AN AMAZING SUMMER!
By Fred Lanphear

Editor’s Note: Fred Lanphear died at age 74 from ALS. He wrote this article in summer 2010 just before his death on September 10. He lived with his wife, Nancy Lanphear, in Songaia, an intentional, co-housing community that he helped organize just north of Seattle, Washington. Once a professor of horticulture, he became a teacher and builder of communities through the Institute of Cultural Affairs. A designer, gardener, and singer of songs, he loved life and was inspired by Thomas Berry. He was much beloved by others.

It has been an amazing summer! In my wheelchair, I have been able to go outside almost every day. I have watched our landscape attain its intended beauty through the hard work of our adult children and grandchildren. Trips to the community gardens have provided sheer delight. Sitting under the new gazebo I have watched the garden unfold, realizing an earlier vision. Although I can no longer dig, plant, weed or harvest, the ongoing dialogue with my fellow Biogaians (Songaia gardeners) keeps me in the loop of the landscape and garden plans and activities.

It has been an amazing summer! Visits from colleagues, family and friends continue to provide stimulation and enrichment to my daily life. Total dependency on others for basic needs has increased. Most recently, community or family members “serve” me my meals as I can no longer use my arms and hands. Body work, hugs and other forms of touch are ever more significant, forming deeper relationships with those I encounter. It has been an amazing summer!

I look forward to each new day with its greater challenges of total dependency along with the new insights that come. I am hungry to learn something new. Due to my immobility, I find myself watching many nature documentaries with their captivating insight into the intricacies of the web of life. I realize that I am an integral part of this very web. Truly, we live in a sacred universe!”