

British Columbia

Organic Grower



In this issue:

GMO Alfalfa Update, Apple Luscious Organic Orchard, Ravenhill Farm, Snakes on the Farm & Software Tools for the Small Farm

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Living with snakes

Margaret Holms shares tips for co-existence with these beneficial predators.

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BC Organic Grower

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Executive's Report

By Fred Danenhower

As a treefruit grower, the older I get, the more I think that spring in the Similkameen is my favorite season. Where I grew up, 100 miles north of Los Angeles, you had to look for spring. It was there, but you had to look.



In the Similkameen, it jumps at you. Flowers bloom everywhere, the river rises, the mountains are green as the snow melts and birds are all over – you don't look for spring, it's visible everywhere. The tractor rows are covered in dandelions, which always reminds me of the story "Ferdinand the Bull" one of the best children's stories ever, and how I imagine spring in Spain to be.

Aside from the usual couple of leaks to fix when you turn the water on (does anyone ever blow out the irrigation lines and not have to fix something?), I have had only one drama this spring. I had a leak in my sprayer tank down by my impeller shaft. As I reached and reached (both shoulders somehow got past the hole in the top of the tank), I realized that I was in trouble, but continued to thread a bolt with a washer through the leaky hole.

The chair I had been using as added support fell away and I was now stuck straddling the tank, half in, half out. I couldn't get my shoulders out past the top of the tank. I asked myself, "Can I crawl into the tank?" I wasn't sure if I could:

- a) get my hips past the hole, or
- b) once in the tank, get turned around so I'd be head first. What a predicament!

After about 15 minutes of fumbling, I finally decided to force myself out – visions of "1000 Ways to Die" in my head. And... since I'm writing, you know I made it! With two cracked ribs and badly scraped shoulder blades! Suffice to say, this enhanced my appreciation of spring.

One of tasks treefruit growers do in spring is foliar feed. Boron helps fruit set, Zinc is deficient in the soil and the trees need extra. The one I spray is like Dr. Mcwen's Magic Elixor–

liquid fish and kelp. It's the secret ingredient to lush green leaves and good production. The problem is that it smells a bit.

I ask my wife Nancy, "why the complaints? We can pretend to have oceanfront!" She responds, "Yeah right, it smells like dead fish."

So, this year we're going to compromise. I'm going to try and win her over. I had some sand delivered to the backyard, bought some beach umbrellas and tiki torches, built a little fire pit, and we have lawn chairs (although not very stable – see above), I even wired in an electric cooler, so we can have cold beer. It will be glorious. I am trying to find a few shells and all we're missing is the waves! Spring has sprung!

But the very best thing about a Canadian spring, better than dandelions, better than overcoming the annual dramas, better than the beach and cold beer (maybe the beer is as good), Spring means that... FRIDAY NIGHT FOOTBALL IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER!!! There is no finer game than CFL Football. Happy Summer Everyone!

And now for the "real" report from the Executive! The AGM was a great success and we more than broke even in terms of costs. This bodes well for the budget as usually if the AGM breaks even so does the COABC. Financially, we were in good shape at the first quarter. Jen and Kristy do a great job of administrating the office, I feel lucky to work with them.

The other news is the Small Scale Farming Certification Project has been completed. All Certification Bodies are being asked for feedback, in particular, ways to implement the recommendations. Nobody wants to dilute the organic standards but if a farm grosses less than \$10,000 a year, they should not be paying \$900 for certification.

If the COABC can be inclusive, at the marketplace, there will be benefits. The use of "certified" organic will be more widespread, consumers more exposed to the term, the need for organic or certified organic product, clearer to a more educated public. 🌱

Administrator's Report

By Jen Gamble

This spring, there has been an increase in action on GMO issues with the possible introduction of GM alfalfa. COABC has made our objections to the approval of GM alfalfa known to the federal Minister of Agriculture. In addition, the following GMO statement was approved by the COABC and has been sent to Provincial Ministries such as Agriculture, Health and Environment.



"We the members of the Certified Organic Association of BC, representing a significant and growing sector of the agriculture industry in British Columbia, hereby declare zero tolerance for contamination of our soil, water, seed, livestock feed, and food supply with genetically modified organisms (GMOs).

We also reject Agriculture Canada's proposal for low level presence and we reiterate that zero means zero.

The COABC demands that labeling be mandated at the federal level in Canada to indicate the use or possible presence of GMO ingredients in foods meant for human or livestock consumption.

The COABC demands that the BC Government and its related ministries (Agriculture, Health, Environment, Forestry, Fisheries) require GMO seed providers to submit an annual report listing the number of locations per municipality, the types of GMO crops and test plots in production, the acreage cultivated and tonnage harvested. This report is to be made public promptly.

The use of genetically engineered organisms or their products are prohibited in any form or at any stage in organic production, processing or handling. For organic farmers, handlers, processors and retailers, GM contamination is utterly unacceptable as it puts our entire food system at risk."


Please feel free to use this statement when writing to your local MLA and MP. The campaign to stop GM alfalfa continues and the Canadian Biotechnology

Last Quarter Achievements

- Hired BC Organic Grower Editor, Marilee Peters, starts July 1, 2013
- Finalized first quarter financials
- Completed SSCP project
- Submitted Vancity enviroFund application
- Submitted Investment Agriculture Foundation grant application

Action Network (CBAN) requests your help. Turn to page 14 for more information.

2014 COABC Conference

The COABC is pleased to announce that the 2014 conference will be held in Nanaimo at the Coast Bastion Hotel from February 21 to 23, 2014. We look forward to connecting with everyone again next year in Nanaimo. 



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Editor's Note

After nearly 5 incredible years of editing the BC Organic Grower, I am hanging up my suspenders and rake, and moving on to new pastures.

Coming into this role I was intimately involved in organic agriculture in British Columbia, and I although I knew what a great community of people were its proponents, nothing could have prepared me for everything I have learned.

