

# British Columbia Organic Grower



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Program Administrator:



British  
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Certified  
Organic

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## REMEMBER THE...

### Husky Mohawk Community Rebate Program?



COABC is involved with the **Husky Mohawk Community Rebate Program** in order to raise additional funds for the organisation. Husky forwards 2% of the loyalty card users' purchases to COABC in the form of a rebate. All COABC members

were sent a card in 2005 and a small amount of members have been using the card resulting in an average rebate of **\$30 per quarter**. We still need more help to raise funds using this loyalty program.

If you would like to receive a card or additional cards, please contact the COABC office at (250) 260-4429 or email us at [office@certifiedorganic.bc.ca](mailto:office@certifiedorganic.bc.ca).

### Correction Notice:

The Nature's Nutrients advertisement in the Winter 2009 issue incorrectly stated that PACS reviewed and approved the Nutri-Gro product for use by its members. PACS does not approve inputs. Sorry for any confusion this may have caused.

## BC Organic Grower

is received by all members of organizations belonging to the Certified Organic Association of British Columbia. *BC Organic Grower* is published quarterly by COABC.

We welcome letters to the Editor (300 words maximum) and articles (1000 words maximum). Letters to the Editor are published at the discretion of the editor, based on relevance and suitability.

### Letters & submissions to:

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**Next Issue Deadline:**  
**May 25, 2009**

# President's Letter

by Brad Reid

2009 is looking like a big year of change and challenges for the organic industry with the implementation of the Canadian Organic Regime. There will no doubt be many bumps on the road but with a spirit of cooperation and hard work by everyone we will make the organic sector of agriculture even stronger.



I would like to thank Karen Fenske, our administrator since 2007, for all of her hard work in getting COABC organized helping the BOD put in place many of the tools that an organization of our size and diversity needs to run smoothly. We will miss Karen, as she is moving on to other projects, however, her work will be appreciated for years to come.

We welcome Sarah Clark as our new administrator. The Board Of Directors (BOD) is looking forward to working with her to build on the work of Karen

and continue to serve all members of the COABC and the organic industry at large. Sarah comes to COABC with a degree in microbiology & botany and strong administration skills. This is a busy time of year for COABC's office so it is great that Sarah was able to start right away.

On a sadder note, I would like to express our sympathies to the Family of Stan Hagen for their loss. The honorable Mr. Stan Hagen was only Minister of Agriculture for a short time. However, his openness and enthusiasm for our industry was evident, and he will be missed. We welcome the new minister of Agriculture and Lands the Honorable Mr. Ron Canelon. We look forward to working with the minister in promoting and growing the BC organic sector through a continuation of current projects such as the OEA and accreditation support as well as new services to build infrastructure for the continued growth of the Organic sector in BC.

I would wish everyone a successful 2009 growing season (that's when winter decides to let go) and look forward to working with our new BOD and staff.

Respectfully  
Brad Reid 



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# Report from the Administrator

By Sarah Clarke



Spring is a fresh start and this year it also means a fresh face. As the new administrator I am excited to be working with the COABC to develop, grow and support the organic sector in BC.

With a background in quality and project management coupled with my education and experience in the wine industry and manufacturing in both Australia and Canada, I look forward to bringing these skills to an organization which aligns with my passions and values. I have been an active member of local food initiatives in the

North Okanagan and the international Slow Food Movement.

As I get my feet wet in my new role, I see the broad range of activities overseen by the COABC and yet realize that there continues to be a lot of work ahead. It is an exciting time and I am up for the challenge ensuring the COABC is an effective organization for the organic sector in BC.

Sarah Clark 

## IOIA Basic Livestock Training Course

If you are interested in taking an IOIA Basic Training in Livestock course in the Lower Mainland, sometime in late fall/early winter, please contact Sarah Clark, the COABC Administrator. Send your expression of interest including a \$50 deposit chq by June 15, 2009 to the COABC Office 202-3002 32 Ave, Vernon, BC V1T 2L7. For more information please call 250-260-4429 or email [admin@certifiedorganic.bc.ca](mailto:admin@certifiedorganic.bc.ca). COABC requires 15 candidates for this event to take place.



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# Editor's Note

by Andrea Langlois



Andrea Langlois, Editor

The theme for this issue is "fresh" and fresh it is. There are many new ideas within the pages of this Spring Issue - From research findings on bindweed control to potato trials to the essays that won our yearly Fresh Voices Contest. We have also

started a new column entitled The Farmer's Voice, where we hope to feature the experiences and concerns of BC organic producers, in their own words. Have something to say? Send your ideas to [editor@certifiedorganic.bc.ca](mailto:editor@certifiedorganic.bc.ca).

I am also pleased to include some information that may



Moss Dance, Layout

help to clarify some of the concerns around the CGC's ruling on Kamut®, Spelt and Quinoa, as well as on egg sale policies being considered by BC Health Authorities. You will also notice elements of fresh design, as Moss Dance continues to add pizzazz to the look of the Grower.

This year's COABC Conference and AGM were held in February 2009 in Abbotsford and you'll find a few pages of highlights within this issue. There are also hopes to put some of the presentations on the COABC website, so for those of you who couldn't join us, keep your eyes on the website at [www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca](http://www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca). We have a new COABC Board Chair, Brad Reid and a new list of directors, also listed within these pages.

As spring blows through many of our communities, bringing with it unpredictable weather, but also the hopefulness of a new growing season, I wish everyone the best as you shake winter from your boots and move back into the fields, greenhouses, and barns.

Andrea Langlois 

## Dear Rochelle

by Rochelle Eisen

Dear Rochelle

I wonder if you could help me. I would like to administer garlic to my sheep once every 4 to 5 weeks to boost their immune system, and help control parasite loads. Can I use non-organic garlic?

*Sheepish in Rutland*

Dear Sheepish

Glad to hear you are considering feeding garlic! According to Anne Macey's Organic Livestock Handbook, garlic "is active against several types of worms including large roundworms (*Ascaris*) and lungworm. It acts by preventing the eggs from developing into larvae. It is generally used for prevention rather than treatment."<sup>1</sup>

It is also important to keep in mind that the Canada Organic Standard<sup>2</sup> requires that you have a comprehensive plan to minimize inter-



nal parasite problems, which means you need to have a good pasture management plan and a health monitoring program.

Anything fed to livestock on a regular basis either has to be certified organic<sup>3</sup> or listed as allowed in the Livestock section of the Permitted Substance List.<sup>4</sup> Regrettably garlic is not separately listed in the Livestock PSL, but feeding garlic to boost the immune system could fall under the Botanical compounds listing.<sup>5</sup> Be aware that a "garlic product" sold or used as a "wormer" treatment would have to be registered with the Veterinary Drug Directorate as a parasiticide and carry a drug<sup>6</sup> identification number (DIN). As yet, no garlic products have been approved for this purpose in Canada.


That said, it appears to me the easiest approach is feed certified organic garlic, but it does appear that feeding of nonorganic garlic as a preventative botanical is allowed. Check with your certifier to ensure they agree with this interpretation.

Do read the excerpts taken from "Living with Worms in Organic Sheep Production" starting on page 6 of this edition. "Living with Worms" is a COG 2008 Practical Skills Handbook written by Peter Stockdale and Anne Macey and available

for sale from [www.cog.ca/practicalskillshandbooks.htm](http://www.cog.ca/practicalskillshandbooks.htm).

Dr. Stockdale is a sheep farmer himself as well as a retired veterinary parasitologist. He maintains that "resistance and resilience can be built up in flock of sheep so that, when parasites are inevitably present, there is no loss of productivity."

I just finished reading this handbook and found it insightful. It is a must read, as it will definitely help you with your herd management approach. Lastly, I must thank the Canadian Organic Growers (COG) for reprint permission.

Rochelle 

#### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Anne Macey, Ed. (2000). *Organic Livestock Handbook*. Canadian Organic Growers.

<sup>2</sup> CAN/CGSB 32.310 para 6.7.9

<sup>3</sup> CAN/CGSB 32.310 para 6.4.1 - "The operator of an organic livestock operation shall provide livestock with a feed ration balanced to meet their nutritional requirements and consisting of feedstuffs produced in accordance with this standard."

<sup>4</sup> Specifically in Section 5.2 - Feed, Feed Additives and Feed Supplements of CAN/CGSB 32.311

<sup>5</sup> The botanical listing specifies "botanical preparations according to label specifications," which means use would be restricted by any labeling limitation. If no label, no limitation.

The word drug or medicine is defined by the Food & Drugs Act (Division 8) as "any substance or mixture of substances manufactured, sold or represented for use in:

- the diagnosis, treatment, mitigation or prevention of a disease, disorder, abnormal physical state or symptoms thereof, in man or animal,
- restoring, correcting, or modifying organic functions in man or animal, or,
- disinfection of premises in which food is manufactured, prepared, or kept."

