

*British Columbia*

# Organic Grower



*In this Issue:*

**Diversity on the Farm, Fly Spotting, Blueberries, and Humanure**

**COABC**  
Certified Organic Associations of BC

*Journal for the Certified  
Organic Associations of BC*  
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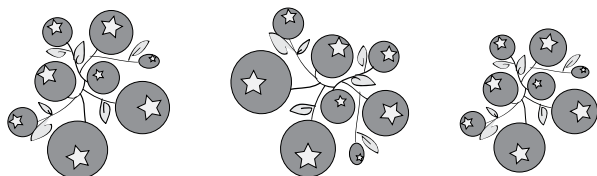


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**On the Cover:** Rainbow Chard Collective at the Victoria Pride Parade, July 2009 by Jennie Applejuice

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**Next Issue Deadline:  
December 15, 2010**

## President's Letter

By Brad Reid


Hope everyone had a great holiday season and that you are all refreshed and ready for the new growing year. Last season brought many challenges to many of our growers, from a late start, to the dry summer and a quick freeze up in the fall. Some crops did very well others not so good, but we are all back for another year and I pray that it will be a good one for everyone.



In this issue of the BC Organic Grower there is lots of info on our annual gathering of the organic industry. This year is our first conference in Kamloops and I encourage everyone to make the trip. This is a great opportunity for you to meet with other growers and discuss different techniques for growing crops, marketing ideas and innovations in farms. There will also be a lot of information on bio-security and on farm food safety, two issues that will be front and center over the next year. It is our objective to make all of the information available to our growers; it is your job to use that information.

2010 will be a year of many challenges for COABC. With government cutbacks it is critical that we generate revenue from other sources so that we may keep the fees paid by our growers at their current level. We plan to do this through sponsorships, new members and creative ways of using the Grower and our website. This will take time and effort from everyone to make it happen.

In this issue of the grower you will see that we are asking for volunteers for committees. Please take the time to look over our needs and see where you can help. A little help from each person goes a long way in achieving our goals and helping us expand our services.

Good luck in this growing season and we will see you all at the gathering in Kamloops. 



### Achieving success through involvement!

At the 2009 COABC Board Retreat the following committees were identified to help move the organization forward. Which one speaks to you? Where do your skills fit in?

**The Capacity Development Committee:** The Capacity Development Committee will be responsible for finding and securing funding sources to ensure the sustainability of COABC.

**The new BCCOP Campaign Committee:** The BCCOP Campaign Committee will primarily be responsible for implementing BCCOP branding strategies and acquiring the funding to support these specific initiatives.

**The Advocacy Committee:** The Advocacy Committee can be convened to deal with issues such as regulating the term Organic in BC. This would include preparations for meetings with Ministers and government officials.

Interested in helping out? Contact COABC administrator Sarah Clark at [admin@certifiedorganic.bc.ca](mailto:admin@certifiedorganic.bc.ca)



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# Report from the Administrator

By Sarah Clark

We are all looking for ways to spend less and the focus of the 2010 Conference is just that with the theme "Closing the loop: Keeping more income on the farm!" The 2010 COABC Conference is in Kamloops March 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup>. I look forward to seeing and meeting many of you then, COABC member or not.



The themes we will address include; alternative and on farm energy generation, soil building, and value stream development. Connecting and sharing lessons puts a human face on the issue. We will hear real examples of food safety challenges and solutions as well as successes in value added marketing.

Presentations on current research, pest management and some new management tools will also take place.

Whether it is through the conference or in our recent webinar series, providing educational opportunities is one of COABC roles. COABC with the support of extension services recently presented three webinars on

## COABC Achievements

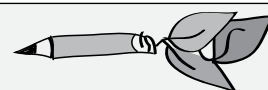
- ✓ COABC represented at meetings with Minister Thomson and at Ag Day in Victoria
- ✓ Refund Policy in place
- ✓ Fall Webinar Series
- ✓ COABC research fund supporting lavender oil and blueberry research
- ✓ Board retreat planning session for 2010 held in early November
- ✓ COABC represented at inaugural Feast of Fields Okanagan

cover crops, stock free farming and innovative weed management in organic production. These were well attended with over 90 participants and many positive comments. We hope to present more in the future.

If you missed the webinars you can purchase archive copies of these presentations from our website:

[www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca](http://www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca) 

## Editor's Note by Andrea Langlois



As the darkness and the cold set their grips upon British Columbia this winter, and the bulbs and seeds only dream of pushing up through spring's warmed soil, I hope that our readers have time to put their feet up and soak in the BC Organic Grower.



Andrea Langlois,  
Editor

I also hope that some of you find the time and energy to put pen to paper, fingers to keyboards, or to record images and sounds for this year's Fresh Voices Contest. Every spring issue we feature the winners from

the contest and I look forward to all the ideas and opinions BC growers have on how to maintain long-term soil fertility on intensively-farmed land.



You'll find some great tips growing in these pages - from how to get rid of bindweed, to new information on blueberry cultivation, tips around preventing lice in cattle, and information on how to approach the issue of water testing on organic farms. This issue also profiles the voices of new and aspiring farmers - from the Rainbow-

Moss Dance  
Layout and Ad Desk



Chard Collective (featured on our cover) to a poem by farm apprentice Michael Geselbracht, to the UBC Sowing Seeds farm interns - and the voices of those who've been at it for awhile. This issue's Farmer Focus profiles Leslie Morris of Penmore Farm. If you have a suggestion of a farmer to profile for this on-going feature by Spring Gillard, please send a note my way (editor@certifiedorganic.bc.ca).

Editing the BCOG for the past year has been such a pleasure, and Moss and I have learnt so much. We look forward to another year of connecting with growers in BC and bringing information and ideas to you. Best of the new year! 🌱

**Obituary** - The COABC and the Organic community were saddened to hear that one of our members, Leo Deschamps of Organa Farms passed away, November 30th, 2009. Our sincerest condolences and warmest regards go to his wife Shelley and family. Leo was a leader in the organic community and will be sadly missed.

## Letters to the Editor

Dear BCOG,

Thanks so much for all the dirt from Gavin Wright in this past issue - I haven't heard much news from him since I took off on my own farmer's odyssey, and his inspired advice and words of wisdom have helped me put this past year, my first year running a farm, into perspective. It also spurred me into thinking about any contributions I could make to the magazine.

*David Asher Rotsztain  
Mayne Island*

## Dear Rochelle

by Rochelle Eisen



Dear Rochelle,

I run an organic veggie farm and I am completely lost on what type of water testing I have to do so I can apply for organic certification. Can you help me?

*Wet in Rutland*

-----

Dear Wet,

I hope I can help you, as this is actually a complicated topic. It is true that many certification bodies ask for evidence of appropriate water testing but I am actually confused by that request! Let me explain...

You, as a producer, are responsible for the quality of water used to grow, wash, process food. There are various government regulations and health authorities that might be interested in your water quality. The concern is that your vegetables or fruit should not make the consumer sick and that water you use for any function on farm should not contaminate your land. But is it the re-

sponsibility of the certifier to make sure you are following these rules by asking you for water tests? And if they ask you for tests what should the tests cover?



Let's start with the Canadian Organic Standards and what they say about water quality. There are a few direct references to water that I will mention, but first let me point out some indirect references. Firstly, the producer is required to take measures to minimize the contamination of land and crops with substances that are prohibited by the standards (paragraph 5.2.1). On the other hand the Introduction, part III, states "*Organic practices in this standard cannot assure that organic products are entirely free of contaminants since exposures of such compounds from ... ground water and*

other sources may be beyond the control of the operator... The practices permitted by this standard are designed to assure the least possible residues at the lowest possible levels." In addition, don't overlook Part I in the Introduction that says that organic food should comply with all applicable regulatory requirements. This section serves as a reminder that organic products are not exempt from the laws of the land.

Specific references in the standards to water quality are: 1) livestock must be provided with clean water (para 6.4.5), and 2) reclaimed [such as gray water] water cannot be used on edible plant parts and root crops (PSL Sec 4.3 Crop Production Aids and Materials). And that is it. There is *no specific requirement* in the Standards for water tests.

So why do some certifiers ask for water tests, and others do not? And what sorts of tests are requested?

Mainly there are two types of contaminants for concern: biological (pathogens such as e-coli), and chemical (such as pesticides, chemical fertilizer, or industrial waste). The producer must take measures to minimize contamination and the certifier may want to assess the risk of contamination by reviewing test results. This process would bring this issue to the producer's attention so that they do something about it. We have seen cases where wells have been contaminated by leaking septic fields without the producer noticing the problem. Farmers should not be waiting for their certifier to practice due diligence.

Microbiological contamination of water used for irrigation or, particularly, used for washing, rinsing or cooling vegetables can make people sick. This is not good for the person, producer, certifier, or the organic movement. Some crops are particularly vulnerable, such as "ready to eat" vegetables and leafy greens. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency guidelines about rinsing or washing minimally processed, ready to eat vegetables require using water that meets drinking water guidelines (potable). Some certifiers may ask for tests to assess the risk of water contamination.

