

*British Columbia*

# Organic Grower

## *In this issue:*

*Community farm profile  
Is certification still relevant?  
Weed control in cranberries*

**Journal for the Certified Organic Associations of BC - Spring 2011**

*Volume 14, Issue 2*



Program Administrator:



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## BC Organic Grower

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*Read all about the varying perspectives on the benefits and drawbacks of certification on pages 12, 14 & 19.*

Left: Jackson of Northbrook Farm in Saanichton shows off a fabulous head of broccoli. Credit: Heather Stretch

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*Part Two of our Community Farm Series features Haliburton Community Farm on page 10.*

Left: Sharing and comparing some of the first eggs collected at Haliburton. Credit: Rhona McAdam

## Correction

The cover of our Winter 2011 issue erroneously identified Notch Hill Organics as Notch Hill Farm.

# President's Letter

By Mary Forstbauer

"Cultivators of the earth are the most valuable citizens. They are the most vigorous, the most independent, the most virtuous and they are tied to their country and wedded to its liberty and interests by the most lasting bands."

*Thomas Jefferson, Letter to John Jay (Aug. 23, 1785)*



For one week I have worn two very important hats. At the COABC director's meeting in Sidney on March 6<sup>th</sup>, I agreed to become president of COABC for one year. This last weekend I officially resigned my position as president of BC Association of Farmers' Markets board. For the next year the COABC will be my passion and priority!

As a founding member of the COABC I was honoured to be the fifth recipient of the Founders award in 2002. I am now excited to be your president.

Some of you will remember my song and dance at the conference in Parksville many years ago. "Check, check, check that's what it's all about..."

Well, it is time for us to get busy checking our products. With the new national standard not allowing us to put the qualifier of "certified" in front of the word organic, consumers could become confused. The COABC trademark has "certified organic" as part of the symbol and we are still allowed to use it! So fellow BC producers let's all start using that check mark to assure BC consumers that they are in fact receiving a BC CERTIFIED ORGANIC product.



I will be working with our board and staff to find a way to get a check mark campaign happening this spring and summer. It is long past due! Over the next year I look forward to every producer in the COABC program using the check mark.

I want to thank the executive from the past year: Brad Reid for the great job he did as president, Susan Snow for her work as treasurer, not an easy task, and our vice president Carmen Wakeling. Your work has inspired me to take on the job of president of this great association.

There is much work to be done. The board of directors is 16 people. We all have our own farms and businesses to look after. We do need help. If you are willing to be on a committee or if you have an idea that you want to work on with the board please contact me and we will talk. We need the help of non-board volunteers to bring COABC to the next level. Remember this is YOUR association. It does not belong to the board or the staff it belongs to YOU!

Thank you to Lee Fuge and the organizing committee of the conference in Sidney. We had some great speakers and most of all great networking opportunities. Thank you to our speakers, sponsors and to those who donated to meals and the silent auction. For those of you who do not attend COABC conferences, you're missing a great networking time to learn and share ideas. It would be great to have two or three hundred people at next year's conference.

In the meantime, keep "checking" your product! 

*Mary Forstbauer - President COABC*




# Administrator's Report by Jen Gamble

In the midst of the year end financials and the final stages of conference planning, I began as the new COABC Administrator. The learning curve has been huge but the welcome, and support, I received from staff, directors and members made the transition really enjoyable. I have been discovering the amazing depth of this organization through research, conversations, and of course, by attending the "Next Generation" conference in Sidney.



I was greatly impressed by the sessions and the quality of discussions at the conference. The COABC is able to host this incredible conference as a result of the dedicated staff and volunteers and the generosity of our sponsors. In particular this year, Vancity and the Government of British Columbia's Agri-business department's financial support allowed us to secure a number of great speakers and for this we are extremely appreciative.

The conference also serves as a point of connection for the Organic Sector in BC. It offers an opportunity to meet other members and to connect with the organization. Coming together not only eliminates feelings of isolation but also facilitates great networking. The weekend had a positive, welcoming atmosphere – a great cornerstone for an organization as it attracts new members as well as the public. I sincerely hope we maintain that feeling of good will as it furthers the growth of the strong and vibrant community, which is so important in the COABC.

A welcoming and inclusive atmosphere builds unity and a unified membership helps us create a COABC that can be a strong voice for the organic sector in BC. Working together to meet challenges will increase our success, create cohesiveness and enable the COABC community to flourish. I strongly believe that cooperation and open communication will help this organization realize its full potential. 



## Achievements for last Quarter

- COABC conference "The Next Generation" held March 4-6th, Sidney, BC
- Secured funding from agri-business fund for all business sessions at the conference
- Executive members met with Agriculture Minister Ben Stewart
- Executive and staff met with Ministry of Agriculture policy representatives about regulating the word organic
- Finalized 2010 financials

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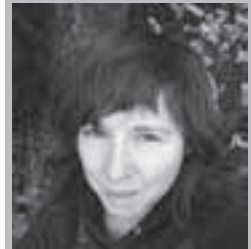
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# Editor's Note by Andrea Langlois

The introduction of the Canadian Organic Regime brought with it hopes, questions, and, as change often does, anxiety. With the national standards' insistence that "organic" means "certified organic," alongside media stories about organics, and studies showing that consumers believe that "natural" is better than organic, a whole bunch of questions have been tilled up to the surface.



Andrea Langlois, editor



moss dance, layout

Where are organics going? Is direct-to-consumer marketing taking the place of the trust issued by the stamp of certification? Is the movement able to hold onto and attract more producers? How can certification stay relevant?

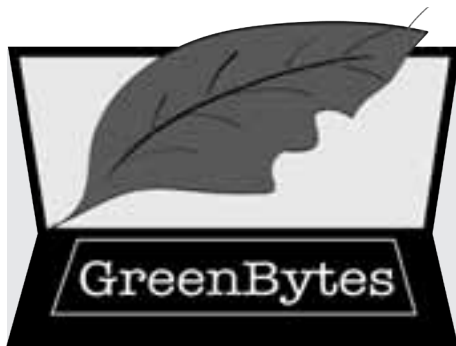
Despite mumblings on listservs and at events, I hadn't realized how these very questions have been occupying the minds of many.

Yet here, in this Spring 2010 issue of the BC Organic Grower, we have the very proof that folks have a lot to say on this topic. We have 3 articles dedicated to the above questions, and dozens of voices contributed to the thoughts behind them, as well as a call from the COABC's new president to get out there and use that check mark!

I'm pleased that we can create space in the BCOG for these debates, alongside helpful tips about hiring staff, research findings on weed control in cranberries, and profiles of a few of the many faces and farms behind certified organics in BC.

The conversations around certification have certainly been around since before it even existed, and they will surely continue to shift and change as we move forward. But the one thing that is certain is that it your voices that are needed to keep the discussions rolling like a well-oiled tractor. Because organics has always been about the people behind it and the value they put on maintaining the integrity behind the word "organic." 🌿

Send me your thoughts, letters, and article ideas to [editor@certifiedorganic.bc.ca](mailto:editor@certifiedorganic.bc.ca)



## Cover Crop Chart

The United States Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Research Service has created a useful Cover Crop Chart designed to assist producers with decisions on the use of cover crops in crop and forage production systems.

The chart, patterned after the periodic table of elements, includes information on 46 crop species that may be planted individually or in cocktail mixtures. Information on growth cycle, relative water use, plant architecture,

seeding depth, forage quality, pollination characteristics, and nutrient cycling are included for most crop species.

Select individual crop species by clicking on the name which will direct you to additional information about the selected crop.

**The chart is available online at [www.ars.usda.gov/Main/docs.htm?docid=20323](http://www.ars.usda.gov/Main/docs.htm?docid=20323)**

# THE NEXT GENERATION

## 2011 COABC Conference



Young farmers attentively occupy the front row for the “Passing on Market Garden Secrets” workshop with Hermann Bruns.



Rochelle Eisen was honoured for her many contributions to the organic farming sector in BC.