## Excerpts from "Living with Worms in Organic Sheep Production"

By: Peter Stockdale and Anne Macey

A COG 2008 Practical Skills Handbook [www.cog.ca/practicalskillshandbooks.htm](http://www.cog.ca/practicalskillshandbooks.htm)



Photo: COABC

Effective management of the host-parasite relationship in sheep is an art that can be summed up as good shepherding. The aim is to prevent an infection adversely affecting production or developing into disease and possible death. Knowledge of the basic science underpinning parasitology, parasite management

and animal husbandry is necessary to achieve this goal.

It is essential to attempt to mimic the relationship that exists between wild sheep and their parasites. That is not to say that disease and death cannot happen in wild sheep. Under conditions of crowding, limited grazing and marginal nutrition, deaths and poor condition occur and, on post-mortem,

large numbers of nematodes are found.

Good shepherding requires juggling many factors. These cover a wide spectrum from managing individual lambs to adjusting farm management to suit the weather and local climate.

Outbreaks of disease due to nematode parasites can happen in well-managed flocks. Usually outbreaks are triggered by a change, such as a wet summer in the prairies, that results in conditions favouring the survival of ineffective larvae, or conditions that lead to poorer nutrition in the sheep. As a result, the balance is tipped against the host.


Manage the sheep and pasture to naturally increase the mortality of infective larvae through dry conditions, temperature extremes and freeze/thaw cycles. Increase exposure to these factors by spreading feces in hot dry conditions, rotating livestock and crops, and resting the pastures.

Ensure a high plane of nutrition of ewes and lambs for good productivity, effective immune response, and high milk production so the lambs graze less. Use Body Condition scoring and fecal egg counts to monitor flock health (Complete details on how



Photo: Helmut Lang

to perform Body Count Scoring (BCS) is covered in the Handbook). Delay or consider not weaning to reduce the negative effects of weaning. If weaning, put lambs onto clean, well-rested pastures or pasture where other management techniques will have reduced the number of infective larvae.

Reprint Permission Courtesy of Canadian Organic Growers. 

| ASSESSING THE SITUATION  |                       |   |   |
|--|-----------------------|---|---|
| OBSERVATION  | ACTION                |   |   |
| NUMBER OF LAMBS DOING POORLY   | Do BCS                | Check feces for <i>trichostrongyle</i> eggs | EGG NUMBERS HIGH:<br>Treat lambs and move to clean pasture 48 hours later<br><br>EGG NUMBERS LOW:<br>Check other possibilities, e.g. mature stemmy pasture or triplet lambs not doing well.<br>May require creep feed |
| LAMBS HAVE DIARRHEA  | BCS < 2 +/- Bottlejaw | Check feces for fecal egg count             | Treat if egg count high or suffering evident  |
|  | BCS > 2               |   | Only treat if found to be losing weight later and BCS < 2   |
| LAMBS +/- DIARRHEA, DEHYDRATED, SOME DEATHS  |                       | Check feces for fecal egg count             | Treat if large numbers of <i>Nematodirus</i> eggs   |
| LAMBS +/- DIARRHEA, WEAKNESS, WHITE MUCOUS MEMBRANES INSIDE EYELIDS, VULVA OR PENIS PALE, BOTTLEJAW, SHORT OF BREATH |                       | Check feces for fecal egg count             | FEC high but possibly low. Likely <i>Haemonchosis</i> – Treat   |

# The Future of Monsanto's GM Alfalfa: It's In Our Hands

By: Lucy Sharratt

Monsanto's herbicide tolerant Roundup Ready alfalfa was approved by the Canadian Government in 2005, but it is not yet legal to sell the seeds in Canada. This could change at any time.

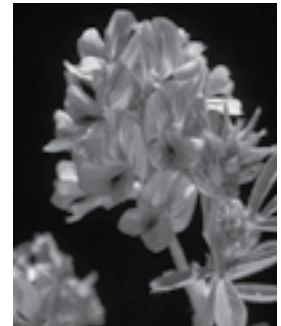
While the US courts have already placed an injunction on plantings of genetically modified (GM) alfalfa, this is only in place until the US Government completes an Environmental Impact Statement. In Canada, alfalfa is one of a few crops that requires variety registration before it can be commercially sold. But Monsanto is changing the rules.

## Changing the Rules

Monsanto is working to change seed regulations in Canada to make the final step to commercialize GM alfalfa possible. The seed industry has been working with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) to change the process of variety registration to make it easier and faster for companies to get seeds registered. The CFIA calls this "Seed Modernization," and the changes are now almost law. For farmers, it will mean some seed varieties make it to market without

merit assessment or pre-registration testing for quality.

In effect, the government is now dismantling the seed regulation that has provided farmers with assurance of quality seed for over 100 years. The CFIA even admits that there may be increased risks of economic losses to producers under the new protocol. Some crops, such as alfalfa, could be re-classified under the new regulations, such that they do not need any variety testing.



The current seed regulatory system was established in 1886. By 1916, there were 25 experimental stations in Canada charged with responsibility to protect farmers from bogus claims and to ensure quality seed stocks. (Maureen Bostock, National Farmers Union, Presentation to Potatoes New Brunswick, 2009.)

The central principle of protecting farmers first has all changed since Monsanto and other major seed  
...continued on page 27

# THE BINDWEED MONOLOGUES

By: Wendy Armstrong-Taylor

I never thought I'd see the day that I would be weeding out everything but field bindweed from a planting bed. But last summer, this is exactly what I did, as we explored organic options for controlling bindweed.

After many years of dreaming of escaping our city life, my husband Malcolm and I bought a wonderful 67-acre farm five years ago. With our stored up energy and enthusiasm, we embarked upon far too many projects at once. Somewhere between the renovation of our 100-year-old house, raising a young family and settling in to our new community, we planted veg-

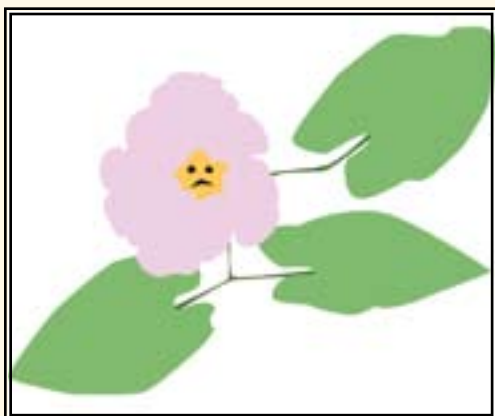
## Bindweed Support Group

Are you a field bindweed sufferer? Do you suffer in silence? Did you just wake up one morning and it was there? Have you been ignoring the signs?

Contact Rochelle Eisen 250-547-6573  
extension@certifiedorganic.bc.ca  
to join the...

### Field Bindweed Sufferers Society (FBSS)

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etables, cut flowers and fruit trees, went to farmers' markets, raised sheep and chickens, started a vineyard, managed a grain field, obtained organic certification and worked several part-time jobs.

During our first summer, we noticed a couple of unfamiliar weeds in the vegetable garden, one of which became our nemesis. European Field Bindweed or *Convolvulus arvensis* – considered to be one of the most problematic weeds of agriculture in British Columbia and classified as an invasive plant by the Biocontrol Agent Program – flourishes on our farm and shows very few signs of being knocked back by our many attempts at control. Field bindweed is particularly awkward in cut flower beds as it twines up long stems and into shrubs such as Lavender, which requires regular, complete weeding before harvest. Vegetables such as potatoes are smothered, and seedbeds are quickly covered up. Within a few days of hoeing, the intensive root systems, which can be several meters deep, push their way back up to the soil's surface.

A few years ago, while considering giving up vegetable/flower production because of bindweed, we decided to explore all possible organic control options. The COABC's extension agent Rochelle Eisen, recognizing that we were slowly burning out, researched possible biocontrol measures and encouraged us to obtain funding from the organization to trial the European gall mite (*Aceria malherbae*).

This microscopic mite originated in Thessalonika, Greece, and has shown promise during trials in other parts of the world, however none in British Columbia. We applied for funding from COABC'S OSDP program in order to trial the mites in a small area on our farm.



Typical numbered 8'X10' plot showing chicken wire supports and rototilled separations, ready to receive the European Gall Mites.



Scattering mites into the plots in June 2008



Every 10 days between May and November, these microscopic worm-like mites lay round translucent eggs into the galls created by their feeding. Adults and nymphs feed on upper leaf surfaces, and development occurs within the galls, thereby stressing the plants.



Close-up of Mites Photo: Alec McClay

We ordered the mites in the fall of 2007 from Alec McClay of McClay EcoScience and received them in early June 2008. Alec collected the mites from a site of heavy infestation in Medicine Hat, Alberta, shipped infested leaves to us in containers with ice packs, and we scattered them carefully over our plots. The plots had been prepared ahead using a paired comparison design. Each of the 6 plots was about 8'x10', with 2 halves randomly selected to have either mites or no mites. A short, curved chicken wire fence was constructed into each half-plot, in order to evaluate the length of the bindweed runners as the trial progressed.

