

307 words, column #22  
Java Talk  
(for September 20, 2007 to September 26, 2007)

## Every Age Is The Best Age

### *Growing Elders*

These days, local gardeners are bringing in their harvests, while collecting ideas for next year's crops. Perhaps you already know that this year's herb of the year is *Melissa officinalis* (Lemon Balm), and how this versatile plant, known to "calm you when you're wired and boost you when you're tired," thrives in warm plant hardiness zones like ours. I am not going to suggest that anything you grow or indulge in will add to your longevity, especially when it might just be herbal folklore, for example, that someone by the name of John Hussey of Sydenham drank lemon balm tea every morning for the last fifty years of his life and lived to 116; or that Llewelyn Prince of Glamorgan also drank this tea daily, and lived to 108!

However, I do believe there is a perfect time and season for everything, including this "age of aging" which is flourishing now, because of the growing numbers, around the world, of hardy octogenarians, nonagenarians, centenarians, and super-centenarians (people in their '80s, '90s, '100s, and those over 110, respectively). The latest "Census results show more people over the age of 80 are now living in Victoria than in any other Canadian city. Nationwide, people aged 80 and over passed the one million mark for the first time."

Meanwhile, Statistics Canada now uses the term, "very elderly," to refer to people in Canada who are 100 or over. According to the latest figures, there are 4635 of them in Canada, and this is a 50 percent increase since the 1996 Census. In Japan, however, there are more than 28,000 people over the age of 100!

In a couple of decades, when the 80-year-olds become the *new* "very elderly," it will be interesting to learn how they will refer to the *old* "very elderly." Perhaps they will call them "very super-centenarians."

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