Water taken from an open source such as irrigation ditches, ponds, rivers, lakes, or



### Cold Water Washing

Studies have shown that immersing fruit and vegetables in water that is colder than the fruit and vegetable can cause water to be drawn inside the produce due to the temperature gradient. If this water contains pathogenic microorganisms, these may infiltrate the fruit and vegetables, thereby escaping subsequent cleaning procedures. This route of entry by pathogens has been demonstrated in apples with *Escherichia coli* 0157:h7 (Burnett et al., 2000, Buchanan et al., 1999) and tomatoes with *Salmonella* (Zhuang, 1995). Page 28 of the On-Farm Food Safety Guidelines for Fresh Fruit and Vegetables in Canada Canadian Horticultural Council, Third Edition, January 31, 2004.

shallow wells is most likely to have microbiological contamination. The problem with testing is that open water sources are particularly vulnerable to change during the year. When the water is at its lowest is usually when there is the highest risk, but there is also a higher risk during surface runoff occurs if there is any chance of surface runoff contamination. Many tests might be needed to assess risk each year. The BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands (BCMAL) suggests tests for e-coli & fecal coliforms be done at least twice a year (high and low water) as screens for micro-biological contamination, but there is still no guarantee that this will cover all possible microbiological risks. Any time there is a change in the irrigation source, water levels, or upstream activity there is increased risk.

You also have to consider how close your last irrigation is to your harvest window, as that alone increases risk of pathogens being present. BCMAL suggests that to reduce the risk you stop irrigation 2 weeks

before harvest if your water has biological contamination. It also makes sense to use types of irrigation (eg drip) where water will not touch the edible portion of the crop. Don't count on using water from open sources for washing or rinsing crop – this is a higher risk and you may need to figure out an allowable water treatment to clean the water, or find a potable source for this activity. Be sure to inform your clientele that vegetables require a good wash prior to eating.

**Chemical and heavy metal contamination:** Contamination of crops or land with pesticides, chemical fertilizers, or industrial waste is prohibited under paragraph 1.4 of the standards. This could occur either in irrigation or wash water.

If you farm in an agricultural area, it is possible there may be some chemical contamination in your water. However, you need to watch out for higher risk contaminants such as industrial wastes being flushed into the water, substances being applied directly into the water, or larger concentrations of fertilizers or chemicals from bad farming practices upstream from you. You are required to report possible contamination to your certifier.

It is unusual for a certifier to ask for a general chemical screen on water – this is because there are so many chemicals including minerals in water that it is difficult to decide which ones should be tested, unless there is a specific concern. Furthermore, concerns around surface water differ from groundwater sources. This is why many Organic Farm Plans ask you to identify possible sources of contamination around your property or known contaminants in the water. Some areas are known to have naturally occurring contaminants such as arsenic, for instance. If the certifier thinks there is a chemical contamination they can ask for appropriate tests and water treatment.

**Complaints:** If a certifier gets a complaint or has specific information about contamination they are obligated to follow up in some manner. They might ask for more information, for a water test, or other kinds of tests.

**Certifiers:** If your certifier is asking for water tests don't be afraid to ask ques-

## Veggie Regulations Demystified




Although there is no specific regulation for minimally processed ready-to-eat vegetables under the *Canadian Agricultural*

*Products Act*, these products must conform with sections 4 and 7 of the *Food and Drugs Act*. Section 4 states that: No person shall sell an article of food that has in or on it any poisonous or harmful substance; is unfit for human consumption; consists in whole or in part of any filthy, putrid, disgusting, rotten, decomposed or diseased animal or vegetable substance; is adulterated; or was manufactured, prepared, preserved, packaged or stored under unsanitary conditions. Section 7 states that: No person shall manufacture, prepare, preserve, package or store for sale any food under unsanitary conditions.

tions and to give them more information. You can ask what risk they are trying to identify. What is the certifier's policy and what guidelines are they going to use to evaluate the test? If you are doing things to mitigate risks from poor quality water (like using drip, stopping irrigation 2 weeks before harvest, treating water, not washing product, etc.) be sure to tell your certifier.

You can get access to the Canadian Horticultural Council's **On Farm Food Safety Guidelines** by contacting the COABC office, if you are certified by a member of COABC.

Much good information and references about water quality is available from Cyber-Help for Organic Farmers in Canada: [www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca/rcbtoa](http://www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca/rcbtoa) and click on the link on the lower right that says On Farm Food Safety. 

*Credit: this Dear Rochelle was written in partnership with Sarah Davidson, who is currently the certification administrator for BCARA and has been a certification committee member for both BCARA and PACS and has been involved in many discussions of water quality and certification during the last 15 years.*

# UBC FARM'S SOWING SEEDS PRACTICUM

## Growing Farmers for the Future



Credit: Sarah Belanger

By Tove Morigan

The first time I heard about the UBC Farm was when a friend sent me a link to the practicum program, *Sowing Seeds*. I was living in Nova Scotia at the time, and the last time I had been out to the West Coast was on a family vacation when I was five. I explored the website with growing interest. I had no real experience with farming; although I had spent the previous five summers working outdoors, I was more involved in the gardening and landscaping fields. I had a growing interest in the ability to become self-sustainable but so far had approached that only from a construction and builder's perspective. The UBC Farm sounded like a magical place – a hideaway in the middle of the city where passionate people got together and made the world just a little bit better – so I applied.

I was in the middle of reading Michael Pollan's *In Defense of Food*, and had just finished Barbara Kingsolver's *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*, when I received the news that I had been accepted. I was enamoured with the idea of living off the land, eating real food, and sustaining myself. I was also looking for a new adventure, being fairly nomadic in nature. In late February I moved out to BC (still never having seen the farm) pre-

pared for a year of organic teachings.

There were ten apprentices for the 2009 season and we were a diverse group. Our ages ranged from 24 to mid-fifties, there were six women, four men, three vegans, one celiac, one Master's student, and one non-BC resident (me) – in total, ten amazingly passionate and knowledgeable people. I consider myself lucky to have been thrown into such a group, as I was new to the West Coast vegetation and climate. The concept of being able to plant anything as early as April was completely foreign to an East Coaster! My fellow apprentices were a great source of information and were a huge help in expanding my knowledge about agriculture in the West Coast region.

completely foreign to an East Coaster! My fellow apprentices were a great source of information and were a huge help in expanding my knowledge about agriculture in the West Coast region.

It became clear to me that the biggest assets to have in this business are adaptability and problem-solving skills.

The practicum was set up as a four days/week program. We spent classroom time learning about soil biology, important nutrients, the benefit of composting, and how to save seeds. In the field we did an assortment of tasks ranging from putting up trellises and moving chicken fences, to planting, tending, harvesting and preparing vegetables for market.

Once summer rolled around, our main focus on Fridays and Saturdays was the weekly Farm Market. On Fridays, the farm staff, the apprentices and a group of volunteers would harvest the wide selection of vegetables, fruits, herbs and flowers the farm produces and wash, bunch and prepare them as





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needed. The Harvest Hut was a bustling hive of activity every Friday; an amazing community of people all happy to get their hands dirty and to prove that the best carrots don't grow in grocery stores.

The practicum also featured a diverse series of guest speakers who came in to give us more in-depth information on subjects such as soil chemistry, irrigation, marketing and business management. They were all incredibly knowledgeable and afforded us new perspectives and opinions. We had over 20 such



*Credit: Sarah Belanger*

speakers and the breadth of knowledge was truly astounding. It was also an eye-opener for me in that there are a lot of people involved in the organic movement in various capacities – be it as farmers or as scientists trying to find non-toxic means of disease control – that are quietly trying to shift the current cultural paradigm around food and farming. There is a whole group of educators ready and willing to teach those of us who are ready and willing to listen. Thankfully, it seems like the numbers in both groups are on the rise.

The highlight of the program was the field trips we took to other farms. The UBC Farm, while it is a working farm that relies on the sale of produce to support its continued op-

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eration, still exists in a university setting and receives a degree of public support that most working farms don't have the benefit of. Although it is a great teaching arena, it can feel at times like it is a world apart from a farm in the industry. Because of this, it was great to be able to go out and see how farmers ran things at Glen Valley Farms, Brighte Farm and Snow Farm, to name a few.

The biggest lesson in these visits was the fact that no two farms did things the same way. The farmers all had different levels of experience and different backgrounds and they had all made their farm work for them. A piece of advice given by one farmer would be soundly contradicted by the next, and it became clear to me that the biggest assets to have in this business are adaptability and problem-solving skills, not to mention a certain amount of grit and the ability to work to exhaustion eight months of the year. Everything depends to some extent on what you are growing and where you are growing it and who your customer is – and with those variables there's obviously going to be so many ways of doing things that in the end you'll have to figure out your own way or be overwhelmed by the opposing opinions. The farms we visited gave us all the hope that we *could* make a go of it while sticking to our respective principles, and each person took

away information that most closely aligned with their objectives.