I have learned that organics is not just about this or that input, or what you feed your chickens. It is about a community of people who believe in leaving this earth better than the way they found it, who believe in helping each other out, and in trying to work within an economic system that puts profits before the environment by showing how things can and are being done differently.

I have learned about generosity, when each year dozens and dozens of you have volunteered to exchange your ideas, tips, and expertise with each other – all within the pages of this cherished publication.

The BC Organic Grower is not just a 32-page magazine to tote with you to the loo. It is the symbol of everything the organics community stands for – trying to make a difference, contributing to the germination of ideas, and sharing the successes of each and every certified organic producer in BC.

So as I move on, I would like to use this space to thank every one of you that has contributed to the BC Organic Grower during my tenure as editor. As I have always said, this is your publication – thank you for the honour of having me at the helm!

In closing, I would like to introduce Marilee Peters, the new BC Organic Grower, who will certainly sow new life into the pages, with fresh ideas, and a fresh perspective.

Marilee is an experienced writer and editor, with a passion for bringing the stories of people and organizations into print and life. Over the years, she has written and edited publications in the arts, social services, and environmental sectors, has worked in publishing and



*Andrea Langlois,
editor*



*Moss Dance,
layout*

journalism, and for one brief but truly terrifying period of her life was employed at a subatomic physics research laboratory (fortunately, there were no fatalities).

She's looking forward to sharing the stories of the incredible community of people who make up the membership of the COABC, and to learning and growing in the pages of the the BC Organic Grower. "I've got big editorial boots to fill – but I can't wait!" she says. "Editing the pages of the BC Organic Grower will be like breathing fresh air and sunshine, even though I'm in rainy Vancouver." 🌱

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software tools for the small farm

By Chris Bodnar

Many organic farms have a special binder. The binder holds field records, crop plans, a multitude of to-do lists and miscellaneous notes. The binder is sacred – should it ever go missing, the following year's organic inspection would be a nightmare. Operations depend on a bundle of papers that with one drop in a mud puddle could cause a lot of unnecessary stress.

Whether your record keeping involves such a binder, spreadsheets or any other systems you've developed over the years, you are likely aware of the value of the information you have accumulated over the years. Moving your record keeping to a specialized program can help to make this information more useful and more organized

In this article, I review a number of record keeping and community supported agriculture (CSA) management software programs that I've tested over the past year. Our farm business has successfully transitioned to electronic record keeping and CSA management programs that, ultimately, have made our work easier and more efficient.

COG-Pro



It would stand to reason that a record keeping program designed by organic farmers to meet the expectations of organic certification programs would best meet the needs of organic farmers. This is certainly the case with COG-Pro.


COG-Pro is designed to keep track of records from the point of developing your seed order right through to



Credit: Chris Bodnar

Square

Do you ever have to decline sales at the farmers market because people don't have enough cash? Want to take deposits for larger advance orders? Square allows you to accept credit cards using your smart phone. Low transaction fees, a free card reader and no need for a merchant account make this an economic way to accept sales you might otherwise lose. Plus, you can track all sales for the day (no cost for using the app to track cash sales). End result: capture non-cash sales while building data about the number of daily sales, average size of sales and products sold, all to help you better understand your customers' choices.

 squareup.com

recording harvest yields and sales. If used to its fullest extent, growers can use lot numbers from seed packages to track seeds through the entire growing process, generate seed records (e.g. demonstrate your search and use of organic seed), and produce field plans, seeding records, fertility records and harvest records.

In addition to crops, COG-Pro also offers modules for Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) record keeping as well as for livestock records. One feature of the software is that it allows growers to provide a read-only password to Verification Officers and Certification Bodies to enable review of records prior to site visits.

COG-Pro is cloud-based – this means data is stored on remote servers so you can access your account from any computer with an internet connection and you don't have to worry about backing up files. More than one person can access your account at the same time and anyone with the account password can enter information to records.

COG-Pro features an intuitive and simple interface design. When using the program on a desktop computer, the layout looks like a notebook with tabs. This makes the software easy to understand and use. COG-Pro can also be used on all mobile devices. The company's support service is exceptional.

Our farm business began using COG-Pro this past season and we highly recommend the software.

COG-Pro costs \$79/year for its crop module, \$129 for the crop and GAP modules or the crop and livestock modules or \$159 for the crop, GAP and livestock modules.

 **cog-pro.com**

AgSquared



AgSquared has received a fair bit of publicity this past year. Johnny's Seeds sponsors a free 30-day trial of the software for growers. The product attempts to bring together a range of functions from farm mapping and crop planning to record keeping and harvest records.

In AgSquared, growers are able to set up a work plan for the season. Tasks can be assigned to specific dates or time periods. Work plans can then be generated and printed for specific days, weeks or months. Once completed, planned tasks can be checked off and then become records of tasks completed.

The program is cloud-based and the interface uses Flash. As a result, the program only works on desktop and laptop computers, not phones or most tablets. A mobile app is in the works.

AgSquared offers various webinars to help learn about the program's features. They also provide unlimited email support.

The major drawback of AgSquared is its complexity. The program's creators have big plans, but some of

what the software is designed to manage seems overly complex, if not unrealistic. The Flash-based interface ran too slowly over our internet connection and very little about the program felt intuitive.

AgSquared costs \$60/year and a second-level version is coming soon for an additional annual fee.

 **agsquared.com**



Seed to Harvest

Seed to Harvest is a handy iPhone and iPod app that is both affordable and convenient to use.

A unique characteristic of Seed to Harvest is that your data is stored on your electronic device. You can enter and

save data in the field without having an internet connection. Data can be backed up later when connected to the internet.

Seed to Harvest also presents a few drawbacks. Because information is stored on your device, if your device is ever lost or broken and you haven't backed up your data, you risk losing it. As well, records are unique to each device; if there's more than one person on your farm doing record keeping, your notes won't sync. This is one reason we don't use this program on our farm. Seed to Harvest is purely a record-keeping tool – it doesn't have functions for planning or scheduling tasks. Finally, when doing larger batches of entries, it's nice to use a keyboard – thumb typing on a phone gets a bit tedious.