Within an hour of scattering the mites, a heavy rain-



Rochelle Eisen and Sandy Cesselli inspect plots for evidence of mites in September 2008

storm tore through the valley and we raced to cover the plots with plastic to prevent the mites from being washed off. The next morning, the sun shone again, we removed the plastic, observed and waited.

In accordance with the recommendations of McClay EcoScience, we regularly watered the plots with an overhead sprinkler, as mites apparently slow down during hot, dry weather.

Several times throughout the summer, we weeded out pigweed, lamb's quarters, thistle and green fox-

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tail. We checked for any signs of possible gall mite establishment in the half-plots such as reduced vine length, thickened fuzzy-textured, distorted or yellow leaves, or reduced flowering.

Rochelle Eisen and Sandy Cesselli (Provincial Field Biocontrol Technician from the Ministry of Forests and Range, Biocontrol Development Program, Kamloops) inspected the plots twice during the summer, after which we concluded that there appeared to be very little or no evident establishment of mites. Bindweed in two of the plots appeared to have thicker, more leathery leaves – one of the key indicators of establishment – and we can only hope that this will be more apparent next season.

We had also scattered mites onto several other small specific control areas on the farm, and have not seen signs yet. We have decided to be optimistic that the mites need time to “settle in” and will maintain the plots at least until the end of the 2009 growing season. Half of the plots (gall side only) are now covered with straw to ensure at least partial overwintering in a more protected environment.

In the meantime, we are using several other control methods including black plastic mulch (so far the most effective, with the exception of the cut holes), wood chip mulch, regular wheel-hoeing, solarizing (this looked promising for a full season until the bindweed grew back), and smother crops such as clover and rye grass.

In late September, we were fortunate enough to host Timothy Miller, Weed Extension scientist from the Washington Department of Agriculture on one of NOAA's regular summer farm visits. After a visit to Robert and Kathryn Hettler's farm, a well-established vegetable/small fruit farm in Spallumcheen, over 25 NOAA and PACS members continued the informal seminar/tour which focused on organic weed control measures. In Washington, they are exploring the merits of using clove oil and acetic acid, which are sprayed directly onto weeds, and oilseed radish as a green manure and mustard seed meal as a mulch.

Malcolm and I have decided to use our mixed farm operation to its full advantage during the upcoming season, and to do more rotations with our sheep. We've cultivated a section of pasture which appears to be bindweed-free, and will trial planting potatoes, squash and ornamental sunflowers in the spring. We plan to graze the sheep on now-fallow vegetable plots, which will provide fertilizer as well as hopefully controlling the bindweed, which they seem to love eating as much as regular grass or hay.

This research project appears to be a long-term commitment for us. In the past, information sources indicate that gall mites require manual redistribution and,

therefore, can be quite labour intensive to disperse. However, recent reports show that the mites disperse by wind. Studies in the USA have shown the mite to be well established in Arizona and Texas. There are also reports that it may prefer to be in habitats similar to where diffuse knapweed grows.

This newly acquired information will be used in further gall mite development studies and treatments. Cesselli indicated that this biocontrol treatment has been applied and maintained in such a manner that it offers some hope. She mentioned that bioagents often initially establish at very low populations, which can be difficult to detect in a field environment. Once the population reaches a higher level they may then be found with less intense efforts. In our case, it is possible that the mite collection site (Alberta) was several weeks behind the new host plant site (interior B.C.), therefore their development was out of sync, possibly reducing the success of the transfer.

Cesselli is pleased that her program has this site to monitor regularly and will return for inspections in 2009 and beyond, if necessary. She would like to visit the site early in the growing season, about the time that the plants are under 10 cm tall, suspecting that early leaves may show the signs of attack more easily than later growth. She believes that the denser the patch, the better the chance for long-term survival.

Rochelle Eisen is considering generating a survey with the help of Linda Wilson, B.C.'s invasive weed expert sometime during 2009, so that the impact of field bindweed on agriculture can be more accurately assessed, which would help set invasive plant priorities.

*Wendy Armstrong-Taylor and her husband Malcom grow vegetables, cut flowers, fruit and grain, and raise sheep on Hartwood North Farm in Armstrong. A special thanks to Rochelle Eisen, Sandy Cesselli and Alec McClay for their comments and feedback on this article.*

## GREENBYTES...



Photo: ALM Farm

A 2005 study released in May by Britain's Soil Association concluded that organic farming provides 32 percent more jobs per farm in the United Kingdom than conventional agriculture does.

Source: [www.worldwatch.org/node/3975](http://www.worldwatch.org/node/3975)

# The Farmer's Voice

## *First year in the orchard*

By: Daniela Lindner

In 2007, my husband Brian and I purchased a 2-acre orchard in the South Okanagan. We took it over from a conventional farmer and are now in year two of our transition to becoming certified organic. It was an interesting first season with our 600+ plum trees and 1/4 acre of asparagus. We both had some experience with plants, mainly in an urban setting, but it still seemed a bit daunting when the snow first melted last year. We were, however, secure in the knowledge that the orchard was in very good shape and we could afford to make some mistakes without risking a major disaster.

Early in the year, we ordered all of our certified organic vegetable seeds and joined our local organic certifying body the Living Earth Organic Growers Association. I planted the seeds indoors and tended to them, wondering all the while "Do I have enough seeds? Will they grow? Am I doing it right?" Once the weather improved, I started planting them out. The soil was in good shape due to the previous owners' repeated fertilizing with organic matter.

In April, the asparagus started coming up and kept us hopping. We were very lucky to find clients right away who gladly took our asparagus. It sold as fast as we could harvest it. Word about our first-rate product spread up and down the Okanagan valley, and as far away as Vancouver, although the logistics to transport asparagus that far proved to be too much for our first year, and we were happy to sell locally.

During the season we had to contend with a few pests, the first being the asparagus beetle. This beetle likes to eat the ends of the asparagus ferns and can, in large numbers, cause a lot of damage. I went around and handpicked the little pests off the plants. This was very effective as I reduced the numbers substantially in just 24 hours. After that, I just kept a wary eye on them.

It was right around this time that we had our first visit from the Verification Officer from LEOGA, our certifying body. She was very pleased with us as we had kept very good notes about our daily routines. We were worried about the pesticides left by the previous owner that were securely stored in one of our outbuildings. We cannot easily dispose of these items without paying a horrendous fee, if want them gone



Photo: Daniela Lindner

immediately. It is easier for us to contain these items on-farm until the next provincially sanctioned Agriculture Hazardous Waste Disposal event is held.

Aphids were the next pest that decided to pay us a visit. They invaded just one of our three plum varieties. A solution of OMRI approved Safer Soap and a water gun ensured that they were taken care of effectively. In late summer, it was time to harvest the first of our plum varieties. We had anticipated that this harvest would be too much for the few clients we had, and, being new to tree fruit growing, we entered into a contract with the local conventional farmers' cooperative.



Photo: Daniela Lindner

Overall, the co-op was a bad deal for us financially because since we were transitional we could not sell our product as organically grown. Our consolation was that we had the best plums by far. Fellow farmers envied the size and quality of our goods. Then, we discovered we had another pest. This time, it was the twig borer and thankfully the fruit was not affected.

Once the plum harvest was brought in we could finally relax. We had the first year under our belt! We cleaned up the orchard and mulched the trees and asparagus. The cover will give us a head start on

the weeds and will protect the asparagus through the winter. Weeding is by far the biggest job. Although it is a hard job, I find it quite satisfying. It is also interesting to see what insects and wild plants flourish among the main crop. As a master herbalist and farmer, I never get tired of observing what is going on in our little 2-acre orchard and look forward to another productive season.

*Daniela Lindner is a master herbalist and farmer who lives near Oliver, BC, where she farms with her husband, Brian Dyson. Their Willowdale Farm is in transition to becoming certified organic.* 🌱

## Demystifying the CGA's Ruling on Niche Grains

By: Robert Giardino

By now you may have either heard about, or read, the Canadian Grain Commission's (CGC) ruling on Kamut®, Spelt and Quinoa. The press release, issued on January 16, 2009, approximately 6 months after the actual ruling, seems to have caused some consternation amongst grain growers, concerned parties and pretty much anyone involved in farming.

After a careful reading, a few phone conversations, and a letter from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), I can clarify the issue and hopefully ease some of your concerns.

First, let me explain what the ruling is all about. The CGC typically provides some kind of monetary compensation to growers who are unable to collect on their billing receivables from the Canadian Grain Commission's (CGC) licensees, many of whom are grain dealers or brokers. In what appears to be a cost cutting measure, they have decided not to cover any monetary defaults in regards to these low volume "grains" and are employing the legal wording of the Canada Grain Act to justify it.

Many, if not most, COABC members do not sell to any of those licensees. So, rather than get all upset, perhaps we are better served by embracing this opportunity to take full control of the marketing of these "other grains" and put a little bit more money in our pockets.

Let's face it, there aren't that many organic grain growers in BC to begin with, and most have small acreage (relative to the growers affected by the ruling), with even smaller parcels dedicated to the cultivation of these "other grains." Therefore, these grow-

ers probably aren't even on the CGC's radar.