As of the end of the 2009 season, the majority of the program graduates are planning on farming in some capacity. Some already have land to farm on, while others are still looking for their next opportunity. As for my objectives, I got my adventure and now have the knowledge I need to become more self-sufficient. I'm not sure I'll be starting up a commercial farm soon, but I do hope to use my new-found skills. Even if initially it's just to feed my family and friends, I think it will have been a summer well spent. I was able to get to know an inspiring group of people and share and learn with them while transforming from a student to into one of those individuals who is ready and willing to educate others. And, as Gail, my fellow apprentice, said, "There was a lot of laughter along the way." 

*Tove Morigan is a 2009 graduate of the Sowing Seeds practicum at UBC Farm.*



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- Avoid close confinement.
- Good quality feed - provide free choice mineral and kelp to young stock in winter.
- Reduce stress - maintain a stress free environment which allows expression of natural behaviours. Ensure ample space.
- Quarantine - check replacement animals brought into the herd. Isolate from the rest of the herd and observe for 3 weeks.
- Maintain a closed herd policy.
- Minimize communal grazing with other herds.
- Provide a cattle back scratcher (without an insecticide reservoir) to help control chewing lice populations.
- Select for resistance and cull animals that are chronic sufferers.



Credit: Helmut Lang

To read about other control methods, read the entire factsheet at [www.oacc.info](http://www.oacc.info). Be sure to read the balance of factsheets recently published by the **Animal Welfare Task Force of the Expert Committee on Organic Agriculture (ECO)**. 


## FLY SPOTTING OR TRAIN SPOTTING: A New BC Agri-Pastime?

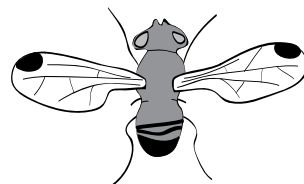
By Rochelle Eisen  
Organic Extension Agent, COABC

In 2009 Spotted Wing Drosophila (SWD), also known as the spotted wing fruit fly, caused some late season damage in the lower mainland. Tracey Hueppelsheuser a Ministry of Agriculture and Lands (BCMAL) Entomologist confirms the fly was found in some Fraser Valley blueberries (August and September) and was also detected in a grape sample. A very small population of SWD was also found in one Kelowna cherry orchard in September.

BCMAL is ramping up its surveillance plans for 2010 and plan to put traps around the Fraser Valley to monitor the population. Farmers can set up their own traps using a Californian recipe: 2.5 oz yeast, 4 tsp sugar, 12 fl oz water, split up into several containers with holes in the top for fly entry. Sup-

posedly the brew becomes more attractive the longer it is kept. And, if it becomes necessary to spray the plan, use GF-120 (OMRI listed), but it would be best if everyone was vigilant and removed breeding grounds (piles of rotting fruit) earlier in the season. Again the prediction is the greatest risk (highest populations) is in the Fraser Valley, and in late season crops like blueberries, and potentially grapes.

For more information about the spotted wing drosophila go to Cyber-Help pest management page [www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca/rcbtoa/training/pestmanagement.htm](http://www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca/rcbtoa/training/pestmanagement.htm) 





# Seeding Farmers

By Michael Geselbracht

In my hands another winter displays  
A bleak overcast sigh and greyish haze  
No blue skies left for praise.  
Sombre ombre, I shelter my inner light  
Uninclined to leave my home  
and feel the cold chill on my cheeks  
to shovel the endless driveway  
that gives passage outside world.

Drudgery of dreary day  
Dripping snow and sopping play  
I look out over frost frozen land  
Where but months ago lay grand  
Spirit growing green leaves into the blue.  
I cast memories back to season when  
I conspired with fertile frey  
Hands digging spuds deep into soil peaty

Where little girls of neighbourly nature  
wandered by to inquire at the peculiar stature  
of my back bent over double  
in a seemingly crooked toilish trouble.  
Yet my mind stood not in paining thoughts  
Rather elated in melodious plots  
Singing rhythms hunched down over haunches,  
rapping the po-ta-to plan-ting motion  
of gifting the land with labour's love,  
to be multiplied in earth's healing glove  
Sowing 'taters into land's open palm  
With simple mysteries in each psalm  
These young-uns surprised at my melodies gest  
Eagerly request partaking in potato planting quest.  
The sylphish adorable sweet pea'd pair  
Quickly fill hands with pomme de terre  
And playfully plop them into rich turf  
A previous wetland who left a black earth  
Fingers dyed dark in a henna stain  
Cute tykish dresses encrusted with dirt  
"That's the coolest thing we've done today"  
they declare "Can we come again to play?"

"To play", I chuckle smiling from deep down within  
Affirmed by heart held hope in the renewal of  
Enlightened attitudes towards farm work  
That for many years was viewed as dreadful labour  
of monotonous mind numbing back breaking bother  
Of "get off from the farm and move into the city",  
To progress into paperfilled office of seated agility  
With clean fingernails and fashion a la mode  
This code called droves of farm children to hit the  
road  
Out from sweet home's manure smelling abode  
Yet countrysides are now barren from farm fresh  
hands  
To mend fencerows and to work the land,  
with rakes and ploughs and stirrup hoes.

Left all alone, the land grows stony in solitude  
And ghostly shadows pay host to rickety barns  
Pleadingly creaking for attention, to warn

a returning consensus to world repair  
of a culture reawakening to farming mystère  
Of hands holding hands,  
holding land in unified stands.

Calling forth the spirit of peasant ancestry  
to replant a heritage of heirloom seeds  
Returning themselves into the earth,  
to deed themselves in relocalized worth  
Sowing the remembrance of seasonal action  
Of an agricultural livelihood's satisfaction  
Of barn raising bashes, whole hearted hoedowns  
borsht cook-off competitions, and baking Bee's,  
jamming preserves and prize winning recipes  
Carefully fermented sauerkraut  
Revived by tradition, our elders did never doubt

Is it possible to replough a nutritious farm field?  
To yield a bumper crop bounty of farmer's content.  
In a rebaking of food, land, and community  
reconciling manhandled land by large scale indus-  
try,  
Of big machineried labourless farms,  
To be redeemed by assemblies of dirt loving  
devotees  
Who sing praise to potato plots and pastured cows  
in a rhythm of hearts all digging as one  
To the rising and falling of moon, stars, and sun.

A reinstatement of empowered motions of slow  
steadiness  
Like a collection of farm friends who weed pumpkin  
patches  
twining in laughter filled reflection of yesterdays  
mis-happenstance.  
Or in subtle thought wrought in existential ques-  
tions  
Layed with chicken or egg causal dilemmas  
Or in a poetry slamming conversation  
invoked by three hour foray  
of plucking cherry tomatoes from musing vines.

Farming for my first year has awakened in me  
my personal appreciation to nature's profundity.  
That realigns my life in humble servitude  
to Eden's story of glorious magnitude.  
Gardened by growers who weed nature's grace  
who bend down low hoeing the wisdom of place  
To who ask with hearts, "what is a good task?  
To help grow us out of this post-modernist mask  
Of increasing technological infatuations  
That buffers us from direct communications  
'Tween nature and people whom with us all 'round  
Always stand in the prospect of our common  
ground

*Michael Geselbracht grew up in suburban  
Nanaimo. A Canada World Youth Exchange in  
Quebec and Benin (West Africa) reawakened his  
intrigue for farming. Michael is a UBC Student  
in the Global Resource Systems program in the  
Faculty of Land and Food Systems. Last summer,  
he apprenticed at Alderlea Farm, a biodynamic  
farm near Duncan and he is currently apprenticing  
at O.U.R. Ecovillage in the Cowican Valley. Michael  
sings to keep the rhythm of work thrumming.*



## Lesley Morris : Penmore Farm

by Spring Gillard



Photo: Lesley and Skip in front of the Penmore Farm storehouse.

Lesley and her husband Skip Pendleton moved from the Fraser Valley to their 11-acre farm in Cawston in the spring of 2002. They had not planned on being farmers, although Skip came from prairie farm stock.

"It just kind of evolved," says Lesley, a former nurse. When asked about why there seem to be so many nurses that get involved in organic farming Lesley responds quickly. "I guess it's still about nurturing," she says. "Growing food that is healthy for both people and the land."

Leslie and Skip always had a garden. And the garden Lesley put in at their new home slowly grew into the farm business they run today. Five of the acres are in hay, two are leased out to a neighbour for squash and fall rye and the remainder are home to 30 fruit and nut trees and a range of ground crops, such as potatoes, garlic, corn, tomatoes, peppers and melons.

"We didn't know anything when we started," says Lesley. "The weeds were different. The soil was different. The insects

were different. The weather was different."

Lesley speaks about how the workload is an on-going struggle. The couple does all the work themselves. Learning how to irrigate with a pump and well system in this semi-desert region was one of the biggest challenges. Skip built a pump house that feeds eight lines. There's a well close to the house for domestic use and another for use by the other residence on the property and the tenant (also a gardener!) they inherited from the previous owners.

