

MAY 2016

HELLO WORLD



Choosing organic foods is the healthy thing to do, but it can come with a pretty hefty price tag. There are serious gardeners at SRI International Menlo Park campus. Tending their own plots, located between Building 201, 203, and 205 off 2nd Street, gardeners draw from all divisions, not just Bioscience or Physical Science. Gardeners who work in labs are happy to get fresh air, eat lunch outside, and save money on organic food!

Michelle Delplanche has gardened here for 15 years and coordinates the sign-up process, spring tilling, general care and maintenance — all on a volunteer basis! Her background is in electrical engineering and her first project at SRI was to assist in the programming, testing, and training of users on a mobile satellite antenna system. Michelle's experience, not counting gardening, includes biomedical health sciences, sensing and devices, space systems, information security, security and defense, and communication, speech, and imaging technologies. She grew up on an 80-acre family strawberry farm in the Willamette Valley of Oregon. She still grows the Hood variety from the family farm!

Non-gardeners are welcome to come and see what's growing. While we were taking pictures, people came by to ask about the beautiful scent coming from the garden — a lemon tree in bloom. It's a networking center where people from different divisions meet and sometimes collaborate on projects. Others enjoy the crops when gardeners take flowers back to their offices or share the harvest. Other visitors include hummingbirds, mourning doves, blue jays, butterflies, honey bees and a neighborhood cat.

Over 150 people have tended the garden plots. Many nationalities and backgrounds are represented. A variety of fun produce includes bitter melon, long beans, purple beans, okra, lemon grass and garlic chives from China, Vietnam, Hong Kong, Italy, Texas and Hawaii. Also flourishing are tomatoes, beans, lettuce, artichokes, peas, potatoes, herbs mingled with seasonal flowers, grapes, stone fruits, citrus and even a Mediterranean succulent rock garden!

Several experiments are in the works to help win the on-going battle with the squirrels and gophers. One scientist has set up an electric fence, while another is using poultry fencing. So far, these experiments have proven successful — they have confused the gophers so much that one of them (a gopher) was found hiding in a bucket! These Advanced Pest Deterrent (APD) plots have wonderful crops of tomatoes and lettuce — all without chemicals.

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