The good news is that Einkorn, Emmer, Spelt, Kamut® and Quinoa can be freely marketed by BC growers as long as some rules are followed. First and foremost, you must sell and market them as common seed. Secondly, CFIA inspectors would require that the grains be graded according to the existing grad-

...continued on page 20

### GREENBYTES...

Anaerobic digesters could generate enough methane to displace the equivalent of over 120 million cubic meters of natural gas per year from agricultural and organic municipal solid waste in the Lower Mainland. That is approximately 3.5% of the current natural gas consumption in that area. They would also produce an enhanced fertilizer and livestock bedding for nearby producers. Some of these may comply with the Canada Organic Permitted Substance List (Can/CGSB 32.311) others may not.

Source: Matt Dickson, M.R.M, Bioeconomy & Carbon Offset Policy Advisor, BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, (250)356-6373 Mathew.Dickson@gov.bc.ca

# People Points

By: Karen Fenske

Problem solving is part of every aspect of life. The long term success of the solution is determined by how we approach the process. When faced with a problem, mistake, or accident there are a variety of ways to approach the problem solving process. The following steps help to resolve problems in a productive, positive manner:

- 1. Seek more information.** Ask questions about what has happened in the past and how things are done. Presume that you don't have all the facts.
- 2. Define the problem.** Often what sets "our hair on end" is just a symptom of the situation and further discussion is required to get to the real issue.
- 3. Explore options with others.** Including those who will be affected by the result and who have to implement the solution results in a group of people are more willing to

proceed. Assume that you don't have all the answers.

- 4. Propose solutions.** Expect that a great idea will come to light.
- 5. Act. Implement solutions.**
- 6. Evaluate the results.** Consider that there are always ways to make things better next time.

A healthy organization strives for a culture of cooperation, mutual respect and team-based problem solving. A demanding and aggressive approach to problem solving generally doesn't result in the best solution and negatively impacts working relationships. What I have learned over the years is that it takes perseverance to collect input from a variety of sources, a strong spirit of cooperation as team members strive to contribute from their strengths, patience as aspects develop over time, determination when "new ideas" flop or thrive, and courage to evaluate to get it right. 🌱

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# COABC AGM Report

## From Field To Table: A Successful Conference and AGM

By: *Andrea Langlois*

This year's COABC Conference and AGM was held February 20-22, 2009, bringing 100 producers out of their fields and to the table to learn, share ideas, and to celebrate BC organics.

The conference sessions were held within the Pacific Agriculture Show and participants wandered through the trade fair throughout the two days. On the first day of the conference, this year's winners of the Fresh Voices contest were announced, and the day wrapped up with an "organic tastings" reception at a local community hall.

Conference sessions on the second day were jam-packed with information. Speakers highlighted details about the Canadian Organic Regime, food safety on the farm, new research from the field and the greenhouse, and there was special attention given to providing information on accessing the marketplace.

Saturday wound down (or up!) with a delicious organic feast, featuring wonderful food from around the province and local musicians. The ever-popular silent auction brought everyone out of their shells as people bid on a multitude of donated products, making it a successful fundraiser.

## A Report on the 2009 VO / CC / CB Admin Roundtable

By *Rochelle Eisen*

This event held on February 22, 2009, immediately following the COABC AGM was a resounding success with 14 people wearing various certification/verification hats actively sharing information for over 3 hours. With both Anne Macey (chair of the COABC Accreditation Board) and Rochelle Eisen (Organic Extension Agent) – who both participate on the CGSB technical committee – on hand to respond and facilitate dialogue the session, everyone left feeling better informed and empowered to proceed with the 2009 certification season.

Thank you to COABC for covering the room rental and refreshment for this session. I would like to recommend that this Roundtable become a permanent fixture of the annual event, and I encourage all Verification Officers, Certification Committee Members and Certification Administrators to attend.

## COABC 2009 Board of Directors

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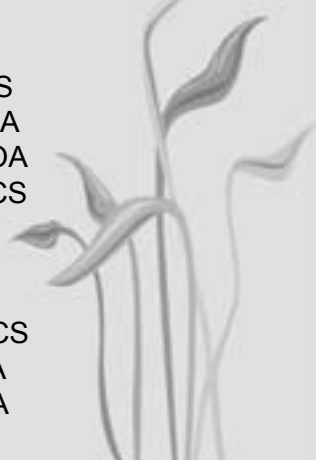
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## 2009 Pacific Agriculture Show Report

By *Rochelle Eisen*

Many volunteer hands came together to assemble, disassemble, transport and staff COABC's booth at the Pacific Ag Show for 2009. Kudos to the regulars like Mary Forstbauer, Susan Davidson Alyson Chisholm, Sarah Davidson, Paddy Doherty, and welcome to our new PAS volunteers David Avery, Gabriela & Gonzalo Naranjo, Marina Buchan, and Cara Nunn. I could not have done this without you.


Beyond having a super group of knowledgeable volunteers, we also had the new COABC lightweight popup backdrop screens to show off the new COABC logo and them. In addition, we had the new supporting COABC PR kits to offer as take-a-ways as well as at-a-glance CB Services and Contact handouts (thank you to all the COABC staff for getting all these pieces in place).

Overall, PAS attendance seemed to be down from previous years, but the COABC booth was humming throughout the event with old and new friends expressing their support and

interest in organic agriculture. Most of the time, I ended up in the adjacent booth talking to people as there was never enough room on ours! And, as in previous years, it was a great opportunity to meet with government, media and with the BC Agricultural Council.

Of course the ultimate is being able to give away delicious Ambrosia and Gala apples to grateful PAS visitors. Thanks

to Gunta Vitins of Pro Organics (SunOpta Group) for donating these 4 boxes of BC organic apples; they were definitely a show pleaser.

There were more organic sessions offered in the Lower Mainland Horticulture Improvement Association's Short Course line up then ever before, making it difficult to get to all the Organic offerings. It was truly amazing. 

# Our Partners



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- Que Pasa
- Serendipity tea
- Sointula wild Seafood & Smokehouse
- Thomas Reid farms
- Vivian Vilich
- Working Horse Winery

## Bronze Level



# FRESH VOICES CONTEST

2009



The aim of the "Fresh Voices" contest is to solicit new ideas to help COABC meet its mandate of "a strong and sustainable community, serving the evolving needs of the sector and the public for generations to come." This year's winning essays are featured here. Thanks to our contest sponsor Sea Soil.

.....

## FIRST PLACE ESSAY

### DIVERSITY = SUCCESS

By: Haliburton Community Organic Farm

Mix together small plot organic farmers, a municipal government, an eager not-for-profit society, and a bundle of wonderful volunteers on a 4.09 hectare historical farm surrounded by suburbia and what you have? The key to success for sustainable community-supported organic farming.

Haliburton Community Organic Farm (Hali Farm to those in the know) thrives on a community of diversity. Certified with IOPA, Hali Farm came into being in 2006 on land that once was home to Four Winds Farm, but had tumbled into disuse when the land was taken over by the Capital Regional District (CRD) to house a water reservoir.



Hali Farm involves a diversity of stakeholders. In 2001, a group of citizens concerned about land lost from the Agricultural Land Reserve formed the Land for Food Coalition. The Coalition developed a land use plan to restore Hali Farm to a working organic farm with a community focus. This plan was presented to the CRD. The CRD agreed to sell the Haliburton lands to the Municipality of Saanich, with the intention that the land would be protected for agricultural use.

Saanich now leases the land to the Haliburton Community Organic Farm Society (a registered not-for-profit organization) for a nominal fee. In turn, the Society rents land to small-plot organic farmers and maintains a portion of the land for Society use (community and farmer education opportunities and produce sales to support the Society).

Tenanted by two organic farm businesses (four farm-



ers) and a fledgling organic gardening/cooking school, Hali Farm has quickly moved from overgrowth and neglect to a thriving organic food producing landscape. Farmers work together to market fresh, organic produce and flowers at the farm gate as well as several local markets. In 2008 the farm businesses established a local CSA box program that now has a significant wait list for the 2009 season. In 2009, Teralicious will begin providing organic gardening and cooking classes to the community for all ages.

The Society operates under four principles: local food security; economic stability for small scale organic farmers; education and outreach; and land stewardship. These principles guide the Society Board in overall management of Hali Farm. The farmers are responsible for their own businesses, the land they rent and their equipment. Farmers readily exchange equipment and other resources in support of each other. The Society and farmers work together to fulfill community communication, education and land stewardship goals. Farmers are represented on the Society Board and participate in the selection of future tenants.







Farmers are not the only residents of Hali Farm. It has a small wetland and a patch of second growth forest that supports biodiversity in and around the farm. While it would be easy to overlook these denizens in the interests of business, the wild residents of Hali Farm have their own set of champions in the form of the Urban Biodiversity Enhancement Project. Originating at the University of

Victoria School of Environmental Studies, the project quickly attracted the attention and support of the Victoria Natural History Society, biological consultants, landscape professionals and members of the general public. The biodiversity group is restoring the damaged wetland, installing bird, bee and salamander housing and using their work to learn and teach land-stewardship techniques and ideals.