Cost is a major advantage of Seed to Harvest. A basic version is available for free. To generate reports you need the paid version, available on iTunes for \$9.99, as a one-time cost (no annual subscription).

CSA Management Software

Two years ago I was at a breaking point with our farm's CSA program. In order to provide adequate service to members, I was spending far too many hours on email and the phone while navigating overly-complex

Continued on page 27...

Apple Luscious Organic Orchard



The Pie Ladies. Credit: Apple Luscious Organic Orchard

By Spring Gillard

You can probably tell by the name of his orchard that Harry Burton is crazy about apples. He thinks his obsession may have started back in northern Ontario where he grew up and he and his friends used to raid apple trees. In 1971, he hitchhiked to Vancouver with a buddy and fell in love with the West Coast. He bought his current five-acre farm on Salt Spring Island in 1980, but he didn't move here until 1998 when he retired from teaching environmental studies at a college back east.

Apple Luscious Organic Orchard was part of an old farm, but it was entirely forest when Burton decided to buy it. Now, there's about 2.5 acres of good bottom-land in production, and the rest is still wild, with cedar trimming the south and east edges and a seasonal creek wending its way through the property.

Burton grows over 200 different varieties of apples, with the largest collection of red flesh apples in Canada, including Scarlet Surprise, Glowing Heart, Alma-ta, Pink Pearl, Burgundy, Mott's Pink, Webster's Pink Meat, Winter Red Flesh, Red Flesh, Pink Pearmain and Aerlie Red Flesh. Plums, pears, cherries and Asian pears bring the tree count to around 350. "If the apple doesn't meet my taste test, then the tree gets removed and I plant a better variety," says Burton.

Burton sells his fruit both at the farm gate and the Moss Street Market in Victoria. He values the personal con-

nection with his customers and they trust him too. The climate on Salt Spring is a little damper and cooler than the Okanagan, so there's more canker and scab to deal with. But by encouraging his customers to taste-test right at his stand, he is even able to sell "ugly" apples.

"People will buy an apple with a scab on it from me, but not from the store," says Burton. "And when they pick the apple from the tree themselves, they really connect with it, even more than buying it face-to-face from me at the community market."

The climate isn't the only issue. "The deer can be fenced out, but rabbits can be really tough," says Burton. "They go after the younger trees and the nursery really got wiped out last year."

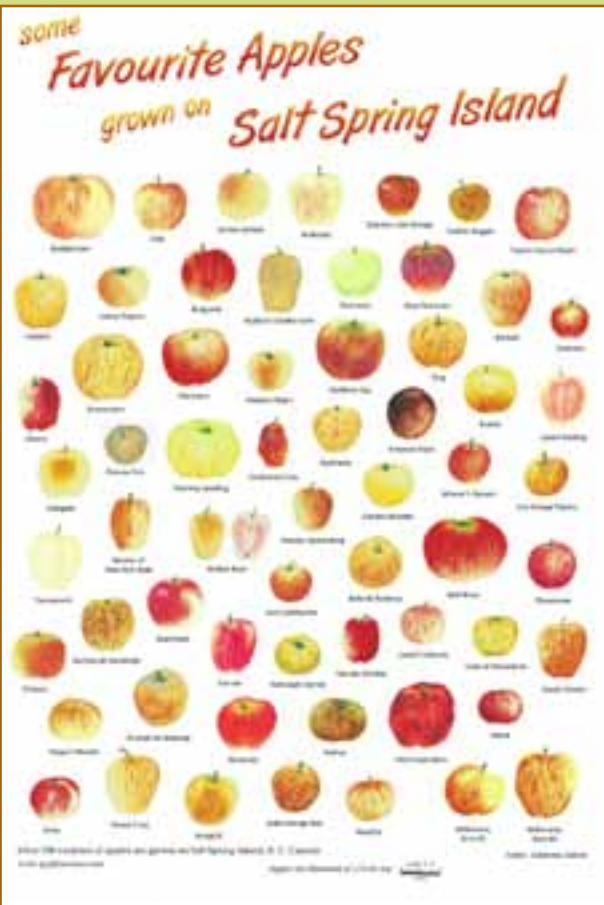
From January to March, Burton sells tree stock from his nursery, which is now surrounded with rabbit-proof fencing.

So, what keeps Burton going through all the ups and downs of farming life? "The orchard," he replies. "It has a pulsing heart that keeps me going. I love being out there, connected with nature. There's always a lot to do, without a specific timeline. And I love that I'm helping to preserve apple varieties. This is the only place in Canada where you will find some of my varieties," he says proudly.

Continued on page 10...



Clockwise from top left: A red-fleshed apple halved to show off the deep pink colour, the apple variety poster created by Apple Festival volunteers, and a number of apples cut up to reveal their true inner colours. Credit: Apple Luscious Organic Orchard.



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Despite the challenges, it turns out Salt Spring Island has a long history of apple growing, longer than the Okanagan in fact. On his website (www.appleluscious.com), Burton has written a brief history, dating back to 1860. He claims that in 1894, there were more fruit trees than residents on the island. Some of those 4,600 heritage trees remain today, but the larger orchards have disappeared. The 450 residents have ballooned to 10,500, but the old remaining trees manage to keep the locals in vintage cider.

Burton is one of many farmers reviving the apple growing tradition on the island. Since 1999, they have been celebrating this legacy at The Salt Spring Apple Festival, initiated by Captain Apple himself. Last year a dozen orchards were on the tour, plus a couple cheesemakers and wineries.

Fulford Hall is command central, with a vast array of apples, more than 300 varieties on display. There's an equally vast selection of pies. The "pie ladies" make over 400 pies for the Fall Fair a couple weeks before the apple festival, then another 150 for the apple celebration. Each pie is made from one apple variety and is labeled accordingly. People purchase a 10 dollar map and then taste and tour at their leisure.