Chemicals were never something they used. "Why would I spray?" asks Lesley. "Ignorance is bliss I guess." Once they realized that GF-120 (a pesticide that is allowed under certification) would control the very pesky cherry fruit fly, they decided they could go all the way. They certified with the Similkameen Okanagan Organic Producers Association.

The wares of Penmor farm are primarily sold at the Penticton Farmers Market. Although this year the melon and pepper crop were so bountiful that they also sold through Parson's Fruit Stand in Keremeos.

"The one with the old cars in the field and on their sign," says Lesley. The car connection is important because Skip collects old cars, including a 1946 Mercury Coup. When they were scouting the area looking for acreage, they stopped at a place in Cawston that sold old cars and parts. It was the owner who told them about the farm for sale across the way.

It wasn't just about the old cars though.

**GF-120 NF Naturalyte Fruit Fly Bait (spinosad)** is a bait formulation for the control of cherry fruit flies. Spinosad is an insect control product derived from a soil bacterium (*Saccharopolyspora spinosa*) and some formulations are approved for use in organic production (OMRI listed) including GF-120. The bait formulation is a mixture of feeding attractant and a very low rate of spinosad. GF-120 is a product that vastly decreases the per hectare rate of an already "reduced risk" product while still providing control of fruit flies. Re-entry interval (REI) for GF-120 is when residues have dried and there is a 0 days pre-harvest interval (PHI).

Source: [www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/crops/hort/news/tenderfr/tf1102a5.htm](http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/crops/hort/news/tenderfr/tf1102a5.htm)

For Lesley it was Ginty's Pond, the wetland and bird sanctuary owned by The Land Conservancy that backs onto their property.

"There are carp in there. And the osprey come to fish for them. There are turtles and salamanders too," recites Lesley. She tells me she can launch a canoe into the pond when the water is high and float all the way to the irrigation culvert. The culvert drains into the Similkameen River.

Lesley and Skip sell some potatoes at the farmgate and provide a couple of local restaurants with spuds: Norland, Warbas and Sieglinde. Twin Lakes Golf Course takes all three varieties. But the Crowsnest Nest Vineyards serves authentic German food. They prefer the Sieglinde, with its yellow flesh for their potato salad. Both spots also stock Lesley's Stonehouse value-added products - salsa, pasta sauce and an "HP" style hot sauce made from Italian prune plums. She also dehydrates her own garlic then grinds it into powder. The Stonehouse line grew out of her garden and kitchen experiments and at the urging of deliciously satisfied friends and neighbours.

Why the Stonehouse label? Because there is in fact a very old stonehouse on the

farm. One with historical significance. It turns out the farm was owned by Francis Xavier Richter, a pioneer settler, miner and rancher. He is also known as one of the founders of BC's fruit industry. The Richter name is everywhere in the Similkameen Valley. Cyclists in Iron Man Canada know the Richter Pass well - a dauntingly steep 11 km climb.

The Penmore Farm stonehouse is used for storing their produce. In the 1800s, it was used as a creamery and doubled as a jail. Richter was a magistrate too. When Skip replaced the old broken window, he added some bars as a nod to the past. And that's not the only reminder of days gone by.

"Everytime you work the soil, horseshoes and other metal objects come to the surface," says Leslie.

No doubt the next generation of farmers will be digging up car parts. 🌱

*Spring Gillard is author of Diary of a Compost Hotline Operator and volunteers with the Westside Food Security Collaborative. Visit her website and blog at [www.compostdiary.com](http://www.compostdiary.com)*

## GREENBYTES...

### A Growing Market

The Canadian organic food market has grown at least 20 per cent annually for the past several years. Today, total sales in Canada are estimated at \$2 billion a year, with 41 per cent in conventional grocery stores.



# Use of Humanure on the Organic Farm

By Robin Wheeler

*The genesis of this article was a lively exchange on the COABC listserv. It seemed timely to summarize the outcome of that dialogue.*

It has likely crossed the mind of many sustainably-minded farmers – as they mulled over the costly future purchase, transportation and storage of soil amendments – that they and their families are excreting some pretty fine amendment already. All that healthy farm food is being converted into manure, and that manure is being flushed down the toilet, as the farmer continues the battle to find materials that will improve tilth and nutrition for next year's dinner. But it has also occurred to these farmers that their little families cannot possibly eat (and excrete) fast enough to support much of a farm.

Knowing the built-in symbiosis of the planet, there is probably some amazing statistical truth in this – that individual farmers can likely fertilize about as much crop as they can eat and not a tiny spoonful more. But when the careful farmer wanders off farm for other human materials, they no longer know what is going into the mix. Hormones from birth control or menopause, chemo drugs, mercury from failed fillings and antibiotics of all kinds can be collected from the neighbourhood. And, for the cultures that collect and use sewage sludge, we can add heavy metals, as well as just about any substance that can be poured down a sink or toilet bowl. Even careful composting is of no help in remov-

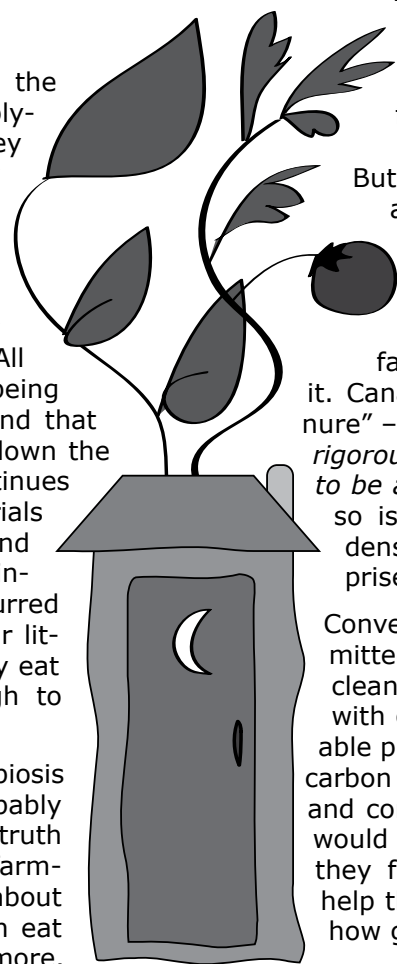
ing many substances unimagined when the original farmers were collecting dung. It is certainly true, that even if the collected substances are clear of bottled toxins, that humans are capable of passing worms and flukes to each other as well unless good composting practises with high heat are followed.

But let's say a farmer wished to eat an organic diet, avoid pharmaceuticals, to compost correctly and carefully, and then use the fertilizer. This is done around the world, but a Canadian farmer would be advised against it. Canadian human manure – "humanure" – has not been considered for the *rigorous registration process necessary to be accepted as a farm amendment*, so is not permitted on market gardens or farm lands. This does surprise the purist.

Conventional chicken manure is permitted, so why not our own much cleaner rose-scented waste? Perhaps with growing moves towards sustainable practise and transitioning to a low carbon future, this will get the attention and consideration it deserves. Farmers would still face a dilemma. How can they find enough clean humanure to help them with farm production? And how good is this stuff?

The University of British Columbia had a chance to find out what would happen if they collected and tested humanure – the award winning CK Choi building ([www.sustain.ubc.ca/greenbuilding.html](http://www.sustain.ubc.ca/greenbuilding.html)), a ~30,000 sq. ft. institutional building, exclusively uses composting toilets in all its washrooms. The system was engineered by Clivus Multrum, Inc. ([www.clivusmultrum.com/](http://www.clivusmultrum.com/)) a company offering a range of composting toilet systems.

*Continued on p.18...*



# Redefining Diversity on the Farm



Credit: Rainbow Chard Collective

By Robin Tunnicliffe

Like most great farming revolutions, the Rainbow Chard Collective started in the fields. It was during a long day pruning tomatoes that two farmers and a field hand got talking about what it meant to them to be queer in a fairly traditional farming region, and how great it would be to create a queer space (i.e. lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and ally friendly space) within the organic farming community.

"We thought it was pretty exceptional to be living in an area where we knew of so many other queer farmers," said Mel. The idea of forming a collective of queer farmers resurfaced some time later over beer and a planning session for the annual Victoria Pride Parade.

"We got excited about coming together through the Pride Parade, it felt like we were bringing people back to their 'roots'! By wearing our farm clothes and getting down and 'dirty', we marched in fun opposition to everything we hated about the Pride Parade – perfect bodies, high fashion and the fetishization of queer culture" said Jen.

With a bucket of mud, gum boots, wheelbarrows and hoedown music, the group marched together under the banner "Rainbow Chard Collective – Re-defining the

family farm." The mud spankings flew, the chants drew cheers and the chard leaves waved proudly.

"It was really fun to be all together, and so meaningful, like, when you know you are creating a historical moment. It was like that, because we were being validated as queers, in the important work that we do, feeding our community," said Larkin.

More than just a farmers' collective, Rainbow Chard grew to become

inclusive to food activists, gardeners, foodies, and students.

"We see the society as trying to create more division than just a collective space, but we're inclusive of everyone that who stands by our manifesto(a). Together we have a louder voice" says Jennie Applejuice.




