, or for farmers looking for a new way to grow food, or for anyone wanting to try something new and healthy, this technology could provide the opportunity to grow your own crop anytime of the year indoors.

"I must have this exposed to the people who need it the most, an opportunity to grow fresh foods, fresh vegetables on a daily basis, in three to four weeks you can be harvesting your own fresh vegetables," says Woodstock.

"Now that is the whole business of sustainability, making sure you have a farm based product or system in play that supports the needs of the people," he says.

"This is a solution especially for Winnipeg Centre because we don't have to eat Kraft Dinner and pizza," he says.

"(Winnipeg Centre riding) is the second poorest riding in Canada and has the highest number of child poverty rates. If we are able to provide fresh vegetables for a cheaper rate, I think more people would eat more vegetables and eat healthier," Woodstock says.

"We have terrible weather in Manitoba and for 12 months of the year I could literally have fresh vegetables grown and all I need inside is two feet by four feet and if I have enough space to stack these things up, I could have the equivalent of one acre produced over the next six months.

"We could provide fresh vegetables to people on a regular basis on a very minimal cost. You seed it and five days later it is one and a half inches high. Think of what happens in four weeks," says Woodstock.

"You grow it in your home and eat it as you go. You use less space, less energy, less everything. Not all the

GMOs and nonsense. This is one way to grow pesticide free and make it sustainable at a very minimal cost. If you cut it, it keeps on growing, just like a perennial, it is the gravity pull," he explains.

"There's a lot of empty city buildings sitting doing nothing and sometimes we have empty spaces we have to heat. How about if we were able to put the Volksgarden® Supra™ right into those empty spaces that we have to heat anyway, to produce fresh vegetables for the people. What's wrong with the concept?"

In Woodstock's community office at 637 Portage, the plants grew two or three inches high in 11 days from seed; something that couldn't be done outside in the summer or inside in the winter.

Woodstock says if one more stack was placed in his office he could harvest approximately one acre worth of produce farmed twice in two months.

"With our weather, this is a solution. We could grow this year round," he says.

The future of farming is here to stay, says Woodstock. He believes Omega Garden™ is a green solution to the winter blues and a great way to create a sustainable environment in all ways in an urban setting here in Winnipeg.



You can contact Omega Garden International at [info@omegagarden.com](mailto:info@omegagarden.com) and you can check out their website at [www.omegagarden.com](http://www.omegagarden.com)

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**About Marie LeBlanc**

Marie is an artist, poet, photographer, with a background in alternative health and Bachelor of Arts in Human Geography and Sociology (Advanced Major). She advocates and has been active in many committees to create awareness for people with various disabilities. She was awarded the Mental Health Volunteer Hero of the year in 2012 and has helped coordinate mental health walks. Marie believes creative expression through art and entertainment is healing for your body, mind and soul. She is extremely inventive, creative and resourceful. Other Interests include the environment, culture and just about anything due to her curious nature. She enjoys and has learned a lot through her experience writing and taking pictures for the community news commons.

2 responses to "The future of growing food"



**Marie LeBlanc** February 9, 2016 at 5:53 pm | [Permalink](#)

Thank you Gloria for your appreciation. I apologize for the late reply.



**Gloria Romaniuk** November 6, 2015 at 2:21 pm | [Permalink](#)

Super story, Marie! We need more stories like this one. Good crossover between science and everyday life. Thanks!

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