“But aren’t those wasps?!” A small sampling of Ted Leischner’s massive native bee collection. Canada’s west coast is home to over 400 species of native bees. Ted believes we must invest time and energy in providing forage for these bees, especially as we see honeybee populations declining.


### Conference Highlights From a “youngish” farmer’s perspective

*By moss dance*

I am always excited to attend the 2011 COABC conference. I enjoy attending with my BC Organic Grower Layout and Advertising hat on, but I also love to gather resources, info and networking that will help me grow my own small farm in the Comox Valley. It’s the only time of year that I can talk about wireworms, buttercups and favourite lettuce varieties all weekend without my conversation partners getting tired of me – or, at least, I think it is!

I love practical workshops, and this year’s conference had some excellent speakers who focused on hands-on solutions to real farm conundrums. Hermann Brun’s “Passing on Market Garden Secrets” covered everything from practical ways to build low-cost greenhouses to crop rotations. Hermann’s market garden tips were those valuable, simple tricks of the trade that cost little and save a lot of time in the long run. Here’s a great example: to save time and combine tasks, attach a few bolts to the safety guard at the back of your rototiller to mark seeding lines as you till!

Heather Stretch’s presentation, “Cooperating for Profit” offered a candid view of what it takes to market your farm product in partnership with others. I was also inspired by Ted Leischner’s passion for native bees in BC. These seemingly different workshops reaffirmed my commitment to working in partnership with the human and other animal communities around my farm.

Finally, I was pleased to be part of the crowd Saturday evening when Rochelle Eisen was honoured for her contributions to the COABC and to the daily working lives of organic farmers across BC. Lee Fuge was also in the limelight for her organizational magic at this year’s conference. Many thanks for the pioneering spirits, inspired wisdom and hard work of all those who made this year’s conference a success! 



The COABC 2011 conference was a great place to catch up with friends, network and enjoy amazing local organic fare!

## 2011-2012 COABC Directors and Alternates

**President** – Mary Forstbauer – Bio-Dynamic

**Vice-president** – Kris Chand – IOPA

**Treasurer** – Rob Horricks – PACS

**Secretary** – Rebecca Kneen – NOOA

**Secretary** – Annie Moss – PACS

**BCARA – British Columbia Association for Regenerative Agriculture**

Chris Bodnar

Alternate: Brad Reid

**Bio-Dynamic – Bio-Dynamic Agricultural Society of British Columbia**

Mary Forstbauer – (2011 President)

Alternate: David Avery

**BOPA – Boundary Organic Producers Association**

Roly Russell

Alternate: Sheila Dobie

**FVOPA – Fraser Valley Organic Producers**

Doug Luder

Alternate: Susan Snow

**IOPA – Islands Organic Producers Association**

Kris Chand – (2011 Vice President)

Alternate: Randy Pearson

**KOGS – Kootenay Organic Growers**

Angela Weir

Alternate: Jeanine Powell

**LEOGA – Living Earth Organic Growers**

Sarah Martin

Alternate: Clive Johnson

**NOOA – North Okanagan Organic Association**

Rebecca Kneen – (2011 Co-Secretary)

Alternate: Bob McCoubrey

**PACS – Pacific Agricultural Certification Society**

Fred Danenhower

Annie Moss – (2011 Co-Secretary)

Rob Horricks – (2011 Treasurer)

Charlie Lasser

Destin Lydiatt

Eric von Krosigk

Alternate: Ron Schneider

Alternate: Philippa Mennell

Alternate: Linda Edwards

Alternate: Gay Hahn

**SOOPA – Similkameen Okanagan Organic Producers Association**

Corey Brown

Alternate: Rob Vanderlip/ Yuri Zebroff

**STOPA – Shuswap Thompson Organic Producers Association**

David Comrie

Alternate: Ron Coghlan/Mendel Rubinson

**Ministry of Agriculture**

Alison Pearce – (ex-officio)

**Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA)**

Geoff Urton & Alyssa Bell-Stoneman – (Farm Animal Welfare Co-ordinators)

**Consumer/Environment Representative**

Lee Fuge – BC Food Systems Network

With thanks to our funders:



For a full list of conference sponsors please visit: [www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca](http://www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca)



# Haliburton Community

## Organic Farm



Credit: Brian Harris Photography ([www.brianharrisphotography.net](http://www.brianharrisphotography.net))

By Wanda Gorsuch

**N**estled in the midst of suburbia, only a 15 minute drive from downtown Victoria, Haliburton Community Organic Farm provides the community with fresh organic produce, welcomes all community members and supports local biodiversity. As of 2011 Haliburton's nine acres are farmed by five farm businesses – H&R Veggies, Sunbird Farm II, New Mountain Farm, Littlest Acre Organics and Barefoot Organics – and are home to a restored wetland/Garry Oak meadow complex.

### Land

Located in the District of Saanich, Haliburton Community Organic Farm Society's (Hali) nine acres are owned by the city of Saanich and are leased to the Society for a nominal sum. The lease is for five years, with provision for renewal. The lease agreement is simple, but does include reporting requirements and restriction on certain activities (e.g. type and number of livestock). The land has unique zoning, designed by the municipality specifically for the farm.

Each of the five farm businesses at Hali rent an area of land (average 1 acre in size) from the Society under a

**Part 2 of a 4  
part series on  
Community  
Farms**



**Haliburton's Vision:** To be a leading model of community-supported, small-scale sustainable organic agriculture carried out in harmony with local ecosystems.

Memorandum of Agreement. The MOA's include sections on farmer responsibilities, Society responsibilities, dispute resolution, and terms for departure. As of 2011, the rent is \$500 per year.

## Structure & Governance

Overall land care and community connection is overseen by the Haliburton Community Organic Farm Society, a registered charitable organization. The volunteer Board meets monthly, and usually has about eight members at any one time. The Board includes one to two farmer representatives

and a local community representative. The remaining members come from many different walks of life but all share a passion for local, sustainable farming. Funding for Society activities comes primarily from farm rent, produce/seed sales (grown by the Society), Society memberships, and project grants.

The farmers are solely responsible for the care and success of their plot of land and their associated business. The farmers meet weekly throughout the growing season to discuss markets, growing, tool sharing and other topics that may

arise. They also meet early in the new year to negotiate who will grow what, in what quantities, for the coming year.

Decision-making is collaborative – issues are resolved through open, honest discussion and willingness for compromise.

## Sharing

At Haliburton there are common areas (maintained by the Society with support from the farmers) shared by both the farm businesses and the Society. These include a house, which cannot be used for living accommo-

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# Straight from the Farmer's Mouth

## Benefits of farming on a Community Farm

- "Collaboration, sharing, being part of the community, and knowing what we do is helpful to others."
- "Shared knowledge and collaboration with the other farmers and a stronger connection with the community."
- "Collaborative spirit is an incentive to new farmers starting out. It is immensely supportive to work together sharing growing ideas, markets, utility costs, resources and knowledge."

## The challenges

- "Sometimes things take longer to get done because of the channels you have to go by."
- "Can't think of any... except maybe if the vision and interests of the farm as a whole is forgotten as each business continues in the busy process of their own survival."

## Dispute Resolution

- "With having good communication, regular farmer meetings, helping each other solve day-to-day farming problems, you get to know each other better which helps with understanding and is easier to discuss and solve a dispute. And our Memorandums of Understandings have a process to follow if we can't solve a dispute."

## Tips for new Community Farms

- "Dream big, start small, have a vision."
- "Planning is always the key. Start small with a realistic scope of the work and set achievable goals."
- "Excellent communication and transparency – message boards, telephone message books, updated web site. Regular farmers meetings with all farmers. Work together. Be aware of the community farm's clear cut, enthusiastically agreed upon vision, and post it on the fridge."
- "Having a simple and clear vision to what the community farms mission is. Have a working plan as to what and when things need to be started and finished. Written expectations for all involved eg. Board members, farmers, manager, volunteers."