Credit: Dennis Dupuis



Since their inception three years ago, the Rainbow Chards have done some soul searching to develop guiding principles. Their Queer Manifesto outlines their stance on the food system, earth stewardship, community building, collectivity, heteronormativity and more. They stand for issues specific to queers, but the solutions they propose resonate widely and are echoed in their slogans: "Gender Modified, Not Genetically Modified!" "Rototill the lawns of the Legislature!" "Homo Grown!" "Squash the State and Beet the System!" and "Food Sovereignty!"

They have taken on youth mentorship by leading a food politics workshop at Camp Fyrefly in August 2009, a camp for queer youth, where young folks from across BC talked about food politics and exchanged stories about community food initiatives, diverse cultural values about food, and how to deepen connections among food-inspired queers. Rainbow Charders have also rallied for more government support for small farmers at the BC provincial legislature. They maintain an active email list and are ready to mobilize when inspiration strikes, such as sending a contingent to Salt Spring Island's first ever pride parade.





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# Queer

## A Definition

The term “queer” has been reclaimed by people who reject or expand on traditional labels for sexual or gender identification. This usage retains the historical connotations of being “outside the bounds of normal society” at the same time as creating space for diversity and empowerment.


To read the manifesto or to see what the rainbow chard collective is “cooking up,” search for their facebook group or send an email to [rainbowchardcollective@gmail.com](mailto:rainbowchardcollective@gmail.com).

“I feel like all aspects of my identity can be fully expressed within the Rainbow Chards. My politics, my work, my vision of a local and organic food system and my sexuality. Nothing has to be compromised,” expressed Karen.

The Rainbow Chard name is already echoing across Canada. “Last winter we got an email from a queer farmer in Saskatchewan who felt inspired by our community. It made us realize the potential impact we can have on agricultural communities,” said Larkin. The group has also heard of another Rainbow Chard network based in California’s Bay Area and of someone making a film about the movement in the northwest United States.

While their commitment to farming remains high, the Rainbow Chards face some big obstacles to food production. Access to land in the Capital Regional District on southern Vancouver Island is prohibitively expensive, and the cost of living there is high, especially on a farmer’s income. Many of the Collective are farming and going to school so they can diversify their incomes and make their farms more financially sustainable. Others are considering buying land together so they can reduce costs and share the workload. Together, they are keeping the farming spirit alive.

For the Rainbow Chard members who work as farm hands throughout the region, they have received support from those who own and run the farms, and one farm has sponsored them to march in the Pride Parade

three years in a row by paying the entry fee. “Being part of the Rainbow Chard Collective brings a sense of community to everything I do: farming, activism and research on sustainable living. I know I have a support network of like-minded folks who know what its like to live on the fringe of the fringe, who will interpret political issues like I do, and who care deeply about nurturing the earth in all of our actions,” said Dennis. 

*Robin Tunnicliffe is a farmer with Saanich Organics near Victoria, BC. She spends her winters doing freelance writing and research. Robin is a board member of USC Canada and a member of the Community Farms Program council.*


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*Humanure... Continued from p.15*

Mark Bomford runs the UBC farm in Vancouver. He states, “When the finished product was removed for the first time two years ago (that’s 10 years’ worth of accumulated compost), we had it analyzed for presence of pathogens, heavy metals, as well conducting a fertility analysis for consideration as an agricultural amendment.”

He continues, “My memory is that the compost was well below the provincial guidelines for content of pathogens or heavy metals (that’s a good thing), that it was not a particularly good source of N or K, and that its potential contribution to plant nutrition as a soil amendment came mostly from its phosphorus content. In all cases, it had far fewer nutrients by volume or weight than the compost we make at the UBC Farm from sheep manures and bedding.”

From this research, it looks as if humane manure is not the be all and end all (oh, sorry) that we thought it was. But it looks as if it would be a perfectly respectable addition to the home garden and would save many gallons of farm water for the plants, not toilet flushes, as well as offset nutrient purchases.

For more information, *The Humanure Handbook* by Joseph Jenkins is a great addition to any composting toilet room to improve our methodologies as we mull this option. 

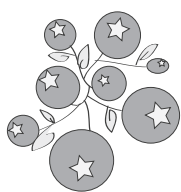
*Robin Wheeler is author of “Food Security for the Faint of Heart” and owns Edible Landscapes in Roberts Creek.*  
[www.ediblelandscapes.ca](http://www.ediblelandscapes.ca)

# Getting Started with Organic Blueberry Production

## When the Going Gets Tough...

**Researchers share some lessons learned with establishing a blueberry planting using organic practices at the UBC Farm**

By Wayne Temple, Tom Forge, Art Bomke & DeLisa Lewis



According to the BC Blueberry Council, there are 650 blueberry growers in this province with 17,000 acres and counting devoted to blueberry production.<sup>1</sup>

The shift in land-use has been fairly dramatic over the last five years, with significant acreage moving from raspberries, other field crops, and some dairy operations to blueberries.<sup>2</sup>

2009 may be remembered as a turning point in overall market saturation for BC blueberries, as better growing conditions and higher yields of the recently established blueberry acreages also meant, in many cases, much lower prices received by growers.<sup>3</sup> A BC Blueberry Council spokesperson reported the retail price received for conventional berries ranged from \$1.00-0.50 per pound lower in 2009 compared their high point in 2008.

Of note to readers, both the BC Blueberry Council and the COABC websites list only 11 of those 650 total blueberry enterprises as organic or "spray and chemical free." Six of the 11 operations on the COABC listing are certified processors or handlers of blueberries, and only five farms are listed as certified organic or transitional blueberry producers.

Despite this year's marketing and supply challenges, for conventional blueberry growers, attention to research and extension on organic blueberry establishment and production methods are warranted and have led to the establishment of an experiment at the UBC Farm on the UBCV Campus in Vancouver.



Credit: UBC Farm

Our team of agroecology researchers (Wayne Temple, Art Bomke, Tim Carter, DeLisa Lewis, Lourdes Niehaus and James Richardson) from the UBC Faculty of Land and Food Systems partnered with Tom Forge (Nematology & Soil Ecology; Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada) began investigating alternative mulching systems and their effects on nutrient availability, weed suppression, root diseases, and overall crop health in 2006 at the AAFC Clearbrook Research Station.

### **Alternative mulching systems trials for blueberry crops**

In B.C. commercial blueberry plantings are typically mulched with sawdust from softwood species like Douglas fir, pine, and hemlock. Recent increases in the demand for sawdust, as well as declines in sawmill activity in the lower mainland, have led to much higher prices and challenges of availability for this industry standard mulching material.

Coupled with this, the softwood sawdust may negatively affect the overall productivity of blueberries by limiting nutrient availability. Although it provides an excellent medium for root system development, sawdust may also contribute to the immobilization of soil nitrogen. The goal of this research goal is to provide practical information to B.C. blueberry growers regarding the benefits of various sustainable alternatives to sawdust for mulching.



Credit: UBC Farm

### **Breaking new ground with organic production**

In the spring of 2009, the research team broke ground on to establish an organic blueberry planting on .35 hectares of the UBC Farm. Several soil moisture and weed issues presented formidable challenges with the establishment of the young blueberry plants, but the most challenging aspect for the first stage was the sheer volume of rocks.

The site was initially ploughed and disked several times; the final rows measured 15 cm high by 120 cm wide row mounds. The high soil OM levels at the UBC site ( $\approx 12.7\%$  - see table below) did not warrant any pre-mulch soil amendments. The soil ( $<2.00\text{mm}$ ) consisted of 70% very coarse sand; 21% fine silt and 9% fine clay. At the time of planting the soil pH was 5.6 - perhaps a little on the high side.

Once planted, a 12mm double line irrigation (37 cm emitter spacing) system was installed in mid-May, with lines spaced 40 cm apart. The plant stock consisted of two year old cv. Reka and one year old cv. Duke plants. The 15 experimental rows were used to compare the effectiveness of two alternative mulching and weed barrier systems using as materials the City of Vancouver's yard trimmings compost (YTC), Douglas fir sawdust (SD), and black fabric weed barrier.

### **Getting a handle on the weeds**

Shortly after planting, a good portion of the field became infested with "couch" grass (*Agropyron repens*) and twenty-three other species of annual weeds. This meant we had to work quickly to control the weeds so that they did not spread to the freshly planted blueberry root systems.

Complicating this, we felt the mulching materials for our trials, and the planned grass

mix seeding in the alleyways could not begin until the rapidly spreading weeds were eliminated. We followed an ATTRA<sup>4</sup> recommended management strategy for inter-row management and installed fabric weed barrier on all of our raised bed plantings to stop the spread of the aggressive weeds.

We then applied a 10 cm depth of sawdust mulch and yard-trimmings compost under the fabric weed barriers. In early September, we seeded the alleyways (100 kg/ha) to a grass (17% turf-type perennial ryegrass; 34% hard and 34% dwarf tall fescue) and clover (7% white and 6% alsike) mix.