"Last year, there was a grandmother looking after four kids, and kids are free, so they could attend the whole festival for \$10. We don't want to exclude anyone," says Harry.

The apple festival crew has created a beautiful poster (see page 9) of the many varieties of heritage apples, with proceeds going to a project that supports communities in Africa who are dealing with the HIV/AIDS crisis (www.solidssaltsspring.ca).

So what's Burton's favourite apple? "Whichever one is in my hand at the moment," he says.

This year the apple festival will take place on Sunday, September 29. The official website is:

 saltsspringmarket.com/apples

Spring Gillard is a communications consultant, SFU sustainability instructor and author of Something's Rotten in Compost City, A Primer on the Politics of Food (Smashwords Edition 2011). She blogs at www.compostdiaries.com.

Editor's Note: This is Spring's last Farmer Focus Column. The COABC, along with the BC Organic Grower team, would like to thank Spring Gillard for her contribution to Farmer Focus since 2010. Her passion and creativity have helped to bring the faces of BC producers to the BCOG!



It's a bird... it's a plane... no, it's Captain Apple! Credit: Apple Luscious Organic Orchard



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Apprentices & BC Labour Laws

A cautionary tale



Credit: Terra Nossa Farm

By Larkin Schmiedl

When a farmer hires an apprentice, most think through whether the apprentice's personality will be compatible with those on the farm, what their experience is, whether they seem like a good worker and what their priorities are. What a farmer doesn't usually think about is the legality itself of hiring.

As Evelyn and Jesse Pereira, of Terra Nossa Family Farm, learned the hard way, having apprentices on the farm is not technically legal according to employment standards in B.C. "I know many wonderful, fabulous success stories," said Evelyn Pereira. "[Apprenticeships have] worked wonderfully in most situations. But, I now know there is also a huge risk."

In summer 2012, the Pereiras, who run a 26-acre mixed meat, vegetable and fruit farm in Mill Bay on Vancouver Island, took on two apprentices. What they didn't realize is that they were also taking on a \$15,000 legal bill.

"In March of 2012 we decided to put our farm up for sale," said Pereira. "A friend of ours, another organic farmer, had this couple who were apprenticing on his farm."

The couple, who were in their late 50's and early 60's according to Pereira, were looking for a farm to pur-

chase. They asked if they could come apprentice at the Pereira's farm with the intent of a possible business opportunity.

"We were not looking for apprentices," said Pereira.

But in the hopes of selling their farm, they worked out an agreement. The apprentices lived in their RV and the Pereiras put in water, septic, hydro, internet, and a place to park. "We also agreed that we would pay them each \$500 a month, plus a \$25 a week meat allowance, and plus unlimited anything else off the farm – fruit, veggies, eggs, that kind of stuff," said Pereira. "We agreed to that verbally. I did say that I would put [it] in writing, which I never did."

After a couple of disagreements over wages during the summer, tensions rose. The apprentices wanted to be paid extra for work blackberry picking, which the Pereiras disagreed to. One week, one of the apprentices took time off and was paid. Another week, the same apprentice was sick following a long weekend and was not paid. The apprentices were unhappy, as were the Pereiras, and the apprentices decided to leave. It came as a relief to the Pereiras, who paid the couple up until the end of that month, despite them leaving earlier.

“One thing for farmers to be aware of is that from the day a person last works on your property, they have only six months to file a claim against you.”

“About three weeks after they’d left, I got a letter from them stating that they felt they were employees, and as such were entitled to minimum wage and holiday pay,” said Pereira.

The couple claimed they had worked 12-hour days, seven days a week, which Pereira said they did not. “They took it to employment standards, and we then got a formal notification from employment standards that this claim had been filed against us,” she said.

New to the situation, the Pereiras consulted four lawyers and learned that it was best to try to settle in the first stage of mediation. If mediation were to fail, the process would go to arbitration, and that decision could then be appealed and go to a tribunal.

The Pereira’s lawyers advised that if they lost, they would have to pay whatever was deemed fair, plus a \$500 fine per person, per violation of the employment standards code. Even if the farmers had won the case at that point, they could still have been taken to small claims court. They settled at mediation.

“The farming community on the island was pretty appalled at this, and came to us and offered to fundraise to help us. And, you know, we were very humbled that they would do that. But upon talking with our lawyer and reflecting on it, even if we were to have won our case, if we would have taken it to arbitration, it would not be a win for the farming community. It would not be saying apprenticeships in any form that farmers are doing them are legal. Because in fact, they are not legal at all.”

Employment standards for agriculture in B.C. are governed by the B.C. Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training and the Employment Standards Act. According to the act, apprenticeship training and internships are considered work, as opposed to a practicum performed for school which is not. “An apprentice is being trained while working for an employer and as such is performing work and must be paid wages,” states the document.

The only exceptions to the act for farm workers include farm labourers not being entitled to overtime pay or statutory holiday pay. Farm workers can also be paid specified piece rates for harvesting as opposed to minimum wage.

“In my mind, OK I’m paying you \$500 a month, I’m giving you a free place to live, I’m giving you food

– but that does not, in the eyes of employment standards, equate to wages,” said Pereira.

“Anybody who comes on your premises and does the work of an employee is considered an employee.... Nobody can sign away their rights to minimum wage. Things like room and board are not deductible off of a paycheque,” Pereira said she was advised by her lawyers.

One thing for farmers to be aware of is that from the day a person last works on your property, they have only six months to file a claim against you.

“I think farmers just need to do their due diligence if they are at all concerned,” she said. “I would for sure try to have as much in writing as possible.... I would try to keep some kind of calendar of hours and duties and things like that, just so that if you did get a situation like mine, you have something to defend yourself with.”

“I hope that we were the one in a million chance... Because I know personally on the island here of fourth-generation SOIL apprentices becoming farmers, taking on apprentices, those apprentices becoming farmers, you know?”