## Resources Available for download from the Land Conservancy Blog include:

(<http://blog.conservancy.bc.ca/agriculture/publications-2/>)

- Whole Farm Planning
- Guide to Farmland Access Agreements
- Business Planning for Small-Scale Community Farming Enterprises
- Community Farms in BC: Building Local Food Systems for Sustainable Communities

dations, and a farm stand. The house basement is used for produce washing/packing, space for seed cabinets, and storage. The upstairs facility can be rented for meetings or for cooking demonstrations.

Farmers pay for their own irrigation water, with sepa-

rate meters for each farm site, and split the costs of utilities and maintenance for common areas with the Society (e.g. hydro, septic, furnace repairs).

Farmers share all marketing and sales costs. At many markets, produce is sold un-

der "Haliburton Community Organic Farm" and the farmers use an inventory sheet to track individual sales. All farms contribute to the Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) box program.

As a non-profit, charitable organization, the Society

is eligible to apply for, and receive, grants. Grant projects are completed with the benefit of the whole farm and community in mind. For instance, in 2010 Hali installed an interpretative trail through the farm, thanks to a community grant from the District of Saanich. A grant from Community Farms Endowment Fund helped fund a necessary upgrade of the produce washing facility (new stainless steel sinks and countertops) and others contributed to building the farmstand. Hali benefits greatly from many contributions and the Society and farmers are thankful for their support in whatever form it takes.

## Ecology

Hali has its own ecology champions in the form of the "Urban Biodiversity Project." This dedicated group of volunteers and organizations are working hard at Hali to build and maintain a lively ecosystem.

Projects include bird boxes, snake cairns, bat boxes, na-



Credit: Martha Keller

tive plant hedgerows and the gem – a restored wetland and Garry Oak meadow. A member of the Project sits on the Hali Board and works with the farmers on the best means of supporting native plants and animals.

## Community Commitment

The Society, and now Sunbird Farm II as well, are dedicated to involving the local community in growing healthy food. All community members are welcome to weekly work parties on the farm, where regardless of ability, all can contribute to the farm.

A special plot of land is reserved for the work parties, but if the more active members are interested, they are welcome to work with and learn from the other farmers. Sharing of volunteers is agreed to between the farmers and the Society prior to their arrival.

## Recent Learning Experience

Hali recently went through the process of finding new farmers/farm businesses as circumstances conspired to have two of the three active farms close in 2010. First a Request for Proposal (RFP) was drafted that outlined the different areas of land available for rent, and general terms and conditions. The RFP was advertised through various local and provincial listservs, through emails, newsletters and by word-of-mouth.

Applicants were required to submit a business plan and an application form. Then, in-person interviews were conducted with the most promising candidates. Although there is concern that new farmers cannot find land, there was not a large response to this opportunity. About two more applications than farm plots available were received.

Fortunately one farm business remained (H&R Veggie) and another of our veteran farmers stayed on to organize an apprenticeship program for the Society (Sunbird Farm II). These farmers are mentoring the new farmers into the system.

## In summary...

Each community farm is unique. Every farm will have its own formula for success. It is fundamentally important to have a common vision, good communication and willingness to hash out the tough details. Don't be afraid to be professional, but be flexible. 🌱

*Wanda Gorsuch is a board member with the Haliburton Community Organic Farm Society and enjoys working and volunteering in support of local, sustainable agriculture.*



# Direct-to-Consumer Marketing: *Whither Certified Organic?*

By Jordan Marr

A consequence of the success of the know-your-farmer movement is that as people experience face-to-face contact with their farmers, they may be becoming less concerned about the presence of a certification label. Is certification less necessary because “I trust my farmer”? Is certified organic’s relevance in the direct-to-consumer food economy waning?

If this is the case, the number of organic farms with certification (I refer only to those engaged mainly in direct-to-consumer marketing) could decline due to attrition and a reduction in new producers seeking certification. I wanted to explore this possibility, so I set out to interview some of the participants in the direct-to-consumer food economy.

## **Being a certified organic producer at farmers markets: diminishing returns on investment?**

A vendor’s lack of organic certification isn’t a deal-breaker for most market-goers seeking organic products, observes Angela Weir of Crooked Horn Farm, in her first year of transitioning to organic. Many producers agree with her. Dale Zeich of Little Creek Gardens, who plans on dropping his certification after nearly twenty years, tells me that after obtaining the Canada Organic logo he had less than five customers mention his “big, beautiful banner” all season.

Rainey Boksa has also dropped her certification after five years of being certified. “An average of once a year at market am I asked if we’re certified organic,” she reported.

What’s key here is that many customers are walking away with what

they consider to be organic food. Herein lays a big bone of contention among those I interviewed. Each shared with me the sense that many buyers of organic products are undereducated on what it means for a product to be organic, and since in many cases it is easy for non-certified producers to use the word organic or any of a number of other statements, many consumers are vulnerable to false claims.

Philippa Mennell of Benjamin Bountifield’s Farm, in her third year of transition, makes an interesting observation about many consumers. “Many people feel confused and overwhelmed by the challenges presented in procuring the ‘right’ kind of food, and are unquestioning once told this or that product is organic because it allows them to get on with their day,” she said.

As the market advantage to being certified shrinks, it may take other reasons for being certified to prevent attrition and to attract new members to the movement.

Some have found those reasons. I encountered four new farmers, all around the age of thirty, who joined the certified organic community for reasons other than market advantage. Angela Weir and her partner are new to their community in the Slocan Valley and feel that the integrity of the standards makes up for their customers’ lack of familiarity with them. Philippa Mennell and Eric Simons, located in Cawston, looked forward to the educational benefits to being certified, though after one year, they admitted to being marginally disappointed in this regard.

Others are not finding reasons. Curtis Stone in Kelowna is not eligible to certify because he is an urban farmer and cannot provide an ad-

equated buffer zone in his garden, but he doubts he would want to be certified anyway. He cites the high costs (which he assumes would be in the thousands of dollars for his one acre of production<sup>1</sup>), the onerous paperwork, and his belief that certification is too heavy-handed and does not provide an adequate mechanism for its members to influence the standards.

For Dale Zeich, also in Kelowna, certification has become too complex and demanding for the return it brings at market. In Edgewood, Rainey Boksa feels that the cost of certification is unnecessary given that most of her produce is sold to people who know and trust her.

It’s not like certified organic products are about to disappear from farmers’ markets in a great poof of irrelevance – witness the Penticton market, where the bulk of vendors are certified, or the Vancouver Farmers’ Market Society, at whose market only certified vendors are permitted to use the word organic on signage.

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*“All conservatism is based on the idea that if you leave things alone you leave them as they are. But you do not. If you leave a thing alone you leave it to a torrent of change.”*

—G.K. Chesterton

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## **Addressing the challenges**

Certified producers appear to be, for the most part, a magnanimous bunch, showing a high level of tolerance for their farming colleagues



Credit: Robin Tunnicliffe

who use organic in their advertising but who are not certified. Long-time certified producer Bob McCoubrey of Lake Country typifies the outrage I have encountered.

“For the most part I’ve been pretty tolerant. I think there are some producers who are legitimately [farming according to the standards] but not certifying. I think that’s fine... my level of frustration starts lowest with people who are doing the right thing but who don’t like the paperwork,” he said. “It gets a little higher when it’s someone who doesn’t understand what the standards are and may be doing something wrong unintentionally.”

But there is no doubt that the meaning of “organic” is being clouded by various health and ecological claims, multiple labels, the term “natural,” and the public’s lack of understanding of production standards for certification.

### What to do?

The COABC’s answer has been to recommend that the BC government enact legislation that would require those who make claims about organic production to be certified.

The prospect got a mixed reaction from the producers I interviewed. Philippa Mennell is ambivalent about the idea, while her partner

Eric is supportive of a restriction. Bob McCoubrey supports the idea, in order to end confusion for consumers.