### **What we learned about irrigation during the hot, dry summer of 2009**

Blueberries have a relatively small and shallow root system - making water management critical to good production. A mature blueberry plant has a vast majority of its roots located within 30 cm soil depth. For new plantings it is especially critical to maintain adequate water supply ( $\approx 60\%$  soil available water), but not so much as to create saturation conditions and root rot.

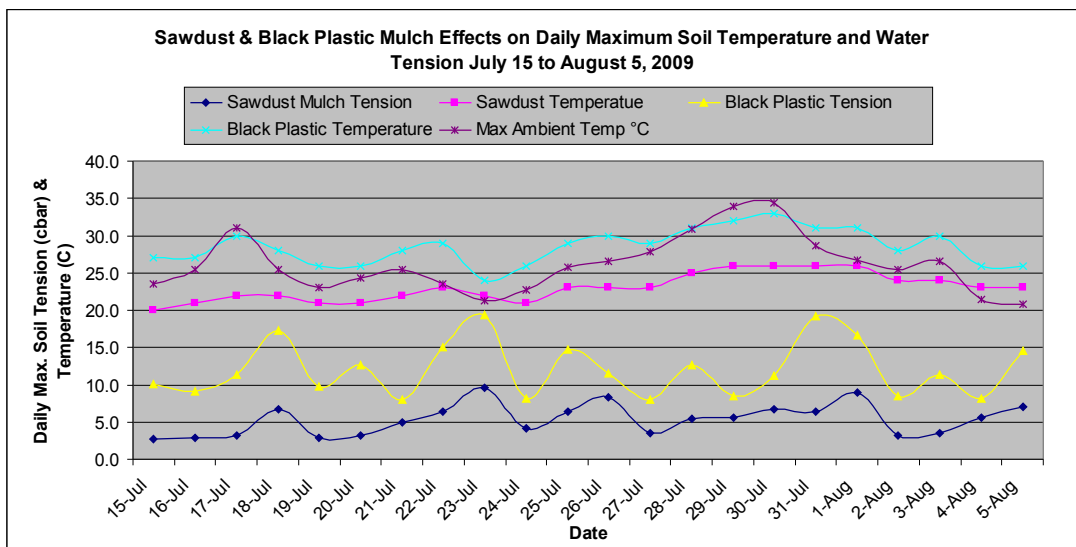
Given the challenges of the rocky site on a coarse textured, fast-draining soil and near constant cultivation of young plants, the unusually warm and dry conditions this spring and summer multiplied our concerns with getting adequate moisture to the recently planted blueberry bushes.

At the UBC site, we set up an irrigation routine for the months of June, July and August once the soil dried to about 60% of its available water holding capacity, which meant irrigation was on for about 2 to 3 hours on alternating days during the hottest periods of the summer.

Starting in mid-July the soil temperatures under the fabric weed barrier began to climb above 30°C and peaking near 35°C. The "Reka" plants began to show visible signs of heat stress - reddening and cupping of the leaves. In response, we applied a 10 cm thick mulch of sawdust to these larger plants to help reduce soil temperatures and moisture losses.

Soil temperatures under the black-coloured fabric weed barrier without additional sawdust mulch continued to rise, while temperatures under the additional sawdust mulch remained 7°C to 8°C cooler.





Three immediate mulch effects of this alternative system on soil water and temperature were:

- Temperatures under the black fabric weed barrier without additional sawdust mulch were much higher than those with this buffer.
- Temperatures under the black fabric weed barrier showed a strong correlation with ambient air temperatures.
- The sawdust mulch under the black fabric weed barrier reduced soil water evaporation and the need for irrigation.

We applied the remainder of the sawdust mulch treatments to the “Duke” plantings in late August, and look forward to learning about the longer term soil-plant interactions with these alternative systems of mulching materials as the plants continue to mature.

**Some preliminary lessons learned with the establishment of our organic blueberry planting at the UBC Farm**

The challenges we faced establishing the blueberry planting at the UBC Farm were many. Given the specific nutrient-related and rooting requirement challenges of establishing blueberry plantings, most commercial blueberry producers would likely make the transition to organic production utilizing established conventional plantings. Our project is the first to study establishment of a new blueberry plantation under existing organic management.

With this blueberry establishment season and the first mowing of the alleyways behind

us this fall, here is a summary of the tough lessons we learned:

- Choose a site free from invasive weeds, brambles, and large stones if at all possible.
- Make sure all of the blueberry life support systems – irrigation, rooting mulches, weed-free growing area, soil testing and any necessary pH adjustments – are in place *prior* to planting.
- Late summer to fall would be a more ideal planting time for establishing blueberries in our area especially on coarse-textured, droughty soils. 🌿

*Funding for this study is provided by: Government of Canada, Investment Agriculture Foundation, BC Blueberry Council, and the City of Vancouver*

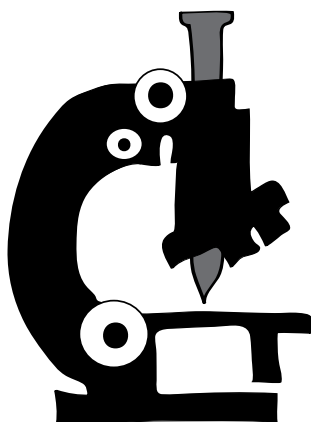
*A longer version of this article is available on the COABC cyberhelp page at [www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca/rcbtoa/](http://www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca/rcbtoa/)*

**ENDNOTES:**

- <sup>1</sup><http://www.bcblueberry.com/>
- <sup>2</sup>(Vancouver Sun: Brian Morton, “B.C. Fruit Sales on growth spurt in 2008, StatsCan says: Vegetable Sales Decline in Province as Farmers Make Switch in Crops”, Thursday, February 19, 2009.) <http://www.vancouversun.com/life/Fruit+sales+growth+spurt+according+StatsCan/1302344/story.html>
- <sup>3</sup><http://www.vancouversun.com/life/Bumper+crop+fruit+pits+local+growers/1879305/story.html>
- <http://www.bcbusinessonline.ca/bcb/business-sense/2009/06/03/kind-blue>
- <sup>4</sup><http://attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/PDF/blueberry.pdf>

# Research Needs Assessment of British Columbia Organic Farmers

*Executive Summary of the Report Prepared by the Organic Agriculture Centre of Canada, Nova Scotia Agricultural College*



Over 577 research needs surveys were distributed to organic farmers in BC with a 16.8% response rate. The top research needs identified in this survey will be used to inform a prioritization process for research projects in different sectors.

Many producers were relatively new entrants to organic agriculture; 52% had 10 or fewer years in farming. Despite the large number of new entrants, many farmers were over the age of 50 (43%). These statistics suggest that many respondents had entered organic agriculture later in life, either after farming conventionally or as a second career. Of concern with respect to producer demographics was the lack (0%) of respondents under the age of 30.

Most producers were interested in having involvement in the development of research projects, indicating that *producer/researcher collaboration* was their highest priority, as opposed to *collaboration with researchers* and use of *producer advisory committees*. *Research conducted on organic farms* and *research conducted using farm scale equipment* were ranked slightly lower, though many respondents commented that use of on-farm and farm-scale equipment are of greater interest as it is more representative of organic farm conditions.

Among animal-related issues, the top-rated research needs among all producer categories pertained to feed, followed by

breeds and parasites. For dairy producers, diseases and parasites were the highest-rated issue of concern, whereas livestock producers were proportionately more interested in feed and breeds. Overall, manure management and housing issues were of least concern to both producer categories.

Research needs for crop production clearly indicated that research related to *enhancing natural insect controls* was of highest priority and use of *ecological interactions in rotations* followed closely. This emphasized the need for holistic management approaches to maintain balance in the system, as many producers commented that the use of pesticides and introduction of predators would upset this balance. Overall, *field crop producers* were proportionately more interested in plant related issues.

The top research needs in the soils category echoed those of crop production, with management involving rotations ranking highly. Overall, *soil fertility and crop rotations* was ranked highest, followed by *biology – improve existing life*. Overall, producers described the need for soil tests suitable for organic systems as there is currently an inadequacy in conventional soil tests.


*Quality and nutrition of organic foods overall* and *quality and nutrition of organic field crops* were ranked highly, followed by *value-added product research* for BC respondents. Ratings for research on the *quality and nutrition of organic animal products* were ranked lowest by all producer categories. Overall, field crop producers indicated more interest than other producer categories in *quality and nutrition of organic foods overall* and *value-added product research*.

BC producers' top two marketing priorities were *consumer education on organic benefits* and *buy local campaign*; *production economics* was ranked low by all produc-

er categories. Market information including *information on market trends and demands, information on commodity prices and volumes, and buyer/seller matchmaking services* were also ranked highly. *Mobile slaughter facilities for organic livestock and assistance in developing value-added products* were ranked highest for processing needs, although individual sectors tended to rank processing facilities for their own product higher than other sectors.