She said SOIL (Stewards Of Irreplaceable Land) took an interest and is now working on a project to make farm apprenticeships more legally recognizable. International WWOOFers actually can come and work for four weeks on a farm with no problem. The Citizenship and Immigration Canada’s Foreign Worker Manual states that unpaid short-term work where the work is incidental to the main reason a person is visiting Canada, for example a tourist staying on a family farm, is not considered legally “work.” More details on this can be found on the WWOOF Canada website.

Pereira said she thinks the seed for her ordeal was planted at a COG meeting her apprentices attended with her, where they heard her speaking about farm labour and how nobody could sign away their right to minimum wage. When they were unhappy leaving the farm, she believes they decided to take the action they did. 🌱

Larkin Schmiedl is a freelance journalist and former WWOOFer who is more in love with sustainable food systems than anything else.

Update: GMO Alfalfa

By Lucy Sharratt

On April 9, farmers and consumers in 38 communities across Canada rallied to stop the introduction of genetically modified (GM) alfalfa. In response to the Day of Action to Stop GM Alfalfa, the company Forage Genetics International was forced to state publicly that they would not introduce GM alfalfa this spring.

CBAN has since confirmed that one Roundup Ready GM alfalfa variety has been registered by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), so Forage Genetics could market this variety at any time. The company, however, continues to say that they will wait until there's an industry "coexistence plan." This "plan" is an attempt to overcome arguments about the inevitability of contamination and to legitimize release of GM alfalfa. The recent discovery of unapproved GM wheat contamination in Oregon is just one of many facts exposing the plan as a work of complete fiction.

Monsanto and Forage Genetics have now also asked the US and Canadian governments to approve a GM low-lignin alfalfa. The CFIA initiated a comment period on the low-lignin alfalfa – which ends July 18 – where the public is invited to comment on... well, nothing. The CFIA invites scientific comment but provides no data, just a one-page description. This comment period is also clearly a work of fiction.

Low-lignin alfalfa is engineered to have less guaiacyl lignin, which makes plant cell walls stiff. The idea is that farmers could delay harvest and increase yield by allowing plants to get bigger without losing quality (delaying "stalkiness") or increase quality by harvesting as usual but getting hay that has the characteristics of younger, more palatable alfalfa. Whatever possible merits, later harvest would increase the number of days of flowering before harvest, making contamination issues even more severe and destroying a main tenant of the industry's coexistence plan.

Forage Genetics and Monsanto are on the defensive now, forced to prop up GM alfalfa with flimsy plans and pretend consultations, while we solidify consensus among farmers and consumers that GM alfalfa is useless, destructive and must be stopped.

For action and updates:



www.cban.ca/alfalfa

Lucy Sharratt is the Coordinator of the Canadian Biotechnology Action Network.

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Eating Local

with the Farmers' Market Nutrition Coupon Program


By Peter Leblanc

This summer over 2000 low-income families and seniors will be shopping for fresh nutritious local food from farmers markets because of a Farmers Market Nutrition Coupon Program. The BC Association of Farmers' Markets is hosting the program in 34 communities across every health region of BC.

The way the program works is simple. A local farmers' market partners with a local organization in their community. The community partner engages low-income families and seniors in food and nutrition skill-building programs. The participants are then provided coupon booklets each week to shop at their local farmers' market for fresh fruit, vegetable, meat, cheese and nuts. Each week, the farmers turn their coupons into the market manager who reimburses them.

The results last year were fantastic – participants were eating more fruits and vegetables, they visited the farmers market with great regularity, and most felt more connected to their community.

Not only do program participants receive farm fresh food, they also meet the farmers, pick up new recipes and learn how to include the market in their meal planning strategy. Participants enjoy workshops like canning and preserving, how to prepare healthy meals on a budget and how to use fresh, in season produce. When attending the market, kids get to taste sweet fruits and parents can ask questions on how to cook unfamiliar vegetables.

Last year, the program operated in 21 communities, and this year, it has expanded to 34, and will grow again next year. You can find out which communities are involved and more information about the Farmers Market Nutrition Coupon Program by visiting the BC Farmers' Market website. 



Kelowna Farmers' and Crafters' market. Credit: Peter Leblanc



 www.bcfarmersmarket.org

This program is funded by the Province of BC through Healthy Families BC.

Peter Leblanc is the Farmers' Market Nutrition Coupon Program Manager at the BC Association of Farmers' Markets.

A Herb-ivore's Dream Ravenhill Farm

By Hannah Roessler

“It is deeply empowering to be able to turn to our gardens to help us, and to have that connection to the land,” Jessy Delleman muses. “This was what we all had at one time.”

We’re sitting on a picnic table overlooking the beautiful gardens at Ravenhill Farm, and Delleman has me thinking about herbs as I look into the distance across the Mt. Newton Valley towards the Saanich Inlet on Vancouver Island.

Herbs have a long legacy within history, one we don’t often contemplate as we reach for them in the cupboard in their somewhat lackluster plastic spice bottles. But these seemingly diminutive plants harbor fascinating tales of long grueling treks across deserts, oceans and rainforests to satisfy the human desire for these delicious and healing items.

While herbs and spices may be prized primarily for the flavorful kick they give to a meal, they also tend to be medicinal. Many spices have anti-microbial properties, and many herbs are as healing to your body as they are flavorful for your experimental culinary concoctions.

There are over 400,000 species of vascular plants in the world and approximately one third of these plants have been employed medicinally by indigenous cultures. Herbs have long been connected to traditions of magic, medicine, religion and preservation and sometimes don’t garner the attention that they ought to, and although many herbs and spices we find in our cupboards are grown elsewhere, there are also many that can be grown right here in British Columbia.

Ravenhill Herb Farm

Jessy Delleman grew up in the Yukon, picking berries, growing food, hunting, fishing and living off the land with her family. When she moved to Victoria, Delleman dove right into what she did best, which translated to greenhouse/gardening jobs while she studied horticulture and biology.