Certified organic vegetable grower Andrew Arkesteyn-Vogler thinks it’s in his own best interest, but also that the public will be worse off. “It’s in my interest to be protected,” he said. “From the larger perspective, it’s tough when you want to apply legal definition to a word. How can you limit the use of words that people use to communicate with their customers? It’s the easy answer but continued education with customers is what we need.”

Urban gardener Curtis Stone, who is proud of his commitment to sustainable production, is outraged at the idea. “It’s turning into fascism. I understand the intention behind it, but to further regulate things, my back gets up about that. The more they do that, the more they’ll piss people off and the more people will drop their participation in the system,” he argued.

Those against the idea of regulating the use of the word “organic” tend to favour public education, but they acknowledge the difficulty and cost inherent in such a tactic.

At the COABC’s suggestion, I spoke with their former Organic Extension

Agent Rochelle Eisen about the recommendation, though she emphasized that does not speak for the organization. She has little sympathy for those who call the idea heavy-handed.

“From the last census we know that there are 750 certified organic operations and 1300 others making unsubstantiated claims about organic that benefit from the work of the certified organic community,” she said. Most countries, including the US, restrict the use of the word organic to those with organic certification, Eisen added.

Consumers are confused about meaning. Some producers are confused about what being certified entails. And there seem to be as many phrases to describe sustainable production as there are ideas about how to produce sustainably. None bode well for a label that depends on clarity for credibility.

It’s a situation that Dale Zeich probably wouldn’t have predicted when he certified in 1991. At that time, the term was unknown to many consumers, and Dale didn’t even know any other organic growers in the region. But he wanted to differentiate his production practices from conventional ones and to gain credibility in the marketplace.

Now, twenty years later, he’s dropping the label. Credibility is no longer a problem, because everyone knows what organic means. Or at least they think they do. 🌱

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*Jordan Marr is an organic veggie grower living in Peachland.*

<sup>1</sup> Regardless of the individual cost, which you can find by contacting your local certification body, there are set costs for membership in the COABC, which each applicant must pay. This fee is a sliding scale fee based on gross organic income and ranges from \$70 up to \$2000. Fees are payable every season and may change from year to year.

# Ask Not What Certification Can Do For You...



Photo: Heather Stretch Credit: Robin Tunnicliffe

By Heather Stretch

In the decade that I have been a certified organic farmer, I have seen some troubling trends emerge. First, there is the significant number of “non-certified organic” growers, and their recognition in the marketplace as equivalent to certified organic. Possibly more disturbing is the number of farmers I have seen who certify for a few years and then drop their certification. In both cases I hear similar reasoning: “My customers know me. I don’t need certification, so why bother?”

I believe there are some very good reasons to “bother” with certification. An individual

farmer’s growing practices may be exemplary, but her decision not to certify validates that choice for other farmers too. The not-so-organic (often self-described as “as organic as possible”) farmer down the road surely also has customers who know him. I doubt that all the customers out there who know their farmers ask in-depth questions about their growing practices. Indeed, I doubt most customers know what questions to ask.

Collectively, we need certification. It is unrealistic to think that all farmers have the time to adequately educate each of their customers on their growing practices. So, by necessity,

rather than discussing all of our cultural practices, all our inputs, all our seed sources etc., we use the shorthand “organic.” This term has no meaning if there is not an agreed upon definition, and that is exactly what certification is.

Decades of work have gone into developing and refining the standards. Are the standards perfect? No. Are they good? Absolutely.

**“Certification will be harmed if all the small farmers bow out. Small farmers started this movement and we must not abandon it to ‘industrial organic’”**

The confusion around “organic” and “certified organic” among consumers leaves room for all manner of products to ride our coat-tails. At the recent COABC conference, Dag Falck (Organic Program Manager for Nature’s Path Foods) presented troubling data showing the disturbing and erroneous conflation of the terms “organic” and “natural” in consumers’ minds.

At present, “natural” has no legal (or practical) definition. Indeed, the term is used on Rogers’ brand of conventional, white granulated sugar. We need to be diligent to make sure the word organic does not become similarly watered down.

Certification is a driver for research and product development. It is in response to the



demands of certified organic farmers and organizations that companies have developed everything from potting mixes free of synthetic wetting agents to fish emulsions that don't plug irrigation systems. The "pretty much organic" crowd simply does not have the cohesion to demand that this research and development continue.


After their first few years, it is true that most small-scale farmers no longer need certification for marketing purposes. It is therefore time to ask not what certification can "do for you" but what you can do for certification.

Certification will be harmed if all the small farmers bow out. Small farmers started this movement and we must not abandon it to "industrial organic" (to borrow Michael Pollan's phrase). The very fact that several exemplary small-scale farmers in my region are not certified indicates that the certification process is not perfect. This is all the more reason for the best farmers to become and stay involved in the movement.

This is not to say that there are not many tangible benefits to certification, even for the seasoned small-scale farmer. Organic standards provide valuable information on good growing practices. Certification ties an individual to a larger group

of like-minded farmers who can form a supportive and helpful community. Even the paperwork, often cited as the reason to avoid certification, can be a valuable tool. Recordkeeping is an indispensable management tool on a farm, and the records required for certification form the skeleton of a good record-keeping system.

If we allow our community of organic farmers to further splinter into many fine distinctions (certified, non-certified organic, natural, "beyond organic," etc.), we cause confusion among our customers. This opens the door for not-so-organic and even not-so-scrupulous growers to gain market-share. We need all the best farmers from tiny to large to join together under the tent of organic certification to make sure that we are the ones who are driving the movement.

If you are not a certified organic grower, I encourage you to certify. If you are certified, I invite you to become more involved – if there are things about the process you don't like, get involved and change them. Then you can encourage all the other great farmers you know to join us. 

*Heather has been farming for 10 years. She is owner/manager of Northbrook Farm, and co-owner of Saanich Organics.*





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## Klippers Organic Acres



Credit: Brian Harris Photography  
([www.brianharrisphotography.net](http://www.brianharrisphotography.net))

“As they proved their abilities, their reputation grew, as did local respect for the young duo. In just over a decade, they have built their original five acres into forty, growing a variety of crops from tree fruits and nuts to ground crops.”

By Spring Gillard

Award-winning is probably the best descriptor for Kevin and Annamarie Klippenstein. These two young farmers have been chalking up nominations and awards aplenty in the last few years, the latest of which is the 2011 BC and Yukon Outstanding Young Farmers Award.

They were finalists in 2005 through 2007. The awards in those years went to a chicken farmer who ran his farm off his laptop; a greenhouse flower grower; and a sod farmer. Normally granted within the realm of conventional farming, it is particularly satisfying for the organic industry to have two of its own receive this award. Klippers Organic Acres also won the Organic Harvest Award from COABC in 2006 for the best direct farm marketer.

Kevin and Annamarie are thirty-somethings who defy the odds in many respects. They have had no land access issues for example, often a barrier for young farmers. In fact, farmland has been falling into their laps since they purchased a five acre parcel in Cawston in November 2001.

They describe their farm as perfect for doing markets. It had been farmed organically, there were greenhouses, mixed tree fruit varieties and a ground crop area. The first year they focused on getting the orchard in shape and both worked at nearby Apex Mountain during the winter to help make ends meet. The following year they realized that if they were going to make a living at this venture, they would need more growing room. They

approached a neighbour to see if he'd be willing to let them use some of his land. He said he'd sell it to them. They came up with a creative purchase agreement and thus began their foray into many creative land agreements – some purchased, some leased, some just neighbourly arrangements.

As they proved their abilities, their reputation grew, as did local respect for the young duo. In just over a decade, they have built their original five acres into forty, growing a variety of crops from tree fruits and nuts to ground crops. They also sell their own dried fruit and herbs, juices, jams, and eggs. They are certified by PACS.

The larger acreage, even if it is not all in one place, has caused them a few problems however. It was always their intention to sell at farmers' markets. Kevin and Annamarie are social types, who thrive on interacting with their customers.

