

# Great ideas grow better

## HARVEST AND EAT

A green-fingered author and educator is helping people help themselves — and make the planet a better place, writes Rowena Orejana.

**T**HE avocado and banana trees are heaving with fruit, just two of 30 fruit trees in this backyard in Glenfield on the North Shore and enough plants to providethe property's occupants with fresh salads throughout the year.

Dee Pigneguy is the award-winning author of the 2007 book *Feed Me Right*. An advocate of organic gardening, self-sufficiency and saving the planet from climate change, she has no time to preach about it. She would rather teach people how to do it.

"By doing it [organic gardening], you can actually involve people so that they can make a contribution themselves, too, in preventing climate change," she says.

Mrs Pigneguy has many things on her plate. She teaches gardening to schoolchildren, holds "Nana Technology" classes and is involved in a number of community gardens.

Her latest project is "Growing Your Roots", with Raeburn House. The Growing Your Roots newcomers' network scheme hopes to help new



Demand for Dee Pigneguy's self-sufficiency courses shows people are interested in changing.

MICHELLE HYSLOP

migrants feel connected to their community through gardening. Mrs Pigneguy says she had a chance to get involved in community gardening projects with migrants even before this project.

"I do a community garden at Highland Park," she says. "That started out as there were a lot of Asians in the area and they wanted to learn English while they're gardening. But what's

actually happened is I've learned so much about Asian vegetables."

The project will have three gardening hubs: St Barnabas Anglican Church in Glenfield, Northcote Housing NZ community garden and the Kaipatiki Project in which Mrs Pigneguy is involved. "The organisers were really focused on growing natives and revegetation and they had a lot of volunteers coming in and doing that."

But they were also looking for another avenue. "We came up with this idea of Nana Technology. It's something like: 'Don't you wish you'd listened to your nana?'"

The group's lessons in making bread, chutney, pickles and even raising chickens were so popular there's more planned in February. They are also planning classes on folk medicine — easy ways to make teas, decoctions and

poultices. "All those things that people can easily do without rushing off to the chemist and spending money."

Mrs Pigneguy, who came to NZ in 1963 to finish her teacher training, believes in educating people to be self-sufficient.

"If I can make my property productive and teach people to just take responsibility for themselves, then I did my bit."

Much of Mrs Pigneguy's work is voluntary so she supplements her income by writing books. "That's part of the package," she says. She will launch *Sonja's Kitchen*, a cookbook she collaborated on with Sonja Raela, who owns Tauono's Organic Garden Cafe on Aitutaki. The photos were taken by Mrs Pigneguy's husband, Mike. "The book has a story and it's not about breakfast, lunch or dinner, it's about plants. What do you do with okra? What do you do with pawpaw, cassava or grapefruit?" she says.

■ The launch is at St Anne's Hall, Browns Bay on November 27, 3pm-5pm.

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■ See more on the Kaipatiki project at: [www.kaipatiki.org.nz](http://www.kaipatiki.org.nz)