Continued on page 29...



Credit: Jessy Delleman

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Herbal Opportunities

According to Conrad Richter, vice-president of the large herbal nursery, farm and seed company Richters Herbs, the following provide good opportunities for commercial production:

Fresh Herbs

- ✕ Field and greenhouse grown – chives, basil, dillweed, oregano, watercress, peppermint, spearmint, thyme, tarragon, sorrel, cilantro, garlic.
- ✕ Dried Culinary Herbs
- ✕ Basil, oregano, savoury, mint, thyme, marjoram, dill seed, coriander seed, caraway, poppy seed.



Credit: Hannah Roessler

Phytomedicinals

- ✕ Borage, evening primrose, American and Siberian ginseng, golden seal, echinacea, milk thistle, feverfew, catnip, ginkgo, burdock, sheep sorrel, slippery elm, Chinese rhubarb.
- ✕ Herb Seeds
- ✕ Most of the above, others.

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ALTERNATIVE Certification Models

SEARCHING FOR COMMON GROUND ON SMALL-SCALE CERTIFICATION



By Jonathan Knight

“Are you organic?”

I pause for a second to consider this question at our bustling Saturday morning market stand, where I am busily bagging vegetables while trying to keep track of the tally in my head.

Do we grow without the aid of chemicals toxic to living things, strive to nurture rather than deplete our soils, and produce and maintain our fertility on the farm? Yes. Are we well-versed in and do we abide by the national organic standards? Yes. Are we certified to these standards? Presently, we're not, although we were for the last three years (and our growing practices haven't changed one iota).

I look at the customer and try to get a sense of her commitment to the question. Does she want the long-winded philosophical discussion or the technical description of growing practices, the spiel on the present state of commercial agriculture and the changing face of the organic movement or a synopsis on the politics around certification among small-scale growers?

Or does she want the simple yes/no answer, to have a sense that the lettuce she is buying is in some way better for the planet and healthier for her family? I glance

at the people behind her who are waiting patiently for their turn.

It's at the farmers' market that the debate over certification among smaller-scale producers plays out. Side-by-side, Farmer A prominently displays the certificate attesting to their dedication and adherence to sustainable practices. Farmer B shares similar values and commitments, yet questions the relevance and affordability of certification for their face-to-face business.

And, Farmer C displays a big "organic" sign and feels their products deserve a premium because they only use Miracle Gro, or because their chickens are allowed to go outside. It's complicated, and for the consumer looking for the short answer on what is the better choice, it's confusing.

Fortunately, in British Columbia we have the BC Certified Organic Program (BCCOP) parallel to the federal Canadian Organic Regime (COR), which still allows Farmer A use of the qualifier "certified" to differentiate herself from Farmers B and C. However, the BCCOP is a voluntary program, meaning that the legislation behind it on does not require all farms making organic claims to be certified.

We hear there is a push to require mandatory certification in BC, to keep in step with national and inter-

“It’s at the farmers’ market that the debate over certification among smaller-scale producers plays out.”

national regulations. “Organic” is meant to be an adequate description of a product certified to the national organic standards, and as such “organic” should no longer be used to describe growing methods and principles by non-certified farmers.

This doesn’t sit well with Farmer B, who has always considered himself an organic farmer and whose growing practices fall well within the current standards, who believes that neither certifiers nor legislators have the right to claim ownership of the term.

Last fall, research was commissioned by the Certified Organic Associations of BC (COABC) to look into the reasons why small-scale growers choose not to certify or are dropping their certification, and to investigate possible changes that would make the system more accommodating.

At the same time, spurred on by a debate over certification on the COABC listserv, an ad hoc group of 15 mainly farmers’ market and CSA growers from across the province established a separate listserv to continue a constructive conversation on how to make certification more appealing to small-scale growers. Two months of discussions, of which I was a part, culminated with the preparation of a “Direct Market Organic Proposal,” which, alongside the COABC Project’s findings and recommendations, is presently before the COABC for consideration.

The COABC-commissioned research found that two-thirds of non-certified respondents cited cost as the main barrier to certification. Considering that certification fees range from \$400 to over \$800 a year for a start-up farm that manages to gross \$10,000, this is not easily affordable for those attempting to make a living solely off the farm. (Interestingly, about 60 per cent of farms certified by the regional bodies across the COABC in 2011 reported farm income of less than \$10,000, which indicates that there is likely off-farm income subsidizing certification costs.)

The Direct Market Proposal raises the question of value for this cost. Direct-market growers, it argues, have less to gain from certification than the producer selling the packaged product sitting on the store shelf, because there is a direct relationship between the producer and the customer. The oversight of a third party is less valuable in this situation to both parties, compared to in the supermarket where the organic logo alone must convey the trust in the product.

While the Direct Market Proposal does not suggest that the certifying bodies charge too much for the service they provide, it reasons that direct-market growers do not require the same amount of service provided because a level of scrutiny already exists within their community of customers and peer farmers, if adequate transparency is in place.

Paperwork is the other most readily cited barrier, according to over 50 per cent of responders to the COABC-commissioned research. The Direct Market Proposal agrees that the annual barrage of forms can feel daunting, but takes a bigger issue with the audit trail that is expected to be maintained under the present system.

Particularly for small-scale market and CSA growers, a complete in/out record of seeds started, transplanted, harvested, quantities sold and for how much for each harvest of each succession of two dozen or so different vegetables can be logistically challenging, time consuming, and many times the work compared to that required of the wholesale carrot grower.

Important lesser barriers listed by the COABC-commissioned research are concerns around bureaucra-

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cy within the system, the lack of a strong “organic brand,” difficulties complying with the standards, lack of education for both farmers and consumers, and that the system best suits “big” farms. The Direct Market Proposal echoes this last concern, with the observation that the present audit-based system feels overly cumbersome when required of small, diverse farms, and is simply not the most appropriate way of ensuring the compliance of small-scale producers.