Access to market information and research on organic issues was considered important to respondents of the survey. BC producers identified the *internet, email* and the use of paper handouts (i.e. bulletins, magazines) as the most effective means for information transfer. All producer categories ranked *conferences* and *academic courses* low. Producers also commented that there is an increased need for access

to market information, improved consumer awareness and *processing facilities*.

The most significant barriers to the growth of organics described by BC farmers were the *lack of new entrants, consumer education, and certification and regulation challenges*. Most farmers had an optimistic outlook on future growth opportunities in the organic sector. Respondents commented that the *buy local campaigns* have increased *consumer awareness and demand*, and helped consumers become more environmentally conscious as they realize the "direct link between the environment and farming." 

*Reprinted with permission from the OACC, for the full report, visit: [www.organicagcentre.ca](http://www.organicagcentre.ca). For more information contact: Andy Hammermeister: [ahammermeister@nsac.ca](mailto:ahammermeister@nsac.ca) or call (902) 893-8037*

## Chick Tips ... Effective Cleaning and Disinfection



Cleaning and disinfection (C&D) of a barn and equipment is a critical part of good biosecurity. The most important part of the whole C&D process is cleaning. No disinfectant performs well in the presence of organic material, and this is especially so for the few disinfectants or sanitizers available to organic producers. This makes the cleaning part of C&D even more important. Good cleaning means removing every trace of organic material, including the film (biofilm) that can coat surfaces.

Steps for cleaning thoroughly:

- Dry clean - remove all organic material from the barn or equipment being cleaned. Scrape it off if necessary.
- Soak all surfaces thoroughly with plain water and leave it soaking for an hour or so.
- Wash all surfaces with a pressure washer, preferably using soap or approved detergent and preferably using warm water. Begin with the ceiling and topmost surfaces and work down.
- Rinse thoroughly in the same manner.
- Allow all surfaces to dry.
- Apply an approved disinfectant.

Each of the first 3 steps – dry cleaning, soaking, and washing with warm, soapy water – will significantly reduce the actual washing time required. Paying close attention to the details will produce an effective C&D and have a positive influence on the health of your next flock.

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

## Bindweed Support Group

Here's a Tip from Julia Grace at Moonstruck Cheese on Salt Spring Island.



The very best way to rid yourself of bindweed is to pull your land out of production for one year (two tops) and put cows on it. It is their Number One favorite food. Present them with various choices and sweet and juicy bindweed wins every time. They do not like the roots, but they won't let the roots grow too much since at the first sign of a leaf, chomp!

When we converted to a dairy operation, I saved the market garden grounds to the very end and finally consigned them to the rotation. Bindweed never thrived again. Now, many years later, there is no sign of it anywhere, except in my house garden where I refuse to let the cows. I am seriously considering starting a second garden and letting the calves into the first one, but maybe other members of this group have less drastic ideas.

Send your bindweed tips to [editor@certified-organic.bc.ca](mailto:editor@certified-organic.bc.ca)

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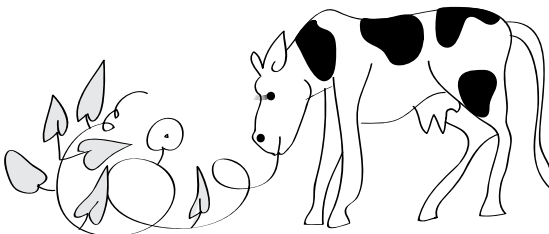
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# Closing The Loop COABC's 2010 Conference

Friday, March 5th - Sunday, March 7th  
Executive Inn, 540 Victoria St, Kamloops, BC

## Competition! Sustainability! Viability! *How do certified organic producers meet all three demands?*

Come to the Certified Organic Associations of British Columbia's 2010 conference...

- learn lessons, network with other producers and share successes to keep more income on the farm
- input reduction - soil building strategies, cover crop and pest management sessions
- profitable outputs – value stream development, value added products, collaborative marketing
- improving sustainability – alternative energy systems
- there will be workshops on labelling requirements, food safety systems, and resources for new organic producers.

Friday Night - Network with fellow organic businesses while enjoying the organic tastings and sounds of Moss Dance at St. Andrews on the Square. Saturday night feast on an organic buffet and dance the night away to local band, the Blues Jumpers at the Executive Inn.



### Keynote Saturday, March 6th, 9:00am

After being diagnosed at age 42 with Multiple Sclerosis, Dr. Code became involved in organic foods and farming to help in his healing process. As part of this involvement, he is a director with the Vancouver Island Heritage Food Service Cooperation, learning many lessons about the value streams and life along the way. Hear his story at the COABC conference.

## General Information

The conference package is included in the BC Organic Grower and on the COABC website at [www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca](http://www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca). It includes a listing of the conference workshops a registration form and accommodation information.

The conference will be held at the Executive Inn which is in downtown Kamloops at 540 Victoria Street. Kamloops is situated in the heart of British Columbia's Southern Interior nestled in a lush scenic valley at the confluence of the North Thompson River and South Thompson River.

## How to get to Kamloops

**Air:** Daily direct flights are available from countless destinations (Kamloops is less than a 1-hour flight from Vancouver. If you are flying you will need ground transportation to the hotel. It is approximately \$25 cab fare to downtown.

**Vehicle:** With four major highways intersecting Kamloops, the city is an easy drive from major centres including Vancouver. It is approximately 355 kilometers from Vancouver or 4 hours.

Certified Organic Associations of British Columbia  
T: 250-260-4429  
[www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca](http://www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca)



## Delegate Accommodation

### Executive Inn – 540 Victoria Street

A limited number of rooms are available at the conference hotel for \$109 a night. This includes a continental breakfast. Parking is 6.00 a day. When you are booking your room please quote group number 4783 or that you are with the COABC conference, The rate will be held until February 5th.

### Sandman Inn – 550 Columbia Street

The Sandman Inn is in walking distance from the conference venue ( 5 blocks). When you are booking your accommodation you must identify yourself as a COABC conference attendee to get the \$84 room rate. Junior suites are \$94 a night. Hotel parking is free. The rate will be held until February 5th.

**Friday night Reception is at St Andrews on the Square**, 159 Seymour Street. It is centrally located downtown adjacent to Gagliardi Park. The site boasts beautiful stained glass windows and unique heritage charm.

## Trade Show

Companies can showcase their business to the organic community at the COABC Trade Show held on Saturday. Contact the COABC office for information.

## Contacts

**Conference Coordinator:** Nancy Plett, email [nancy@shaw.ca](mailto:nancy@shaw.ca) or phone 250-851-9995

**Conference Registration:** Online at [www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca](http://www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca) or call 250-260-4429

## Conference Schedule

### Friday, March 5 – St Andrews on the Square

6:30pm – 9:00pm – Reception with Guest Speaker and music by Moss Dance – Organic Tasting & Cash bar

### Saturday -March 6th – Executive Inn

<i>Breakfast: 7am - 8:30am</i>	<i>Keynote Speaker - 9:00am</i> Dr Bill Code
<i>Session 1 - 10:30am</i> Transition Towns Webinar; Organic Labelling	<i>Session 2 - 1pm</i> Breaking Down Market Barriers Webinar; Cover Crop Research and Fertilizer Calculators; Root Crop Value Streams
<i>Session 3 - 2pm</i> On Farm Energy Alternative Solutions; Crop Rotations; Value Stream Development and Value Added Products Panel Discussion	<i>Session 4 - 3:15pm</i> On Farm Energy Anaerobic Digestion; Insect Pest Management - Wire Worm, Tuber Flea Beetle, Carrot Rust Fly; Food Safety: Understanding the Importance and Learning Hard Lessons (goes till 4:45)
<i>Session 5 - 4:15pm</i> How to Create a "Whole Farm" Plan; COABC Research Fund: Blueberry Project and Lavender Oil Project	<i>Organic Feast - 6pm</i> Music by Blues Jumper Band

### Sunday - March 7th – Executive Inn

<i>Breakfast: 7am - 8:30am</i>	<i>Session 6 - 9:00am</i> Nematodes Webinar; Wheat as a Crop Rotation; Ecological Goods & Services - What Does it Mean?
<i>Session 7 - 10am</i> Fresh Voices Contest Winners; Blueberry Research; Introduction to the Organic Farming Institute of BC	<i>Annual General Meeting - 10:45</i>
<i>Executive Meeting - 12pm</i> Working lunch and information session with Rochelle Eisen and Anne Macey	

# Conference Sponsors

## Gold



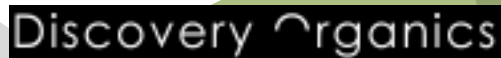
## Donations

CY Growers Supply	Lyon's Home & Garden Centre
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Green Room Organics	Stellar Seeds
Indigo Natural Products	
Left Coast Naturals	
Level Ground Trading	
Lotusland Winery	

## Silver



## Bronze



# Conference Registration Form

Closing the Loop – BC Organic Conference and AGM

March 5 -7, 2010, Executive Inn 540 Victoria Street, Kamloops, BC

\*\* Registration Deadline is February 5<sup>th</sup>, late registration is an additional \$20 on conference fees only.