Hali Farm is undoubtedly unique, but it also highlights some key ingredients for successful community organic farming:

1. Accepting there is no cookie cutter solution to what makes an organic farm a success, whether considering size, location, produce, number of farmers or any of the many other factors that shape an organic farm. Every farm, farmer, land and community is unique with their own special attributes.
2. The structure and organization of the farm must be built around the strengths and interests of the farmers and communities involved. For Hali Farm, the farmers and Society operate the farm as a collective decision-making group rather than having a designated leader.
3. Success (regardless of how you define it) does not happen alone. Organic farming can only thrive with an integral network of support from other farmers, the community, educational institutes and others.
4. It takes more than champions to establish a community-based farm such as Hali. It takes a large number of dedicated, hard working individuals who share common and/or related interests.

Diversity, dedication, cooperation and collaboration between many people and organizations has resulted in Hali Farm being a sustainable community success.

*Haliburton Community Organic Farm is a "Fresh Voice" for BC sustainable organic agriculture. They are a new farm organized around a diverse community of farmers, a not-for-profit society, local government and many volunteers dedicated to farming, education and biodiversity. Their positive energy keeps them "Fresh." Their produce sales, community events and education projects make them a strong "Voice" in our community for sustainable organic agriculture.*

## SECOND PLACE ESSAY

# THE COMMUNITY GREENHOUSE PROJECT

By: Lin Steedman

With the threat of retiring farmers a reality and the lack of young farmers stepping into the fields, the looming question continues to be asked, how are we going to feed ourselves? This issue is not new, nor will it disappear. But, at what point is it essential that we start educating our children about food production and its significance to our health and well-being? At what point do we realize how precious our food source really is?

In the Columbia Valley we are addressing this ques-

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The Common Greenhouse under construction *Photo Credit: Lin Steedman*

tion through education, opportunity and experience. The Columbia Valley Botanical Gardens and Center for Sustainable Living (CVBG/CSL) partnered with and David Thompson Secondary School (DTSS) in Invermere, BC, to construct and operate a community greenhouse on the grounds of DTSS. The Community Greenhouse will complete the food circle as students learn how to grow and harvest fresh organic food from the greenhouse, which they will then learn how to prepare in the high schools award winning Chef Training Program.

The Community Greenhouse is a leading edge design that incorporates the latest in energy and water conversation technology. It's a low energy use, solar heated, water conserving 3000 sq ft educational greenhouse. Heat collected from the summer temperatures is captured and stored in the ground for use during the winter months of the school year. It not only addresses issues of organic food production, but also issues of climate change, energy, water and resource conservation, regional ecosystem and biodiversity conservation, food security and decline in agriculture in our community and region.

Over 200 volunteers in our community have come together over the past three years to contribute their time and/or services. The community response has been tremendous. We want more than just the schools to benefit from the educational opportunities, we want the whole community involved, including students and staff of School District #6, seniors & seniors service providers, food security networks, the agricultural sector, First Nations, disabled community, service clubs, and municipal and regional governments.

One major issue that will be addressed is food security. Food production at the Community Greenhouse will directly contribute food but more importantly, will demonstrate that it can be achieved locally and organically, with low inputs of carbon-based fuel and water in its production and transportation. Hands-on examples and programs for engaging in sustainable practices like home to

farm level food production and preparation, organic horticulture, composting and green building are vital to community growth, yet few opportunities exist for people to learn and adopt them. The Community Greenhouse provides this key link particularly for youth but also for all audiences. Education and skills development about organic food production, preparation and healthy food choices have been at the core of our education and capacity building goals from the outset and will remain the centre piece of our three year pilot.

The overall impact of this Community Greenhouse on the community will be significant. It will provide an increased understanding of the food cycle, organic growing & food security issues from farm (our Greenhouse), to kitchen (Chef Training Program) and to table (School Cafeteria) by students at the high school. It will also enhance the understanding and development of skills in organic horticulture through education in all grades and horticulture programs and events for the community.

The ominous question, how are we going to feed ourselves, will be explored in our community greenhouse and, with great determination, these students will step out into the world with more of an understanding of what nourishes them and sustains them. This project provides hope for the future, gives our community the opportunity to learn about organic growing, but most importantly serves as a catalyst for sustainability.

*Lin Steedman was born and raised in the Columbia Valley, in Windermere, BC and holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Global Resource Systems. She represents the younger generation of farmers, with a fresh voice and abundance of passionate for organic growing, sustainable agriculture, local food production and food security. She's the educator and coordinator of the Community Greenhouse Project, and her fresh voice in the community will be used to enhance food education, experience and opportunity as she works with students fresh organic produce and provides guidance in making healthy food choices.*



The Common Greenhouse plan. *Photo Credit: Lin Steedman*

### THIRD PLACE ESSAY

# BECOMING A SUCCESSFUL ORGANIC FARMER

By: Mike and Sharyn Romaine

*"If you want to build a ship, don't drum up people together to collect wood and don't assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea"*

Antoine de Saint-Exupery, French Author and Aviator

This quote also has relevance when it comes to the desire of becoming a successful organic farmer. Success, in large part, depends upon each person's vision, commitment, and values. Luck, timing, available resources and opportunity are equally important ingredients for success. There is no single template to become a successful organic farmer. Each person and the land they steward impart upon each other a unique combination of conditions that lead to the resulting success of the farm and the farmer. Working with the land is both a humbling and rewarding experience whereby the day-to-day contributions of the farmer meld with the annual and long term renewal of the land.

Learning what makes a successful farmer does not happen overnight or come as quick sound bites. Rather, it is the subtle experiences that incrementally lead to knowledge that in turn leads to successful practices and products. In addition to the actual products from the farm, comes personal success that takes the form of respect and pleasure from the rewards of hard work, humility and insights to the rhythm of nature that sustains the farm and the farmer. The above enables the farmer to put into context his/her role as an inhabitant on the planet and more specifically, as a member of his/her local community. This provides the basis for learning, becoming independent in one's actions but open and ready to collaborate, and share knowledge and time with others.

Solitude on the land provides the opportunity to reflect and think about the long term and the big picture needed to make an organic farm successful as well as the pleasure of planning specific hands on day-to-day activities that will contribute to that success. One can also measure the success that comes from the joy of having people wanting your food and the thrill of sharing your own home grown food with family and friends. Seeing the birth of young chicks in the spring, blossoms and the emergence of new fruit and vegetables gives one the sense of renewal, purpose and feeling the joy of living irrespective of one's age. Other seasons confirm the feeling of being alive, of change, and upcoming challenges.



Healing Farm. Photo Credit: Mike and Sharyn Romaine

The above is the driver for us to work towards becoming successful organic farmers. But this personal enrichment alone is not enough. In order to survive and be successful also requires consideration of the following key points:

1. Being willing to learn, open to challenges, shifts in thinking, and new approaches, but accepting of tried and true practices.
2. Having a long term vision but the patience to take considered steps to get there and being prepared for disappointments, surprises, and mistakes along the way.
3. Knowing the limits of your farm and yourself and taking the time to do what is right.
4. Learning and being secure in your own abilities to be independent and innovative yet ready and open to collaborate and share information and ideas with others.
5. Seeking partners and opportunities to work with other organic farmers, active community organizations that support local food production and social justice, as well as members of the business community and governmental institutions.
6. Being holistic in your approach and understanding the relationship between good farm stewardship, sustainability and environmental health.
7. Balancing your time between farm stewardship and crop production with identifying and developing niches and markets for your produce.
8. Devoting time and energy to contribute to greater public awareness and understanding of the importance of organic farming and the value of local food.
9. Making farming a family affair and, whenever possible, a team effort that draws upon individual strengths and combined energy.
10. Having a transition plan for future generation of farmers.

*Mike and Sharyn Romaine are the operators of Healing Farm in Saanich BC. Although they are older, they are new to farming but feel that they can add a fresh voice to sustainable organic agriculture by showing that it can be done and rewarding at the same time.*



... "Demystifying the CGA's Ruling on Niche Grains," continued from page 12

ing tables (Seeds Regulations, Schedule 1, Table 2).

Here is an excerpt from the aforementioned CFIA February 13, 2009, letter:

"Common seed of Spelt may be sold in Canada, but it must not make reference to any variety name on the package or any advertising material associated with the sale. Emmer, Einkorn and Polish wheat are not listed in Schedule 111 and as such, do not require variety registration to be sold in Canada and variety names may be applied to this seed.

"[However], even though a crop kind does not require variety registration, a variety name cannot be arbitrarily assigned to a plant population. When a variety name is used for a seed lot, those seeds shall be that variety and the variety must meet the definition as stated in the Seeds Regulations: 'variety' has the meaning assigned to 'cultivar' by the International Union of Biological Sciences' Commission for the Nomenclature of Cultivated Plants and denotes an assemblage of cultivated plants, including hybrids constituted by controlled cross-pollination, that

(a) are distinguished by common morphological, physiological, cytological, chemical or other characteristics, and

(b) retain their distinguishing characteristics when reproduced; ( variété )."