Alternatives to the third party audit of assuring compliance to organic standards exist around the world, including here in BC, with about 30 farms following the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movement’s (IFOAM) concept of a Participatory Guarantee System (PGS). PGS is tailored to small-scale direct-market growers, and the hallmarks of the system are: transparency, peer review and mentoring, low fees, suitably-tailored paperwork requirements, and a foundation of trust as the starting point.

According to the IFOAM website, PGS proponents believe that “organic farmers who make a public declaration to uphold the principles of organic farming can, in fact, be trusted.”

The COABC-commissioned research, undertaken by folks highly knowledgeable in the certification system, offers a proposal of an alternative system that meets the Direct Market Proposal – they are on fertile common ground. While both documents stress that

any new system must achieve at least the same level of compliance as the current system, both advocate for developing a system within the COABC that incorporates the values of a PGS system with a high level of transparency and strong enforcement mechanisms unique to the diverse needs of small-scale organic growers.

In the meantime, I and my fellow producers will continue to grow the freshest, healthiest food we can for our communities. Whether or not the certification system meets our individual needs at present, we will continue to use the best sustainable practices that we are able, even if we have to struggle to find the right words to describe them.

Each proposal can be read online at:

📄 certifiedorganic.bc.ca/docs/COABC_SSCR_P_Report-15Apr13.pdf

📄 woodgrainfarm.files.wordpress.com/2013/03/trust-transparency.pdf

Jonathan Knight farms a century-old wilderness farmstead by the Skeena River in northwest BC, where he is also on the board of directors of two small-town farmers’ markets. WoodGrain Farm is presently re-certifying to the BC Certified Organic Program through a regional CB.

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CANADIAN ORGANIC STANDARDS REVIEW

Working Groups Back to Work!

By the Organic Federation of Canada

The review of the Canadian Organic Standards will be launched soon. This review is a very important activity for the Canadian Organic sector as the standard is referenced by the Canadian Organic Products Regulations.

More importantly, it defines the principles and accepted practices for organic production and guides the daily work of Canadian certified operators.

Because of funding cycles the whole review will have to be completed inside a two-year time frame; so time is precious and the sector has to start organizing itself. The Working Groups responsible for analyzing requests for amendments made by the sector are now being re-activated.

Are you interested in continuing your participation on a COS Review Working Group, or are you interested in applying to join a WG?

If yes, please contact Nicole Boudreau, OFC Coordinator, at info@organicfederation.ca or 514-488-6192.

Participation in Working Groups is voluntary and not paid; meetings are held by toll-free teleconference.

The time commitment is up to one 2-hour call every second week, depending on need.

The Chairs of the Working Groups will coordinate the work and agenda of the meetings and CGSB will provide secretarial assistance. Chair selections will be finalized for each Working Group once funding is secured. Payment of an honorarium for WG Chairs is dependant on the approval of an OFC application for funding under an AAFC program. (More info coming soon.)

You don't have to be a member of the Technical Committee (CGSB Committee on Organic Agriculture) to participate in the Working Group meetings. The CGSB is responsible for re-establishing the Technical Committee and will do so once the review workplan is finalized.

 info@organicfederation.ca



WANT TO GET INVOLVED?

The basic working groups:

- 32.310 Organic Standard: Crop WG, Livestock WG, and Processing WG
- 32.311 Permitted Substances List: PSL Crop WG, PSL Livestock WG, and PSL Processing WG

Organic related skills and expertise wanted:

- Organic farming or processing
- Materials/Chemical substances
- Veterinary medicine/nutrition and supplements
- Apiary
- Environmental
- Animal welfare

Above photo credit: Angie from Sawara, Chiba-ken, Japan

Wildlife Management

A Snakey Surprise



Credit: Margaret Holm

By Margaret Holm

May, along with September and October, are the months when snakes are most often encountered on farms as they travel between their dens and summer foraging areas. All summer they help keep the mouse and pocket gopher populations down, so they should be welcome on your property. In this article, I'll outline a few tips to follow to prevent snake surprises and to help snakes stay out of the way of farm vehicles and people.

Many of our province's snakes are considered "species at risk" because of loss and fragmentation of their habitat. The main threat to snakes is being killed as they cross roads. Each of the different species has areas used for winter hibernation, gestation, summer foraging, and even for hiding as they shed their skins.

Snakes are protected under the BC Wildlife Act which prevents the killing or capture of snakes without a permit. Only the Western Rattlesnake, also called the Northern Pacific rattlesnake, is venomous. Bites are not common, since this snake prefers to stay away from humans, and are fatal only on rare occasions if left untreated.

In order to avoid surprise encounters with snakes, never put your hands where you cannot see what's underneath. Irrigation valve boxes, pallets, and bins are ideal places for a snake to hide. If you live in rattlesnake country, be aware, as this shy snake often hides in the heat of the day.

If you hear the buzzing of a rattlesnake's tail, stop and find out where it is located. The rattle is a sign that the snake feels threatened; assess whether to remain motionless or slowly move away. Never attempt to pick up or move a rattlesnake with your hands. (This might seem obvious, but every year people get bitten doing just that.)

Rattlesnakes, as well as the similar looking Gopher Snake (bull snake), sometimes live in or travel through orchards, vineyards and farms. Depending on the attitude of managers and employees, this can result in frightened employees, frayed nerves and a dead snake. But with proper training and preparation, relocating snakes can be safe and easy.

Most snakes don't need to be moved and will quickly go on their way. But sometimes snakes hang out near work areas or get trapped in buildings. In these cases, snakes should be moved to the closest area of natural habitat where a den might be located and away from any roads. Snakes return to the same dens each year, so don't move them more than 500 meters or they will likely not survive the winter.

Check out the snake relocation, snake identification and safety pamphlets that can be downloaded at www.osca.org, on the "Living with wildlife: Snakes" pages. The free brochures are offered in several languages. Proper equipment and employee training is

“In order to avoid surprise encounters with snakes, never put your hands where you cannot see what’s underneath.”