"If we had to just sell to a packinghouse, we wouldn't be doing this," said Kevin on the phone from Cawston. They wanted to sell at the Penticton Farmers Market, but the organizers deemed them too large. They did sell at the Kelowna Market for a time, but then the organizers there redrew the boundaries and this change shut them out as well. So Kevin and Annamarie drive down to Vancouver each week, participating in six markets, including the winter market, and sell to some Vancouver restaurants.

They also run an apprenticeship program, training up to 10 paid apprentices a year, as well as eight WWOOF'ers (Willing Workers on Organic Farms). The trainees stay in a comfortable five-bedroom suite atop a solar-powered drying facility. The roof top panels also heat the bunkhouse's hot water. With the added help, including two other paid staff, Annamarie can now stay home during the week. They have four children ranging from six to thirteen years old



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*Credit: Annamarie Klippenstein*




who also require feeding, watering and tender loving care.

The Klippensteins may seem to have quite enough on their plate, but they continue to lead and innovate. It probably helps that they both have backgrounds in hospitality and management. When they built their dream home in 2006, powered by geothermal energy, they also began planning a bed and breakfast. They were the first organic farm to have an Environmental Farm Plan and the first to be Salmon-Safe certified. They run a community shared agriculture program and have started a gift certificate program. Kevin just stepped down from the board of the Vancouver Farmers Markets, and is now chair of the Organic Farming Institute of BC.

Both farmers grew up in Chilliwack and went to school there. "But we weren't high school sweethearts," Annamarie chimes in. They got together in their mid 20's. Annamarie's mother insisted that if Kevin wanted to see her daughter, he would have to help her sell the family farm's produce at local markets on the weekends. Her mother is Mary Forstbauer by the way, longtime organic farmer, industry advocate and, until recently, president of the BC Association of Farmers' Markets, which probably hasn't hurt either.

You might say that Mary's enforcement of the "work-for-date" rule set the stage for what was to come next.

One morning, during their courtship years, when Kevin was at work at the local Best Western, a couple came in to the restaurant and ordered the steak and egg special. "Hey, don't you sell at the White Rock farmers' market?" they asked. Turns out the couple had a farm for sale. In Cawston. Five acres. And the prize went to... 

Visit their website at [www.klippersorganics.com](http://www.klippersorganics.com)

*Spring Gillard is a communications consultant, sustainability instructor and author of Diary of a Compost Hotline Operator. [www.compostdiary.com](http://www.compostdiary.com)*



Credit: Kevin Klippenstein



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# The Value of Certification



Photo: Rebecca Kneen inspects the colour of lupulin to determine the ripeness of hops.  
Credit: Brian Maclsaac

*“If we want to encourage trust in our customers in our current consumer climate of “greenwashing,” the best start is to be certified by a proven public body with verifiable standards.”*

By Rebecca Kneen

It seems that between the complexities of the National Organic Regime and direct farm marketing, people are opting out of certification. But is this a wise idea?

Certification was developed for a number of reasons, all of which are still valid. The first of these was to develop a definition of what constitutes “organic” and what doesn’t.

The standards are an educational tool as much as anything else, for both farmer and consumer (assuming consumers read them), and in my own experience, they have been a great start to learning what good farm practices are, from crop rotations to soil management.

In our first year we had to actually write a plan for how we were going to improve the soil on the farm and control weeds, a plan which we’ve modified as we have gone along. Because we are certified, we have had to examine and assess our farm every year, so we’ve been forced to improve. The standards have also kept us up-to-date on the ingredients in various inputs – such as the sudden inclusion of chemical wetting agents in a formerly acceptable potting soil mix.

“The process has made me a better farmer and forces me to stay current and on top of things,” said Barbara Odegard, an IOPA certified farmer from the Comox Valley who I spoke to while writing this article.

“There is a lot of confusing, changing information out there and the certification process forces my attention to stay in the loop and in the know, it makes me accountable. It is human nature to take the easy way of doing things, you get into a mode and have a tendency to stay the course, your crops are growing so why change anything, there is no third party contributing to your knowledge of how you do things and helping you stay on track,” she said.

“This is why I choose to stay certified. It helps me help myself and my customers and the public. It creates a definition and a standard. I grow and make available for sale the absolute best food I can with the most current knowledge and care,” said Odegard.

The certification process is meant to allow farmers to sell to people they don’t know. This can be at your local farmers’ market, where your customers are not coming



*“This is why I choose to stay certified. It helps me help myself and my customers and the public. It creates a definition and a standard. I grow and make available for sale the absolute best food I can with the most current knowledge and care.”*

*Barbara Odegard (above right, with partner Bryne) Ironwood Farm, Comox Valley*

directly to your farm and seeing your operation, but they do need to know you are trustworthy.

How do we become trustworthy? By making a claim or taking an action and backing it up. This is what certification does – it cements trust. The application forms are one of the tools we collectively use to pass information around about what we are doing. Verification visits and Certification Committee reviews are other tools. It’s about openness and sharing information, which is the basis of solid and trustworthy relationships between producers and buyers and between farmers and other farmers.

If we want to encourage trust in our customers in our current consumer climate of “greenwashing,” the best start is to be certified by a proven public body with verifiable standards. Over the last 20 years, organic certification has earned the trust of the public. If we want to continue to have that trust, we have to ensure that organic claims are made only by people (or farms, or businesses) that are actually following the standards.

Barbara Odegard shares her opinion: “As someone who has been farming on a commercial scale for 15 years now I still haven’t come across too many other growers who have ever read through the certification requirement manuals and standards, and so do they really under-

stand the difference between saying you are organic and being certified organic? I hear what customers get told by some growers and it’s usually a pretty simple ‘well I don’t use pesticides.’ We can point to our standards to help other farmers become better farmers, and to help our customers understand what it really means to be organic.”

When we take the time to teach our customers, we build stronger relationships with them and deepen their commitment to genuine sustainability. Many of us feel that customers are undereducated, that they don’t understand what it means to be certified organic. To me, that’s the strongest reason to be certified and to advertise it. It’s a very simple way to let people know that you are honest, that your claims are valid, and that you are genuinely sustainable.

I have found no better way to start the process than by telling people, “If you want to know if your food is safe, start by looking for a ‘certified organic’ stamp with a certification number on it.” It’s a simple and very effective tool and reduces confusion in the marketplace.

We can also use certification to protect ourselves from unsubstantiated claims and from other farmers claiming to be organic in order to poach our markets. David Miege, a Shuswap farmer, recently gave an example on the COABC listserv of a farmer at his local farmers’ market who saw his prices and promptly stuck an “organic” sign on his stall – and raised his prices.

David wrote, “Those people, who operate without a conscience, will always be out there. Certification protects us from them. I am honest and a certifying agency agrees with me, and my customers can purchase from me with confidence.”

Under the national regime, we have some recourse to enforcement of the use of the word organic, and the COABC is working to ensure that this holds true in the regional certification system as well. We are fortunate here in BC to have a regional certification programme to support smaller farmers who are selling only into local markets. The regional certification program allows peer-reviewed certification and supports local markets, as well as providing a lower-cost alternative for smaller farmers.

Many of the regional certifiers also provide a great deal of support to their members in the form of a farming community that shares information. My own Certification Body (NOOA) runs farm tours, as well as seminars on everything from record-keeping to weed management. As Kris Chand on the COABC listserv wrote recently, “We do not need certification for selling but we have made the decision that time and cost of certification is




well worth it. It pays off from the value of information we get from the verification visits and being part of our CB (IOPA).”

We all gripe about filling out all the forms. For our brewery, the application package is around 40-50 pages, including recipes, MSDS sheets for our cleaners and sanitizers, and a plan for where the cat is going to hunt mice.

Even though it’s a lot of stuff to review, there is a good reason why forms are not auto-fill. Over the year, we all make changes to how we do things, sometimes they’re very minor, sometimes major, from changing our feed source (which means checking the source’s organic certification), to altering our use of a field, for example. We forget that we made that change when we fill out our forms from year to year.

