



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Melanie Rekola is a winner in the David Suzuki Digs My Garden contest. The local landscape designer won for having a cozy balcony setting that was free of pesticides.

# Suzuki inspires winning gardener

*Nationwide contest showcases pesticide-free lawns, veggies, gardens*

By Janis Ramsay  
STAFF

It's the green thumbs-up for Melanie Rekola.

Rekola has just won an award from the David Suzuki Digs My Garden contest.

The nationwide contest was for individuals or groups to show off their pesticide-free lawns, vegetables, balconies and flowers.

"I (have) followed David Suzuki's work since I was a child," said Rekola, who owns Sacred Space, a Barrie landscaping business. "I have always had a strong empathy for all things living, and passion to help heal the chemicalized environment in which we live."

## ENVIRONMENT

She said Suzuki was an easy choice as a mentor, and she is overjoyed to be recognized by someone so influential to her life.

The David Suzuki Digs My Garden contest was an online competition where Canadians could enter pictures of their gardening skills. There are four categories including: luscious lawns, voluminous vegetables, balcony bliss and outstanding ornamentals. Both individuals and groups were judged separately, and entrants had to write about why their pesticide-free garden is important.

Like many Barrie residents, Rekola owns a small lot, 50-by-115 feet in the south end, but she has managed to plant 22 large trees (many natives) and a vast array of under plantings, including fruit trees, herbs and vegetables.

"Only seven years ago, this space

was devoid of plant material. We have never used any kind of chemical herbicide, pesticide, or fungicide as we want to protect our young family, and the environment from all of the health problems related to them."

Her husband, Andrew Beattie, is also a landscaper and together they teach their daughters about eco-friendly gardening.

"Many of our trees, soil and stone were reclaimed from landscape construction sites; it was considered waste. We only water to establish new plantings. Our secret to the health of our garden is only good quality soil and a thick layer of mulch that we apply yearly."

Pests are not a problem, said Rekola, because her plants are healthy and can resist most of them. There is, however, an array of wildlife that uses the yard.