### A Note on Varieties

Polish Wheat (*Triticum polanicum*) is used here as a common name for Kamut®, however many wheat breeders believe it should be Khorasan Wheat (*Triticum turanicum*).

Brewers in Germany and Switzerland are using the covered wheat varieties, Einkorn, Emmer and Spelt, to brew some very interesting beers, which may be suitable for people who have gluten intolerance. In fact, Emmer was the grain of choice for ancient Egyptian and Summerian brewers. Not to mention that, since a protein content of less than 9% is required for brewing, some of the wetter areas of BC might just work for those wanting to try their hand at grain crops.

As an aside, for those enquiring minds out there, this ruling does not affect the CFIA's stance that it is illegal to sell "Red Fife" seed under the name "Red Fife," given that it is not a legally registered variety name. Since Red Fife is a bread wheat (*Triticum aestivum*), and is classified under the Hard Red Spring category, it must be sold as "Hard Red Spring" (common seed), until such time that it is a legally registered variety under the Seed Act. It should also be noted, that an

application for registration may be submitted to the CFIA, with the accompanying fees, to begin the vetting process. This may take 2-4 years, using a variety of standard benchmark tests, and offers no guarantee of acceptance.

### Marketing Options

So what are the marketing options? In a nutshell, the operative word is directly. In a broad sense, we have Direct to Consumer, a concept familiar to just about every COABC member. Farmgate sales, farmers' markets, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) groups, like the ones in the East Kootenays and the Fraser Valley, as well as value chains.

Then there is Direct to Business. Grain cleaning facilities, such as Fieldstone Granary, are always looking for local supplies, flourmills may be interested, however your grain must already be cleaned. Bread bakers (who mill their own flour), restaurants and even the brewing industry are other possibilities. Ambitious Growers in all regions can also package their own grain and sell it through distributors.

## Resources

To read the **Canadian Grain Commission's press release** visit: [www.grainscanada.gc.ca/media-media-s/press-presse/2009/2009-01-16-eng.htm](http://www.grainscanada.gc.ca/media-media-s/press-presse/2009/2009-01-16-eng.htm)

**For a full directory list** of licensees of the Canadian Grain Commission: [www.grainscanada.gc.ca/licensee-licence/licensed-agreeds-eng.htm](http://www.grainscanada.gc.ca/licensee-licence/licensed-agreeds-eng.htm)


**Heritage Grains Foundation:** [www.lilikoi.ca/heritagegrains.org](http://www.lilikoi.ca/heritagegrains.org)

**Grain CSAs:** Kootenays, contact Matt Lowe at (250) 352-1204, [matt@ecosociety.ca](mailto:matt@ecosociety.ca); Fraser Valley contact martin at [martin@rocksandwater.ca](mailto:martin@rocksandwater.ca)

**Fieldstone Granary** (grain cleaning): [www.fieldstonegranary.ca](http://www.fieldstonegranary.ca)

**Flour mills:** Anita's in Chiliwack at (604) 823-5543, [john@anitasorganic.com](mailto:john@anitasorganic.com) and SaltSpring Flour Mill on Salt Spring Island (250) 537-4282 [dogwoodlane@telus.net](mailto:dogwoodlane@telus.net).

**Cleaning, selling and packing:** Vancouver Island Heritage Foodservice Coop, (250) 741-0024, [www.heritagefoodservice.coop](http://www.heritagefoodservice.coop)

*Robert Giardino is the founder and executive director of the Heritage Grains Foundation, a non profit organization dedicated to the preservation and cultivation of open pollinated, non GMO varieties of grains. He has many years of experience in the hospitality industry, as well as retail and wholesale food industry. For the last 3 years, he has been importing and marketing emmer throughout Canada.* 

# From the Field to the Plate

## BC Potato Variety Trial 2008

By: Heather Meberg

The BC potato variety trial is conducted annually in Delta, BC for three purposes. The first purpose is to gather performance data on new numbered varieties developed by plant breeders at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada in Lethbridge and Fredericton. Second, to give growers in the BC Potato and Vegetable Growers Association the opportunity to gain marketing rights to numbered varieties that are of interest to them. And lastly, to demonstrate and collect data on commercial varieties that are less common in BC, and may be of interest to local growers. All varieties are compared with local industry standards.

The 2008 variety trial was hosted by Rod Swenson Farms Ltd., and grown in a commercial field at 2306 Westham Island Road. Plots were hand-planted at 15cm depth on May 14, top-killed on August 28 and September 8, and harvested September 30 and October 1 using a two-row digger. Varieties were replicated four times in two rows x 5m long plots. Each plot contained 20 plants spaced 30cm apart within a row. The field received no irrigation and rainfall was above average (= 147.5mm).

Whites, reds, yellows, and russets were grown in the 2008 trial. Performance data collected included total yield and tuber set, colour of tuber skin and flesh, eye depth, tuber shape, uniformity of shape and size, and general appearance. The data for some of the more interesting varieties are summarized below, those with bold font were of the greatest interest.



Photos: Heather Meberg

### Whites

**AR2007-4** – This variety yielded as well as Norchip, with excellent shape and size uniformity, and good overall appearance.

**Harmony** – The best-yielding white in the trial, with round tubers, and excellent shape and size uniformity. A great looking potato.



### Reds

**Cherry Red** – A darker, round red that had a high yield, excellent shape and size uniformity, and good overall appearance.

**CV01359-2** – A moderate yielding red. With good size and shape uniformity and a terrific overall appearance.

**CV97050-3** – A moderate yielding red. With good size and shape uniformity and a great overall appearance.

**Dakota Jewel** – This round red has a smooth dark skin, and scored high for overall appearance. Uniformity was excellent, with an average yield.

**Ida Rose** – A great looking and great tasting round to oval red potato. Good colour, with a great overall appearance, and good shape and size uniformity.

**WV5888-2** – A moderate yielding potato with good size and shape uniformity and a great overall appearance.

### Yellows

**AR2008-10** – A moderate yield with creamy pale yellow flesh. There was some shape variability but the size was uniform and the overall appearance was good.

**Augusta** – This variety looked very similar to the Yukon Gold potato with a slight blush around the eyes. The blush spread a little too much on some potatoes, which tended to chain a little. The shape and size were very uniform and the overall appearance was good.

**Elfe** – With a yield comparable to the Yukon Gold, this potato had a very nice colour inside and out. The shape and size were fairly uniform and the overall appearance was good.

**Provento** – A very high yielding variety with shape variability but good size uniformity. The flesh was a deep yellow with a good overall appearance.

**Satina** - A very high yielding round yellow potato with a smooth skin and an excellent overall appearance.

### **Unusual**

**AR2007-3** - This is a purple skinned variety with white and purple flesh. The yield was comparable to Russet Norkotah in this trial. The shape and size were very uniform and the overall appearance was good. A good potato for a niche market.

### **Russets**

**A95109-1** - This variety scored the highest in overall appearance of all of the russets. The size and shape were also very uniform.

**AC Stampede** - A moderate yielding potato that produced very visually appealing tubers with good uniformity.

**Gem Russet** - A moderate yielding variety with excellent appearance and good size uniformity.


**Gem Star Russet** - Very high yielding, with excellent uniformity and overall appearance.

The BC Potato and Vegetable Growers Association participates in the variety trial in order to collect in-



formation on how potato varieties perform under BC conditions. Over the past five years, E.S. Cropconsult Ltd. has been responsible for planning, coordinating and data collection. The trial was carried out this year on a field managed by Rod Swenson Farms Ltd. After harvesting, Rod Swenson Farms Ltd. also provided storage space for the tubers.

If you are interested in any of the above varieties, please contact Heather Meberg at E.S. Cropconsult Ltd., (604) 841-0764 or Susan Smith at BCMAL, 1-888-221-7141, and we will be pleased to help you find more information.

*Heather Meberg is an integrated pest management consultant who has been working with E.S. Cropconsult Ltd. for the past eleven years.* 

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# Applefest 2008 on Salt Spring Island

## *Marvelling in the Diversity*

By: K.A. Curtin

On a sun-soaked Fall morning, the Fulford Hall is packed with Salt Spring Island residents and visitors there for one reason: to see over three hundred varieties of organically grown apples and visit the orchards from whence they came.



Photo: Andrea Langlois

The 10th annual Apple Festival has grown to be an endearing local event with fifteen local farms opening their orchard gates to apple-gazers of all ages. I am a newcomer to this island event and can't help but wonder, what would possess people to be so excited about such a common fruit?

To find out the answer, I made up my mind to go to every farm on my festival map, beginning at the center of operations, Fulford Hall. Upon entering, I am truly awed by the number of different kinds of apples on display. As I shuffle along with the crowd lining the tables, noting the specific details written about each specimen, I realize that the "common" apple does not apply here but to our grocery stores that stock no more than five varieties. Blemish free, uniform in size, and colourful under artificial lights - these are the types of apples we've come to expect as the norm.