If the CB doesn’t have the information, it cannot be verified. I know that I do copy information from one year to the next on my forms, but in order to do that, I have to read it over. Then I find where procedures or sources have changed, and update the records. It’s a very useful exercise!

If you would like to be involved in the future of organics, your Certification Body and your Accreditation Body would welcome your participation. This movement was built by passionate farmers, and will continue to be driven by us as long as we stay involved. We make the farm-

ing community stronger – through the standards and the certification process, by sharing tools, techniques and experience with each other. 

*Rebecca Kneen has been brewing and farming for 11 years in Sorrento BC at Left Fields/Crannog Ales and is certified by NOOA.*



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# Evaluation of methods to improve weed control for organic cranberry production



By Brock Glover and Renée Prasad

The lack of weed control options is an important barrier to organic production of cranberries. Both annual and perennial weeds are problems in cranberries. Weeds can impact yield, vine growth, vine establishment and harvest efficacy. Currently, there are no organic options for weed control in cranberries currently registered in Canada.

Horticultural vinegars (acetic acid) are currently registered as herbicides in Canada for both the domestic market and for landscape and industrial uses. Under the Canadian Organic Standards vinegar is permitted, provided it is derived from a non-synthetic source unless commercially unavailable.

Horticultural vinegar is a contact herbicide that causes tissue desiccation. In BC, previous trials have demonstrated that vinegar can cause significant damage to some weeds, such as plantain, in cranberry fields. However vinegar is a broad-spectrum herbicide and there is also the risk of damaging cranberry vines with its application.

The objective of this study was to examine the impact of application method and frequency on the efficacy of a horticultural vinegar herbicide for weed control in cranberries. Application methods used were basal drenches (sprays directed at the plant base) and foliar sprays. Applications were made at a frequency of once or twice a week. This research project was funded by the OSDP and Fraser Organics.

## Methods

The study was conducted in a commercial cranberry field in Delta BC. The field was not yet mature enough to be harvested and was transitioning to organic production. Horsetail accounted for 60% to 80% of the weed cover in each plot (Fig. 1). A mixture of broadleaf weeds such as pineapple weed and sow thistle made up the remainder of the weed community in the trial area.

The trial was set up with individual plots measuring 1m<sup>2</sup>. Four types of application methods were evaluated at two different application frequencies for a total of eight treatments. The eight treatments were:

- foliar vinegar applied once a week
- foliar vinegar applied twice a week
- basal vinegar drench applied once a week
- basal vinegar drench applied twice a week
- basal vinegar drench combined with foliar applied once a week
- basal vinegar drench combined with foliar applied twice a week
- control (water) applied once a week
- control (water) applied twice a week

The herbicide used was a non-synthetic source of horticultural vinegar with registration for use in industrial areas. All treatments were applied using a backpack sprayer with the herbicide diluted to a 4% solution. Plots were treated for nine weeks from mid-April until mid-June.

## Results

Damage to weeds and cranberry vines in each plot was assessed during and after the trial using a 1-5 scale where 1 = no tissue damage and 5 = 100% tissue damage. We found that application method had a significant impact on weed damage but application frequency did not.

After three weeks of spraying, all three application methods provided significantly better weed suppression compared to the control – with the basal combined with foliar treatment causing the most damage to weeds. All three application methods continued to provide effective weed control after six and eight weeks of spraying. We found this pattern of weed control held for two weeks following the last vinegar application, however four and seven weeks following the last vinegar application weed damage in all treated plots was not higher than damage in the control plots.

We found that both application method and frequency caused significant levels of cranberry vine damage. In terms of frequency, applying vinegar twice a week caused slightly higher levels of damage during the nine weeks that sprays were applied. For application method during the nine weeks of spraying vine damage was significantly higher in all treated plots than in the control plots.

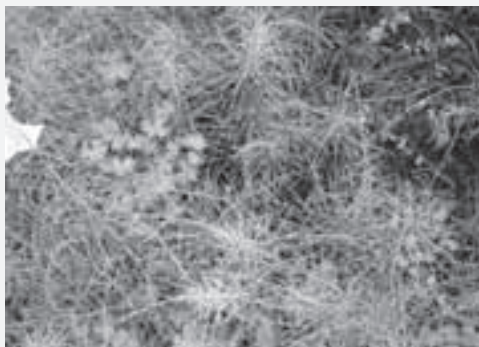
Of the three application methods, vine damage was lower overall in the basal treatment and significantly lower than the basal combined



**Figure 1 - Weed cover in control plots. Note that the dominant weed in the study area was horsetail.**



**Figure 2 - Weed control in a representative plot at Week 9 (top) and at 7-weeks post treatment. Note the complete recovery of horsetail.**



with foliar and foliar treatments after eight weeks of spraying and two weeks following the last vinegar application. However, within four and seven weeks after the final vinegar application, all treated vines recovered and damage levels were similar to those in the control plots.

## Conclusions

Our study showed that applying vinegar to the base of weeds and targeting the root zone (basal) caused levels of weed control that were generally comparable to the foliar and to the basal combined with foliar application methods, but caused less damage to cranberry vines. Additionally we did not find that doubling the frequency of application from once to twice a week increased the level of weed control. Twice weekly applications caused slightly more damage to cranberry vines, but all vines

recovered seven weeks after the last vinegar application. Although all application methods resulted in weed control, control was not sustained by any method four and seven weeks after sprays ceased (Fig. 2). This was mostly due to the recovery of horsetail. Our findings suggest that horticultural vinegar on its own can provide short-term suppression of persistent perennial weeds like horsetail with a weekly spray program. Once there is suppression of these types of weeds additional approaches to management such as physical removal of re-growth should be used. 🌱

*Brock Glover is the vegetable IPM coordinator with E.S. Cropconsult Ltd. Brock works primarily in cole crop and conventional potato research and monitoring. Renée Prasad is the research and cranberry IPM coordinator with E.S. Cropconsult Ltd. Renee also teaches IPM classes at the University of the Fraser Valley (Chilliwack).*

# Hazardous Composts & Soils Contaminated with Persistent Herbicides

by Marjorie Harris

Over the past decade or so, there have been periodic reports of hazardous composts and soils contaminated with persistent herbicides that end up creating havoc down on the farm.

Recently it has been found that good standard composting practices – designed to reduce pathogenic microorganism loads through the production of hot aerobic compost – are not capable of degrading certain Auxinic-type persistent herbicides that are extremely phytotoxic to sensitive broadleaf plant species in very small amounts.

Monocot crops like grasses and cereal grains are able to tolerate them fairly well but minute concentrations of Auxinic-type herbicide residues in soil or compost (as low as 1 ppb) can be lethal to broadleaf garden plants. These include:

- Fabaceae or Leguminosae or pulse family: soybean, beans, peas, chickpeas, alfalfa, peanut, carob, licorice, lupines, vetch and clover;
- Asteraceae or Compositae, or sunflower family is the largest family of vascular plants: daisy, aster, sunflower, lettuces, plants for cooking oils, artichokes, teas, marigolds, chrysanthemums, dahlias, zinnias, and heleniums;
- Solanaceae or Deadly Nightshade family: tomatoes, potatoes, peppers and eggplants;

- Apiaceae or Umbelliferae: angelica, anise, caraway, carrot, celery, chervil, coriander/cilantro, cumin, dill, fennel, hemlock, lovage, parsley, parsnip.

Organic regulations do not permit the use of these persistent herbicides (CAN/CGSB-32.310 1.4.1 (c)), yet they can still affect organic farmers who use off-farm non-organic manure in their soil fertility plan, permitted under CAN/CGSB-32.310 5.5.1 of the standards, which also requires an auditable documentation trail.

For example, in the spring of 2010 “Growing Washington” a non-profit organization that operates several organic farms and agricultural social service programs in Washington State lost their entire greenhouse tomato production to contaminated commercial green waste compost. The WSDA Pesticide Management Division confirmed the presence of aminopyralid contamination.