Delegate Information:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Farm/Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_

Province: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

I am a member of a certifying body/enterprise: Yes No

If yes, name of organisation: \_\_\_\_\_

Please choose from the following options:

- |                 |   |               |          |
|-----------------|---|---------------|----------|
| <b>Option 1</b> | <b>Full Conference</b><br><i>Includes: Conference pass to Saturday and Sunday workshop sessions and keynote speakers. Friday Night Organic Tasting Reception; Saturday night Organic Feast, entertainment and silent auction;</i> | _____ x \$150 | _____    |
| <b>Option 2</b> | <b>Mini Conference</b><br><i>Includes: Conference pass to Saturday and Sunday workshop sessions and keynote speakers.</i>   | _____ x \$100 | _____    |
| <b>Option 3</b> | <b>Friday Night Reception</b><br><i>Includes organic tastings, guitarist and cash bar.</i>  | _____ x \$16  | _____    |
| <b>Option 4</b> | <b>Saturday Night Feast</b><br><i>Includes Organic Feast, dancing to the live blues band, silent auction and cash bar.</i>  | _____ x \$35  | _____    |
|                 | <b>TOTAL</b>  |               | \$ _____ |

COABC's Annual General Meeting will take place on Sunday March 7<sup>th</sup> from 10:45am to 12:00pm at the Executive Inn. This meeting is open to COABC members and the general public.

\_\_\_\_\_ I would like to volunteer to assist during the conference.

I have the following dietary requirements: \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to donate a silent auction item ( please describe): \_\_\_\_\_

Payment Options:

**BY CHEQUE: PLEASE MAIL YOUR REGISTRATION FORM AND A CHEQUE PAYABLE TO:**

**COABC: 202 - 3002 32<sup>nd</sup> Ave, Vernon, B.C. V1T 2L7**

**BY CREDIT CARD: VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT [www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca](http://www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca) AND PAY ONLINE.**

**CALL 250:260-4429 FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON CONFERENCE DETAILS.**

Note: All delegates are responsible for their own travel and accommodation arrangements. Please book your accommodation and send your registration form by February 5, 2010 to ensure availability.



# People Points

## Winning with Diversity

By Karen Fenske

Employees with different experiences, perspectives, languages, habits, and traditions come to their jobs everyday to work together. You want a farm and business to run efficiently and be successful so you ask, "How do we make this work?"

- Celebrate benefits of a culturally diverse workforce.
- Maximize problem solving by asking for input. Different experiences bring innovate solutions.
- Share your knowledge and talents with each other so that you are all working from your strengths i.e. one person may have a language that will help when working with buyers or consumers, another person may be better at sales, machine repairs, math, etc.
- Contribute willingly because you do have something unique and useful to give.
- Recognize communication is a 2-way street and everyone has to work at it. Often what we say needs to be said again using different words or phrases to get our meaning across.
- Be curious and ask questions until you have come to a clear understanding of each other.
- Know that there are many ideas and opinions, so yours maybe used today and someone else's tomorrow.
- Accept that we all have our quirks and being able to laugh at ourselves is good medicine.

One of the tools that helps provide consistency in the work place is an **Employee Agreement**. This contains company expectations in regular language generally in numbered format.

Suggestions:

- Define start time and end time i.e. if this is the time they need to show up or they need to be in the field, etc
- Set-out break times and lunch times
- Clarify workplace clothing requirements
- Provide details about the "reporting in sick" and "vacation/leave" request process
- Explain worksite visitors policy
- Make workplace & food safety requirements clear

To use the employee agreement:

- Go over it with each employee separately
- Allow him/her to ask questions
- Clarify any points
- Emphasize critical points i.e. food safety, workplace safety, etc.
- Have the employee sign and date it. Give them a copy and put the other in their file.
- You may have to go one step further and provide a short training session to show all employees what is expected and to have them practice to get it right. These can be done by you, another staff person, an employee, or a contractor.

We live during a time when we have the opportunity to work with very interesting people. If we choose to meet the challenge we will see possibilities, and experience work satisfaction like never before.

Karen Fenske, is the President of Strat-Point Solutions, [www.stratpoint.ca](http://www.stratpoint.ca).

# Events and Announcements

COABC members have access to the **On Farm Food Safety Manuals** produced by the Canadian Horticultural Council. Contact Kristy at the COABC office for the access code at [office@certifiedorganic.bc.ca](mailto:office@certifiedorganic.bc.ca) or 250 260-4429.

**Fall Seminar Series** recorded archives are now available. If you missed viewing any of the COABC Fall Seminar Series sessions, the webinars were recorded and may be ordered from our website [www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca/infonews/events.php#seminar](http://www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca/infonews/events.php#seminar). These informative, one hour seminars covered the following topics: Utilizing Cover Crops in Organic Production, Stock Free Organic Farming, and Innovative Concepts & Techniques for Successful Weed Management in Organic Cropping.

**USC Canada's** new short, animated film will get you thinking about our broken food system. It identifies what's gone wrong, and what we can do to rebuild it. See it online at <http://usc-canada.org/2009/11/13/watch-the-story-of-food/>

**BC Farm Industry Review Board** has created a webpage for industry consultation on the British Columbia Egg Marketing Board Quota Distribution Policy (QDP) for National and Provincial Allocations and New Producer Program (NPP) Rules. Visit the site at [www.firb.gov.bc.ca/BCEMB\\_Quota\\_Distribution\\_Policy.htm](http://www.firb.gov.bc.ca/BCEMB_Quota_Distribution_Policy.htm)

The **BC SPCA** announced the launch of a brand new Standard for the Raising and Handling of Turkeys. This new standard is the first turkey standard of its kind in Canada to include a formalized lameness assessment protocol. [www.spc.bc.ca/welfare/farm-animal-welfare/farmsense/](http://www.spc.bc.ca/welfare/farm-animal-welfare/farmsense/)

The Provincial Health Services Authority and the Public Health Association of BC launched a **Food Security Gateway** this Fall. Please visit this web portal at [www.phabc.org/foodsecuritygateway](http://www.phabc.org/foodsecuritygateway)

The portal is meant to connect you to BC initiatives and important resources that can help to create healthy eating environments and food secure communities in BC. It is meant to be a resource for public policy makers, food industry leaders, civil society organizations and interested citizens in BC.

## Compost and Manure Sources

Producers should remember to verify that their sources of composts/manures meet the criteria outlined in the Canada Organic Standards. For composted materials look in section 4.2 of the PSL, and for raw manure check section 5.5 in 32.310 even if the manure is from a CO animals.



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# COABC

## ORDER FORM

202-3002 32nd Avenue, Vernon, BC V1T 2L7; p: 250.260.4429; f: 250.260.4436; assistant@certifiedorganic.bc.ca

Enterprise Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Contact: \_\_\_\_\_  
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 CB + Certification No.: \_\_\_\_\_

PST Exemption	
<input type="checkbox"/>	BCAC Farmer ID Card #: _____ If no BCAC Farmer ID #:
<input type="checkbox"/>	Certificate of Exemption must be provided for PST Exemption for each purchase. Form available at: <a href="http://www.sbr.gov.bc.ca/documents_library/forms/0453FILL.pdf">www.sbr.gov.bc.ca/documents_library/forms/0453FILL.pdf</a> or request the form from the office.

Item	Units	Unit Price	Quantity Discount	Quantity	Total
Plastic 10 lb apple bags/vented	250/wicket	\$12.00	4 wickets \$40.00		
Stickers 1" round	1000 pc roll	\$12.50	10 rolls \$108.00		
Stickers 1 1/4" square	1000 pc roll	\$10.50	10 rolls \$90.00		
Twist Ties 10" (15,000 per case)*	1000 pc	\$13.00	Full Case-\$165.00		

The packaging materials above are only available to COABC Certified Organic members.  
 Have you signed a new Consent to use Official Marks Declaration Form (revised July 2006)? Y/N  
 Have all your labels been reviewed by your CB? Y/N  
 With which products will you be using the packaging materials? \_\_\_\_\_

Promo Materials: available to everyone	Member \$	Non-member \$			
Bucket Hats size M or L *	\$15.75	\$15.75	PST taxable		
Ball Caps	\$13.10	\$13.10	PST taxable		
Green T-shirts L or XL *	\$18.00	\$18.00	PST taxable		
Natural T-shirts (Logo) M or L*	\$7.25	\$7.25	PST taxable		
Natural T-shirts (Plain) S M L XL or XXL	\$5.00	\$5.00	PST taxable		
Organic Tree Fruit Management	\$32.00	\$39.95	No PST		
Steel in the Field *	\$25.00	\$25.00	No PST		
Livestock Nutrition *	\$12.00	\$12.00	No PST		
Sub-total (before taxes and shipping):					

\*Limited quantities available - please contact the COABC office for availability GST # 887782431 RT 0001

### Postage Rates

Minimum charge of \$10.00 per order for any promo and/or packaging materials

GST will be added to postage amounts

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An invoice will be sent with your order. Postage and applicable taxes will be added to your invoice.

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