

## ***SOME NEWS AND INSPIRATION FROM SOIL FOR LIFE TO WARM THE VERY 'COCKLES OF YOUR HEART'***

It is Soil for Life's mission to give poor and hungry people access to nutritious food which will allow them to live healthy active lives. This is done not by giving out food, money or vouchers, but by giving people simple, low-cost, environment-friendly skills to grow their own food. We strive to teach them how to grow a lot of food in small spaces, to conserve water and to make use of all available resources. People receive training in seed-saving, compost-making and plant propagation, food processing, health and nutrition, in building small businesses and working with money.

Our work is not simply about gardening. It's about 'growing' people who can help themselves on many fronts; survival, making money, creating healthy families, problem-solving, developing creativity and building bridges of goodwill and understanding. It's about gardening for the body, the mind and the soul.

We have trained a lot of people in the last four years, and watch in awe as some of them have gone on to teach others how to do the same. These people are creating a ripple effect, which we want to turn into a flood of food- and people-growing. That is our vision for the future - where everyone has enough food and money to meet their needs (not their greed).

**Two remarkable Capetonian women have taken this knowledge and these skills into their communities to change the lives of the people. Here are their stories.**

**Albertina Ngqame** lives in Vrygrond, part of Capricorn Park, not far from Muizenberg. She is the garden co-ordinator for the Sibanye Food Garden Project which has been running since 2004, and she's totally committed to helping the people in her community to a better life.



Practising what she's learnt from Soil for Life she has a productive vegetable garden – nearly 4000 square metres – a nursery which produces healthy seedlings and plants for her garden and for sale to the public, and a soup kitchen

which provides nutritious meals to the children and to the sick and elderly. The vegetables from her garden not only go into the soup pot, but are a good enough quality to be sold in local



health food outlets, thus providing her with another source of income.

She attended a Soil for Life food processing workshop last year and learnt how to make jams, pickles and chutneys using surplus garden produce. She has a ready market for her goods and will get into full production shortly in her recently acquired 'container' kitchen. A cut flower



garden is also amongst her plans as the folk in nearby Marina Da Gama have assured her of their support.

Albertina's enthusiasm and energy have enabled her to cope with the many problems that have beset the garden and soup kitchen, not the least of which was the theft of all the newly acquired soup kitchen equipment not so long ago. What's more, the garden is not her only responsibility. She has a family, is a voluntary police reservist, works with the street children and performs various other duties as required by the local council.

Her pride in the garden is obvious and her enthusiasm, determination and courage are a shining example in the community. She is certain to inspire others to get involved in this very worthwhile project, even if it's simply to buy a cup of wholesome soup, or the family meal, on the way home at night.

**Fatima Damon** of Seawinds, just around the corner from Vrygrond, describes her experience with food gardening:

*'In February 2005, I went on a food gardening course in Mpumlanzi Village for three days. Those **three days changed my outlook on people, poverty and life!** I started at home with a cauliflower seedling that I received at the course. I planted it in a 5 litre ice-cream tub, fed it, watered it and loved it for three months and there it was—white, beautiful, rooting completing out of the tub and ready to eat, but I could not eat it. I was too proud. An old lady (Aunty Sannie) caught the seed and we replanted them into my first seed bed and from there, I now have 3 trenches, at least six months' supply of vegetables, and seedlings in seed boxes ready to be given as a motivation for anyone willing to love the plants.*

*My children and I, and a little 9 year old boy, have made trench beds at two other homes, given out plants to others who are keen on making their own trench beds, made friends with the nursery man in the squatter camp who helps as much as he can. I have benefited a great deal from this. Neville from the (Hillview) food garden has provided me with some seed and said that if he gets more compost or black sand, he will help out too. This nine year old boy has had a lot of behaviour problems due to circumstances too much even for an adult to handle. In six weeks, he has melted into such a loving caring child by planting a seed, watering it and watch it grow. Then once it is grown enough, we give them out to people. It is a simple action but, Pat, this boy has become so gentle, responsible and eager to help—even his voice is softer. My children have been actively involved in the process too and the value for them is to really see why their mother makes these sacrifices for people that don't care. They now understand that the community work is not just about helping others but developing yourself and they see this from the knowledge they've gained from planting a seed.*

*The course I went on was done by Soil for Life. It was three days long but the impact of that course, with a small amount or effort overflowed to an entire community. People pass my back gate and now ask how to make their own garden. Keep doing what you're doing. Keep requesting for*



*assistance from the Council. Keep on believing. Your projects change people's lives.*

**We need more people like Fatima and Albertina. May their lights burn ever more brightly to light up the lives of all those around them. We salute them both.**