Since 2000 Penn State University, Spokane Regional Compost Facility and Washington State University have all had these persistent herbicides showing up in both animal and plant based composts.

Every year someone in BC reports crop loss due to contaminated composts and soils. The Integrated Pest Management Act and Regulation here in British Columbia limits the sale of these persistent herbicides to Growers Supply warehouses that have a commercial Crop Life Warehousing certification and they are not sold in home gardening nurser-





# Footnotes from the Field

ies. These regulations also require dispensing and sale records of the annual quantities sold within each region.

Because of the more restrictive nature of how these Auxinic-type herbicides have been registered for use in BC, the origin of the contaminated composts and soils tend to be animal manures and bedding. Horse manure is at higher risk for contamination than dairy manure as horses are allowed onto herbicide treated pastures, rangelands and hayfields sooner than dairy or beef cattle. The persistent herbicides remain chemically stable and intact in both living and dead plants and do not breakdown substantially in the animal's digestive tracts

when eaten. After passing through the animal unchanged they persist in the soil, compost, manure, urine and bedding as residues.

The Auxinic-type herbicides are Phenoxy, Benzoic Acid, Pyridinecarboxylic Acid, and Quinoline. Long-lasting environmental persistence has only been found among the Pyridinecarboxylic Acid forms, which are: aminopyralid, clopyralid, and picloram.

As a group Auxinic herbicides are structurally related to and possess biochemical mechanisms that mimic the naturally occurring plant hormone and growth regulator, auxin (indole-3-acetic



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**Tordon** 22K (picloram)

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### **Aminopyralid:**

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**Milestone** (aminopyralid)

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### **Clopyralid:**

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**Warnings and Use Advisory:** *Rights of way for railway and hydro, rangeland, permanent grass pasture and non-crop land. Do not use on or near waterways or riparian zones due to toxicity to fish, and aquatic organisms. Do not move soils that have been treated. Do not graze cattle for 6 weeks afterward. Do not use straw for mulches, if straw is used for animal bedding do not put in compost, return to the field of origin for spreading. NOT PERMITTED IN ORGANIC AGRICULTURE.*



acid). Auxinic herbicides have been in use since World War II and their precise mode of action is still not clearly understood, but because of their excellence in selective control of broadleaf plants they have become one of the most widespread herbicide families in use today.

Spray application of Auxinic herbicides causes rapid leaf and stem deformations with eventual desiccation and subsequent browning of foliage. The Auxinic herbicides quickly translocate from the sprayed leaves to above ground tissues and then into the roots where small amounts are exuded into the soil. However, the majority of the soil contamination occurs directly from the ap-

plication method.

Tordon 22 (picloram) takes 5 years or more to deactivate in the soil and once picloram has reached ground water it can remain stable for decades, contaminating drinking and irrigation water.

In BC, the spread of invasive noxious weeds are controlled through the use of aminopyralid, clopyralid, and picloram, on crown lands, rights of way, rangeland, permanent grass pastures, hayfields and non-croplands. Both private and government personnel use these products to control plants like Canada thistle and knapweed. Noxious weeds are reportedly spreading aggressively across British Columbia in our natural

## A checklist for sourcing clean feedstocks:

- ✓ Connect with one of the sixteen regional weed management groups for your area to learn about local problem weeds and how they are being controlled
- ✓ When sourcing manures learn how noxious weeds in rangeland and pastures are controlled and determine if animals are grazing in rights of way or under transmission lines
- ✓ For top soil, ask about the field's history
- ✓ For commercial green waste composts, ask about the feedstock sources
- ✓ For hay and haylage, ask about how noxious weeds are controlled
- ✓ For mulches, straws and grass clippings, ask about field history
- ✓ For bedding materials, ask if animals have been fed contaminated feed and the source of the bedding material

ecosystems, urban landscapes, and agricultural lands at an alarming rate and efforts are being made to prevent their entry into the alpine zones. (Visit the website of the Invasive Plant Council for more information [www.invasiveplant-councilbc.ca](http://www.invasiveplant-councilbc.ca).)

### What to do if your soil has been contaminated


Growers with composts or soils contaminated with persistent herbicides should not add additional organic matter as the herbicides tend to bind to organic matter and increase the soil residence time. The soil should be turned regularly to bring the herbicide residues to the surface, as photodegradation is significant only on the soil surface, and turning aids aerobic microorganisms in the breakdown process.

### Testing compost, soil and materials for Picloram, Clopyralid and Aminopyralid residues:

Lab tests are very expensive and slow for these residues in large part because they need to detect extremely low levels

of pesticides. Typically they cost \$600 to \$700 per sample.

To test manure, compost or soil for possible contamination yourself, conduct the following experiment:

1. Set up two sets of pots or trays, one set for the compost to be tested and the other as a control made of your own garden soil.
2. Place the two sets of trials in separate watering areas so that they do not cross contaminate.
3. Plant each pot or tray with sensitive broadleaf plants of beans, peas, tomatoes and lettuce.
4. Observe growth for a four-week period and make note any leaf curl or cupping, stem wrinkle and lack of growth such as damping off. These symptoms may indicate picloram, clopyralid or aminopyralid residue in the manure, compost or soil. 

*Marjorie Harris, BSc, is an Advanced IOIA V.O. with Residue Sampling training.*



# Eco-Friendly Crop Rotations Project Cereal Grains Variety Trial Results

By Wayne Temple, DeLisa Lewis, and Arthur Bomke

Small grain screening trials were established to monitor and compare available varieties of cereal grains as potential low-input break crops (i.e. demonstrate disease resistance in absence of pesticides; and yields under low fertilizer N inputs).


Our research team undertook three years of cereal variety trials situated on the Fraser River Delta or south coastal British Columbia. We sourced seed/varieties – as candidates from the EU/UK, Eastern Canada/USA (Southern Ontario, Quebec & Maritimes; Michigan and Indiana) and Pacific Northwest (i.e. Washington, Idaho & Oregon) – which have relatively similar growing conditions.

We looked for cereals – spring/winter wheats (hard reds), barley (two or six row and feed) and oats (naked) – that would fit into vegetable crop rotations (although the spring seeded varieties should be of interest to our Interior and Vancouver Island growers as well); and, ones that would be appropriate for organic and low input conventional producers (no fungicides; low N inputs). Therefore, we put a strong emphasis on disease resistance, standability and, while yield is important, it was just one of the characteristics we were looking for.

Our producers will likely focus on feed grain, but if the other characteristics are similar, having the opportunity to fill a local craft brew/malting or artisan food grain market could be of interest, especially to organic growers. Since the cost of feed grains is highest to more isolated farmers, e.g. Vancouver Island, we need to focus on grains that would be easily processed for feed on-farm. Naked or hullless oats seem to be an idea we should try as well.

The compiled “candidate” list (available in the full report referenced below) is based upon available variety trial assessments posted on the web for selected regions. Cereal disease pressures for South Coastal BC include some mildew upon over-winter cereals, high incidence of yellow/strip and brown rust and septoria.

Very few of the varieties that we selected for monitoring and evaluation are registered for commercial use in south coastal BC; and, an objective to doing such research variety trials will be to help growers to gain

CFIA registration of those varieties which demonstrate themselves of beneficial growth and development, so that our producers may source such seed in the future. 

The full report is available on Cyberhelp at: [http://www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca/contacts/extension/cereals\\_10.pdf](http://www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca/contacts/extension/cereals_10.pdf)

## The Results...

The criteria for selection of appropriated varieties for south coastal BC were primarily based upon good yields and disease resistance, in particular, stripe/yellow rust resistance. Our analysis of the 52 grain varieties sourced from growing regions with similar biophysical conditions included: grain and straw harvest yield, height, total grain weight, grain protein percentage, and disease assessments.