What we are seeing, however, is a commercialized product bred for high yields, long shelf life, resistance to disease, and long stems (so that the apples can be fully doused with pesticides.) Alternatively, the old cultivars at this festival may be oblong, round, lumpy, bumpy, russeted, or scabbed. The flesh may be red, white,

or cream coloured. The texture and taste may be suitable for cider, cooking, or eating straight off the tree. When is the last time you saw a Cat's Head apple in the fruit section? As I try to conclude if the apple is, indeed, feline shaped, it dawns on me: the marvel is in the diversity!

Tables set up along the perimeter offer supportive information to the apple centerpiece, such as physical examples of bark and fruit diseases, study books for novice beekeepers, and information on genetically modified food. In the corner, oral stories of pioneer apple growers are performed to educate the audience on the time, energy, and challenges of nurturing heritage orchards in the old days. Following the brief history lessons, a masked man, who's super strength passion for heritage apples inspires him to morph into Captain Apple (even fruit needs heroes), summarizes the successes and difficulties of the 2008 growing season - from what I can hear anyway. Over the din of the

...continued on page 26



Photo: Mélanie Sylvestre

# Featured Photo



This beautiful Echinacea Field was photographed at Falcon Ridge Farm in Kelowna in July, 2008 by Marlys Wolfe.

You can see it in person on Sunday, July 12, 2009 at Falcon Ridge Farm's Echinacea Field Day.

Email Marlys Wolfe for more info:  
gmwolfe@shaw.ca

Every issue we feature a photo from a BCOG reader. Have a photo you want to share? Email it to Moss at [bcogadvertising@certifiedorganic.bc.ca](mailto:bcogadvertising@certifiedorganic.bc.ca).



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...*"Apple Fest 2008"* continued from page 23

crowd it is difficult to hear any of the speakers, but I am also distracted by the powerful lure of the pie ladies who were swiftly dishing out slices made from several heritage varieties of Salt Spring Island apples. (My biggest regret from this day is that I only ate one piece.)



Photo: Andrea Langlois

When I finally leave the hall and begin to visit each orchard, any cerebral realizations I had about fruit and economics give way to a new physical sense, a groundedness derived from seeing the relationship of the fruit to the tree to the farmer to the environment, and so on. I begin to see that every orchard is as unique as the farmer who tends it, and I'll bet the personality of the farmer could be characterized from the types of apples he or she grows.

From the manicured to the wild ... neatly rowed trees and honey sweet fragrance in the air at Isabella farm inspires a little boy to sprawl out under the branches, a look of perfect bliss on his face. Massive Wolf River apples hover above my head at Fern Creek Farm. Curious llamas guard the gates to an extensive, open field at Bright Farm. The many lives of apple trees... grown into gnarly old trunks amidst wild gardens or fields of grass, distributed over acres or rising up where the seed fell a generation ago. Younger trees establish themselves, acquiring character and stamina as they mature. Pastoral visions on a perfect fall day.

Eating pie does not deter me from having lunch at Harry Burton's Apple Luscious orchard where another display of apples line a long table near the entrance. After hearing of the virtues of red-

fleshed apples, I yearn to try one, but it seems that others have the same idea. Only cores are left, dotted with happy wasps drunk on fruit sugar. Burton has long been an outspoken proponent of cultivating heritage, organic trees, calling the red-fleshed varieties "the apple of the future" and the theme of this year's festival. He says, "It's time people quit eating with their eyes, and let their taste buds decide." As a grower of over one hundred varieties in his own whimsical orchard, Burton doesn't mind a few blemishes on his apples, calling them "troubled" if they haven't turned out quite the way he'd hoped.

A man calls out a question from a small group hovering near boxes of apples for sale, "Harry, what's your favourite type of apple?"

"Whatever one I'm eating at the time" is Burton's immediate response.

The Apple festival celebrates the journey back from near extinction of many of the older cultivars but also makes a statement about the implications of monoculture. Our history shows us the disastrous effects of reducing diversity, whether it is in vegetation, fish, animals, or humans. There is no superior race of anything, and thank goodness for the diligence, patience, and independent minds of the farmers that know this!

The second marvel, to return again to my original question, is that the festival brings non-farmers, normally disconnected from where food comes from, into the life cycle loop of the harvest. Of course, as a wandering tourist, the brief sojourn into someone else's apple haven is an experience quite different from the farmer's who worries about the weather ruining the crop, who sees the direct results of labour reflected in the quality and quantity of fruit the orchard produces. The festival, at the very least, inspires appreciation for the work of farmers and an interest in acquiring local, seasonal food for the dinner table.

More information on this year's event and Salt Spring orchards can be found at [www.appleluscious.com](http://www.appleluscious.com)

*Originally printed in the Salt Spring Island, BC, publication The Driftwood.* 🌿

... "GM Alfalfa" continued from page 7



companies have taken virtual monopoly control in the market. And, unless we stop it, alfalfa could be the example of how these new (de)regulations serve the biotech companies, to the detriment of organic farmers.

### Why Alfalfa?

Monsanto is sticking to its long-term plan to genetically modify the world's staple crops, putting farmers and global food security at the company's mercy. They have already commercialized soy, canola, corn and cotton – food ingredients that pervade processed foods and are the first generation of feedstock for biofuels – and has a long term plan to commercialize GM rice and wheat.

The commercialization of GM alfalfa planned by Monsanto and Forage Genetics International would have a severe, negative impact on Canadian agriculture, markets, and our environment. Genetic contamination from GM alfalfa is a certainty.

Monsanto has no interest in protecting organics. On the contrary, their genetically modified seeds are a direct threat to the industry. Organic standards prohibit the use of GMOs and a crop with any detectable GMO contamination cannot be certified organic. And domestic and international buyers require organic products that are GMO free.

The Saskatchewan Organic Directorate (SOD) knows all about the risks of GM contamination for organic farmers. In 2001, the SOD Organic Agriculture Protection Fund Committee provided support to the legal action against Monsanto and Bayer for losses to organic farmers due to contamination by GMO canola.

SOD has now initiated, with the Canadian Biotechnology Action Network (CBAN), the "No to GMO Alfalfa Campaign" to stop the sale, trade and production of GMO Alfalfa in Canada. The Campaign is asking the CFIA to reassess its approval for environmental release of GMO Alfalfa. Already, over 60 groups and companies in the organic sector have signed on to the Campaign.

### Impacts

Contamination of organic alfalfa would impact organic farmers in many negative ways. Alfalfa is a perfect legume for nitrogen fixation and losing alfalfa in organic farm crop rotation would severely hamper

the ability to maintain soil fertility and prevent soil erosion, which would harm the future of our soils' health.

The release of GM alfalfa in Canada would also threaten the availability of GMO-free hay or pellets for the production of organic livestock, as well as for the growing market, both domestic and export, for certified organic alfalfa seed for growing edible sprouts. Consumers of alfalfa seed for sprouting prefer Canada's high quality seed and reputation for clean organic products. According to SOD, if genetically modified alfalfa is introduced, the potential annual market loss is over a half of a million pounds of alfalfa seed. This is in addition to any losses from Canadian exports of alfalfa pellets and alfalfa cubes.


Furthermore, cross-pollination and contamination from GM alfalfa would be inevitable. Alfalfa would be particularly hard to contain as it is pollinated by bees, primarily leafcutter bees, but also honeybees, several species of wild bees and wasps. The isolation distance to prevent the transfer of the genes by insect pollination would need to be several miles, but there is no mechanism for separating GMO and non-GMO growing areas and alfalfa seed is usually produced in concentrated areas. GM alfalfa for hay production will often be cut after blooming starts, giving an opportunity for bees and other pollinating insects to transfer pollen from the GM crop to other alfalfa seed crops.

Alfalfa seed crops also produce a percentage of "hard" seed that can germinate several years after the field has been ploughed. This would mean that a GM alfalfa seed crop would have the potential of contaminating non-GM alfalfa crops planted even a few years later. "Volunteer" GM alfalfa therefore would be a source of contamination for several years after destruction of a GM alfalfa field, according to SOD.

### Ways Forward

A united effort by agriculture producer groups, consumer and environmental organizations, as well as concerned individuals, can stop GM alfalfa. A similar campaign stopped GM wheat in 2004. This year, the Saskatchewan Organic Directorate and the Canadian Biotechnology Action Network have established the "No to GMO Alfalfa Campaign." This campaign will rely on organic farmers, companies and every Canadian, to stop alfalfa.

To join the "No to GMO Alfalfa Campaign" or find out more information: [www.cban.ca/NoGMOAlfalfa](http://www.cban.ca/NoGMOAlfalfa)


*Lucy Sharratt works in Ottawa as Coordinator of the Canadian Biotechnology Action Network, a coalition of 18 groups campaigning against genetic engineering ([www.cban.ca](http://www.cban.ca)).* 

# Egg Sale Policy Changes

By: Rochelle Eisen and Sheri Nielson

Some of the following information was circulated on the COABC listserv on Feb 18, suggesting that ungraded eggs may be purchased from the farm gate and farmers markets and used in commercial kitchens as long as the following criteria is met.

