



"Half the population is obese and the other half is starving to death. We'd be much better off if people knew how to grow their own food and grew it organically."

My Patch: Tim Woodard among his own organic veggie garden beds. Picture: Astrid Volzke

Home-grown organic veggies

Growing greens has never been easier, as **Xan Ashbury** discovers



At home: Jude Blereau in her veggie patch. Picture: Guy Magowan

Tim Woodard installs and maintains organic vegetable gardens — and he thinks he has the best job in the world.

"Mate, your corn's up to the fence," he told a client over his mobile, while showing Fresh around another client's garden in East Fremantle. "No, it is! I'll send you a picture from my phone if you like."

Customers who swore they didn't have a green thumb soon find they have enough fresh produce to give away, according to Mr Woodard. Their satisfaction and enthusiasm kept him going in the business' lean years, and, through word of mouth, Your Patch has grown into a thriving enterprise.

Six years ago, he moved to the city following 10 years of farming. Today he has 150 clients throughout Perth and the South-West and employs two full-time staff.

"The idea came from my grandparents. They used to grow their own food just to survive," he said. "It's sad that in one generation the skills have almost been lost."

Wholefood chef Jude Blereau has been a Your Patch customer for three years.

"Tim enables me to do what I want to do and pretend I'm gardening," Ms Blereau said. "I do a bit but having the support and maintenance makes that possible."

An initial consultation with Your Patch, to check the site is suitable, costs \$40. Installation of three raised garden beds, soil, reticulation, seeds and plants costs about \$770.

Fortnightly maintenance costs \$45.55 and includes a liquid feed and a preventive bug spray.

Watering and weeding is up to the customer, who has a choice of what crops are grown.

Even in her tiny inner-city garden, Ms Blereau has room for three garden beds and is currently harvesting carrots, celery, spring onions, zucchini, eggplant, tomatoes, curly kale and Tuscan black kale.

She said the value of the produce grown in the first year more than covered her

initial outlay. "Once you've got it established everything's cheap; \$3.50 worth of cucumber seeds might yield 150-250 cucumbers," Mr Woodard said. "But to buy one organic cucumber in the shops might cost you \$3.50."

Mr Woodard said he enjoyed passing on his knowledge and hoped his clients would teach their kids too. The Your Patch website also offers a wealth of information.

"Even if people stay with us for a year they're going to learn a lot. If after that they feel confident to go it alone, that's fine, it means our job's done. We'll always have new customers coming along."

"I love doing what I do. It's so important, especially with what's going on around the world."

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much better off if people knew how to grow their own food and grew it organically."

Like many who grew up in Perth in the 1950s, Ms Blereau has memories of the family veggie patch.

"Growing some of your food was how things used to be. We had chickens, a fig tree and an almond tree, it's just really logical and that's where we're going back to. It's cheap, it's delicious and it's zero food miles," she said.

"And to be able to go out into the garden and potter in the early morning or evening and pull something up for dinner, it's nothing short of profound."

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