- Of the 13 spring wheat varieties analyzed, our top 7 selections were: Glenlea, Lillian, Strongfield, Sable, Espresso, Cabernet, and Paragon.
- Of the 16 winter wheat varieties tested, our top 8 choices to date are: Monopol, Reaper, Harvard, Stanford, Norwest 553, Panorama, Gladiator, and Warrior.
- Neither winter barley variety trialed in 2009-2010 survived the waterfowl grazing and saturated winter field conditions. We will provide updates on the 5 new winter barley varieties planted in September 2010 as they become available.
- Of the 14 spring barley varieties in our trials, the top 8 were: Island, CDC Bold, McGuire, OAC Kawartha, Baronesse, 95SR316A, Concerto, and Henley.
- Both of the spring oat varieties are nationally registered in Canada, and are recommended for South Coastal BC growing conditions.

This excerpt is taken from:

Temple, Wayne D., DeLisa A. Lewis, and Arthur A. Bomke. Eco-friendly Crop Rotations Project. Rep. C.O.A.B.C., Jan. 2011.

# People Points

## How to get the work done

Karen Fenske

How will you “get it all done”? Whether you hire employees or enlist volunteers these tools will help you manage people efficiently.


A way to get started is to list all the tasks that need to be done. Throughout your day jot down the many different things that you or others around you do (eventually plugging them into a computer will help). Then sort them into lists according to specific criteria such as location or skill set.

For instance, someone who receives shipments could also pack and prep shipments and ensure that the loading area is safe, clean and stocked, while in a different area such as the market counter, the person could be responsible for taking care of customers, ensuring there is enough money in the till, stocking shelves, putting up signage, etc. You may choose to sort tasks according to skill set, such as those with good people skills are frontline with all customers and answer phones, while others who prefer not to interact with customers are expected to plant, prune, stock shelves or prep trucks.

Now prepare job descriptions, which include: a title, a job summary, and a list of duties and responsibilities. Be specific. List the tasks that you expect to be accomplished and what that person will be responsible for. Skipping this step by listing two tasks and adding “other tasks as required” will end in frustration. Also indicate job specifications such education, experience and special demands of the job. Does it require high school, post-secondary or work experience? Will the person be “outside in all weather,” climbing a ladder, working with livestock, doing heavy lifting, etc.? Will the person need a special ticket, special gear, specific plant or soil knowledge, etc?

You can get fancy and fill in a Human Resource (HR) Profile that displays all roles across the top of a page and the tasks/responsibilities required underneath. You will see tasks that haven't been assigned and to which job they belong, and shifting tasks to accommodate new positions can be done quickly and others can quickly see who is doing what.

When you develop these descriptions, be honest about the job. Employee frustration and dissatisfaction occurs when they are presented with tasks they aren't qualified to do. This doesn't mean they can't learn on-the-job; it does mean that both of you need to be prepared for this situation. A few weeks into the season would be a good time to check-in with employees to see if there are more or less tasks per position or if swapping tasks could create a more productive team.

Your workers want to get the job done and done right. You can help them succeed by being clear and prepared. Have a great season! 

Karen Fenske is the president of StratPoint Solutions. [www.stratpoint.ca](http://www.stratpoint.ca)

### Organic Certification Services



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# Events and Announcements

**GE ALFALFA WATCH** Organic food and farming in the U.S. and Canada is under immediate threat from GE alfalfa. On March 3, 2011, after huge public pressure over Bill C-474, Liberal members of the House of Commons Agriculture Committee tabled a motion calling for a moratorium on the approval of genetically modified (GM) alfalfa in Canada. There are new developments on this issue weekly, please take action now and stay tuned to [www.cban.ca/alfalfa](http://www.cban.ca/alfalfa) for more information, updates and new actions!

**WHOLE FOODS MARKET MEAT & POULTRY VENDOR SEMINAR** A Free One-Day Seminar for Meat Farmers and Ranchers Thursday, April 28 2011 8:30 am - 4 pm, Museum of Vancouver 1100 Chestnut St., Vancouver. Please register online at: <http://tinyurl.com/WFM-seminarBC> by April 23, 2011. There is no cost for the seminar. Lunch will be provided. Attendees will handle their own travel arrangements and costs. For more information please contact: Denise Breyley, Regional Local Forager [denise.breyley@wholefoods.com](mailto:denise.breyley@wholefoods.com)

**VO TRAININGS** in Brandon, Manitoba - Crop May 2-6 and Livestock May 9-13. IOIA and Assiniboine Community College (ACC) will cosponsor a Basic Organic Crop Inspection Training (May 2-6), followed by Basic Organic Livestock Inspection Training (May 9-13), using the Canadian Organic Standards as a reference. The courses each include 4 days of instruction, including a field trip to a certified organic crop, respectively livestock operation, plus ½

day for testing. For more information about these trainings, please contact Mary Petersen at Ph: 204-725-8700 Ext 6683 Fax: 204-725-8740; e-mail: [PeterseM@Assiniboine.net](mailto:PeterseM@Assiniboine.net) Assiniboine Community College is located at 1430 Victoria Avenue East in Brandon, Manitoba, Canada R7A 2A9.

## **SORRENTO RETREAT AND CONFERENCE CENTRE 2011 COURSE SERIES**

The "Ecology and Sustainable Agriculture in BC Series" is comprised of three independent courses, one each in May, July and October. This is an opportunity for gardeners to immerse themselves in the gardens and to focus on learning. They have abundant resources for garden education including extensive flower gardens, an established orchard and the Sorrento Centre Farm. Contact Dave Wides, Sorrento Centre Farm Manager, 1-866-694-2409 (Toll-Free), <http://sorrento-centre.bc.ca>

**BC FOOD SYSTEMS NETWORK** 13th Annual Gathering, 2011. "Resilience and Diversity" The gathering will take place from July 7-10 in the community of 100 Mile House in the central interior region of the province. Contact: [gathering@bcfsn.org](mailto:gathering@bcfsn.org)

## **ORGANIC SECTOR DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM DEADLINE.**

Applications for funding are due June 24, 2011. Any person or organization with an interest in the organic sector may apply. Sector participants may include primary producers, processors, handlers, members of the educational community and government and private regulators. For more informa-

tion and funding guidelines visit: [www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca/programs/osdp.php](http://www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca/programs/osdp.php)

**COABC MEMBERS HAVE** been invited to participate in a study about climate change impacts, risks and opportunities for BC agriculture by the BC Agriculture Council's, Agriculture & Food Climate Action Initiative. It is the first step in developing tools and resources to assist agricultural producers to manage existing and future weather and climate-related challenges and opportunities. Interviews and regional focus groups will take place in the Fall. Any interested members are asked to contact the COABC office for more information at: [admin@certifiedorganic.bc.ca](mailto:admin@certifiedorganic.bc.ca)

## **THE ENVIRONMENTAL YOUTH ALLIANCE'S**

Pollinators' Paradise project seeks to engage community members in the importance of bees and other pollinating species to a sustainable food system and the overall health of the natural community. This project (funded by Vancouver's EnviroFund) will work with 12 farms in the Lower Mainland. Nesting structures for different native bee species will be provided to farmers to help establish diverse bee populations, with advising to increase their ability to support pollinator populations. Contact Hartley Rosen at [hartley@eya.ca](mailto:hartley@eya.ca)

## **CLASSIFIEDS**

**Place your classified ad in the BC Organic Grower for only \$25/issue!**

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<p>The packaging materials above are only available to COABC Certified Organic members.            Have you signed a Consent to use Official Marks Declaration Form (July 2006 revision)? Y/N            With which products will you be using the packaging materials? _____</p>					
<b>Promo Materials: available to everyone</b>	<b>Member \$</b>	<b>Non-member \$</b>	<b>Tax</b>		
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Natural T-shirts (Plain) S M L XL or XXL	\$5.00	\$5.00	HST taxable		
Organic Tree Fruit Management	\$19.95	\$25.95	HST exempt (5% GST)		
Steel in the Field *	\$25.00	\$25.00	HST exempt (5% GST)		
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