This is true in some health regions, but as of March 10, 2009 this policy is still under review by the British Columbia Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) to establish if this will be a provincial-wide policy (status verified by Lynn Willcott Acting Program Director, Food Protection Services, of BCCDC Lynn.Wilcott@bccdc.ca). In the meantime, check with your local health authority for confirmation on policy within your Health Region.

All contact information for BC Health Authorities can be found at: [www.foodsafe.ca/FSHealthAuthorities.htm](http://www.foodsafe.ca/FSHealthAuthorities.htm) 



Photos: Moss Dance

## Chick Tips

### To Wash or Not To Wash – What is the Question?

The decision to wash or not wash eggs is complex, and many factors weigh into it. In North America, most commercial eggs are washed. In the UK, eggs that are referred to as Class A are not washed, but must be clean. Dirty eggs requiring washing are sold as Class B eggs. Numerous studies show that proper washing and sanitizing significantly reduces the level of contamination compared with unwashed eggs. One study showed that bacterial populations were similar between fresh washed and unwashed eggs, but with prolonged storage stayed low in washed eggs and rose in unwashed eggs. There is no simple answer to the question of whether to wash eggs or not. Of paramount importance for washed eggs, however, is that proper water quality, temperature, and sanitizers are used. Critical for unwashed eggs, on the other hand, is that they are very clean.

Written by Dr. William Cox, BC Ministry of Agriculture's Poultry Health Veterinarian Contact him by telephone at 604-556-3023 or email [William.Cox@gov.bc.ca](mailto:William.Cox@gov.bc.ca)



From the provincial temporary market guidelines:

#### A. Shell Eggs

Shell eggs may be sold at temporary food markets subject to the following:

- shells are sound and not cracked/leaking
- shells are clean and free of any fecal material or feathers
- eggs are maintained at 4°C during transportation and storage/display at the market
- crates used to contain the eggs are clean and maintained in a sanitary manner
- the minimum information on crates should indicate the name of farm/producer and package/sale date



# UBC Students and Food Services Providers Seek Organic Produce

By DeLisa Lewis

Many readers of the BCOG may already be aware that the number of certified organic producers in this province has more than doubled over the ten-year period from 1995 to 2005. From Statistics Canada 2005 data, we see a steady upward trend in the number of BC organic producers for a total production value of over \$29 million.

Did you also know, that during the same time period, college campuses across North America began actively participating in the farm-to-college movement? For students, these efforts help them gain access to local, and often organic foods; for farmers, campus food service clients can provide reliable markets at a much higher volume; and for college campuses, the relationships with local suppliers have the potential to promote broader sustainability initiatives, and contribute to stronger campus-community linkages and economies.

At the University of British Columbia, the UBC Food System Project (UBCFSP) has a seven-year history, and campus-wide collaborative partnerships which include the Sustainability Office's Social Ecological Economic Development Studies Program (SEEDS), UBC Food Services (UBCFS), The Alma Mater Society (AMS) and its Food and Beverage Department (AMSFBD), UBC Waste Management (UBCWM), Centre for Sustainable Food Systems at UBC Farm, UBC Campus and Community Planning (C&CP), Sauder School of Business classes, UBC Plant Operations, and the Faculty of Land and Food Systems students and teaching team.

Several of you may be nodding your heads now, remembering generously responding to a phone call or impromptu interview at the request of one of the twelve hundred fourth-year Agricultural Science (AG-SCI450) students who have left their mark on the UBCFSP.

An active partner in the UBFSP, UBC Food Services responded to a "FarmtoCollege.org" online survey with a reported a total annual budget for food of over \$17 million. These food service outlets serve 9,000 meals daily to students, staff, and the wider campus community. In the same survey, UBC Food Services lists the total of their annual purchase of local farm products at \$4,000. That leaves plenty room for double-digit BC organic purchasing growth in coming years!


Top three barriers to increasing the volume of farm-

to-college purchasing for UBC food services in the survey were: finding growers/local product supply; coordinating purchase and delivery of products, and product quantity.

Another recent student-driven initiative sparked by the comprehensive UBCFSP, is the AMS "Lighter Footprint Strategy". Targets articulated in March of 2008 include:

To set informed targets for increasing the purchase of local food ingredients as a percentage of total food purchases;

- To increase significantly the number of certified organic, fair trade and GMO-free options and ingredients sold at AMS food outlets; and
- To increase proportion of items procured from UBC Farm and form relationships with other local producers.

*DeLisa Lewis is a PhD candidate, and hopes to return soon to the active practice of growing food and growers of food.* 



If you are interested in building a farm-to-institution relationship with UBC, the following list of interested purchasers and operations managers would like to hear from you:

**Nancy Toogood:** A.M.S. Food & Beverage Manager 604-822-3965 foodbevmgr@ams.ubc.ca

**Nick Gregory:** A.M.S. Stores Supervisor 604-822-2386 stores@ams.ubc.ca

**Liska Richer:** UBC Food Systems Project Coordinator 604-722-5056 Liska@telus.net

**Andrew Parr, Director:** UBC Food Services andrew.parr@ubc.ca

**Dorothy Yip:** General Manager of Retail Operation, Purchasing & Project Coordination, UBC Food Services dorothy.yip@ubc.ca

# Events and Announcements...

## COG's New Practical Skills Book

"Growing Potatoes Organically" by Maureen Bostock has finally been printed. Order your copy on-line at [www.cog.ca](http://www.cog.ca) or call toll free at 1-888 375-7383.

## Small Scale Organic Seed Production Manual

A new 2008 handbook produced by FarmFolk/ CityFolk for farmers in British Columbia and beyond, gives practical advice on why and how to incorporate vegetable seed production into existing farming systems. Written by organic seed grower Patrick Steiner, this publication is not so much a "how-to" of seed growing as it is a "what to expect" when embarking on a journey of seed growing. [http://ffcf.bc.ca/NewSiteFiles/programs/farm/seed\\_manual.html](http://ffcf.bc.ca/NewSiteFiles/programs/farm/seed_manual.html)

## BC School Fruit and Vegetable Nutritional Program's

request for proposals is out for the for the 2009/2010 school year. Please note that in addition to the listed products, they are also welcoming proposals on new products ideas. [www.aipc.ca/bc/](http://www.aipc.ca/bc/) Due date is March 27, 2009.

The First **COABC price list** for 2009 is available online at: [www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca/rcbtoa/services/prices.html](http://www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca/rcbtoa/services/prices.html)

## Guide to the 2009 AgriStability Interim Application

AgriStability is a margin-based program that provides income support when a producer experiences larger income losses. This guide explains how the 2009 AgriStability Interim Payment works, and provides instructions on how to complete the application. [www.agr.gc.ca](http://www.agr.gc.ca)

**Agriinvest 2009** Canadian farmers will soon start receiving government contributions under AgriInvest – a business risk management program under Growing Forward – without any requirement to make matching producer deposits for the first year. Federal, provincial and territorial governments are waiving the deposit requirement as a transition measure for 2007 AgriInvest. For more information visit: [www.agr.gc.ca](http://www.agr.gc.ca).

The seventy-five day public comment period for the **Organic Product Regulation** ends April 29, 2009. Comments can be sent electronically to OPR-RPB. [inspection.gc.ca](http://inspection.gc.ca). The Regulations can be found online at: <http://canadagazette.gc.ca/rp-pr/p1/2009/2009-02-14/html/reg1-eng.html>

## Accessing the Canadian Organic Regime legend artwork

Once the artwork is finalized (yes it still may change between now and June 30) operators will need to submit proof to the Canada Organic Office of ISO 65 certification from an approved CB to the current standard (right now the 2008 amended version) and then the COO will release the artwork to end users. As before, labels must be approved by CBs before use.

## COABC's Regional Seminar Series Program

Interested in having some type of production expert speak in your area and need a little assistance? There is funding available through COABC's Regional Seminar Series Program. Contact Rochelle 250.547.6573 [extension@certifiedorganic.bc.ca](mailto:extension@certifiedorganic.bc.ca) to learn how to access these funds.

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| Stickers 1" round                 | 1000 pc roll | \$11.00    | 10 rolls \$90.00   |          |       |
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| Green T-shirts L or XL *                   | \$18.00   | \$18.00       | PST taxable |  |  |
| Natural T-shirts (Logo) M or L *           | \$10.50   | \$10.50       | PST taxable |  |  |
| Natural T-shirts (Plain) S M L XL or XXL * | \$6.50    | \$6.50        | PST taxable |  |  |
| Organic Tree Fruit Management              | \$32.00   | \$39.95       | No PST      |  |  |
| Steel in the Field                         | \$25.00   | \$25.00       | No PST      |  |  |
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\*Limited quantities available - please contact the COABC office for availability

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