With proper training, snake tongs can be used to relocate snakes. Credit: Margaret Holm

recommended before relocating rattlesnakes. Snake tongs are available online (www.tongs.com) and a rake handle or broom can also be used, but be gentle since snakes are easily injured. A tall plastic garbage bin with handles and a secure lid is the best container to put snakes into that you want to remove from areas where people are working.

If you are on a property that snakes frequent, consider setting up snake hiding areas away from work areas. A strategically located rock pile or clearly marked pallet raised above the ground can provide a safe spot for snakes to hide during the day. Out of ten snake species found in British Columbia, one half are either endangered, threatened or of special concern. They need our help and consideration in continuing to play a helpful role in agriculture as significant rodent predators. 🌿

 www.soscp.org/stewardship

Margaret Holm for works for OSCA, the Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Alliance located in Penticton. Contact her with wildlife questions at outreach@osca.org.

Snake Facts

- ◎ A female rattlesnake goes without food for a year or two while pregnant and after giving birth to live young in early autumn.
- ◎ A gopher snake sometimes shakes its tail and makes a vibrating noise in its mouth to imitate a rattlesnake.
- ◎ Different snake species often hibernate together in a communal den.



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Seeds of Synchronicity

Young Agrarians South Interior



Ian and Ashton weeding & planting. Credit: Alan Price

By Michelle Tsutsumi

On a mild, hazy day in September, a young couple keen to leave their professional jobs to become homesteaders dropped by Pilgrims' Produce Organic Farm just outside of Armstrong for a tour. Living five minutes up the highway on rented land, Chris and Maxine Andruik's enthusiasm for raising chickens, growing good food, and dabbling in hops was a breath of refreshed energy at the tapering end of a busy season.

It wasn't until a month later, when Chris and Maxine invited the Pilgrims' Farm crew to their open house, that the full meaning of that chance meeting became clear. It was surprising to see so many young people at the gathering who were engaged in a similar journey toward farming or food production.

As people told their stories about what they were doing and where they wanted to be in the future, an idea was broadcast to the handful of young farmers in the room: "Let's start a young farmers group!" Murmurs of agreement rippled among the crowd. Throughout the winter, you could find this small group of young farmers every Friday morning at a window table in the Brown Derby, enjoying their "over-easy-sausage-rye-toast" breakfasts. You could sense a collective sigh of relief that others who had a shared desire to do mean-

ingful work and contribute to the local community had been found.

What started out as a handful of people, self-titled the "Young Farmers - Armstrong/Spallumcheen," has grown to a network of at least 40 people who span from the North Okanagan to the Thompson regions of British Columbia. This is, in part, thanks to a fortuitous Young Agrarians (YA) Mixer + Sleepover hosted at Summerhill Winery in January. Not only were participants engaged in a co-created workshop environment, but they walked away inspired and with new lifelong friends.

YA attracts both aspiring and practising farmers, as well as community members who support a holistic food production cycle. It was a natural decision after the Mixer to form a YA hub. To keep up with an ever-changing compilation of members, the group name was changed to YA - South Interior.

Two key aims of YA are to link new farmers with each other, as well as to connect new farmers with existing farmers. Since February, this has been possible through monthly potlucks and farm tours that have been hosted at different venues with attendance ranging from 20 to 60 adults and children. Sharing food is complemented by resource and knowledge sharing,



*Mike and Courtenay planting potatoes.
Credit: Michael & Courtenay Rudy*

mentoring, and opportunities for group purchasing of equipment and materials. A third aim of YA, soon to be launched, is an online resource that will address land access issues.

The type of farming that YA - South Interior members are engaged in runs the gamut from being employed on an established farm (Wild Flight, Left Fields/Cran-nóg Ales, Pilgrims' Produce), to continuing a family line of farming (Meggait Farms, Golden Ears Com-

munity Farm), to starting up on a new piece of land (Wild Moon Organics, The Rudy Family Farm, Roots Up! Vegetable Farm).

Just as there is a wide range of working scenarios, the farms vary in size. Steve Meggait has launched into a series of projects to keep himself busy on 150 acres. He is raising pigs and has contracted with an existing chicken producer to be a satellite site for their operation. Because there are so many ideas to get off the ground, Steve is looking at options like cooperatives to ensure his farm is sustainable and utilized to the best of its potential.

Wild Moon Organics is a new partnership between Richard and Shelli Quiring and Chris and Maxine Andruik (which necessitated a move just down the road from the house where this YA story began), focusing on the wholesale-scale production of a few select crops, in addition to raising chickens and heritage cows on over 80 acres outside of Armstrong.

Michael and Courtenay Rudy, of The Rudy Family Farm, are in the process of moving their existing

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Above: South Interior YA members at Shoots n' Blooms. Credit: Sara Dent (www.farmlove.org) Below right: Planting together lightens the load. Credit: Alan Price

farm in Lake Country (where they have carrots and garlic planted) to a new six-acre parcel they purchased outside of Armstrong. Even though they haven't quite moved in to their new place yet, they've got potatoes planted and are preparing space for their chickens!

In addition to the wonderful range of vegetables they already grow for markets, they have grand plans of incorporating more animals into their operation.

Roots Up! Vegetable Farm is a new (ad)venture for Ian Hart and Ashton Sweetnam. Interestingly, after spending several seasons working on another farm, they posted an ad in newspapers advertising their desire to lease land. A perfect-fit response came in from a couple that has an organic farm near the Salmon River between Salmon Arm and Armstrong.

Ian and Ashton pounced on the opportunity to lease an acre from them and have received their organic certification in their first year of operation. For their inaugural season, they are attending two markets per week (Vernon and Salmon Arm) and are launching a CSA program. Their CSA program runs from summer solstice to fall equinox and comes in two sizes with a weekly drop-off in Salmon Arm.

In getting to know these young (or new-to-farming) people, a curious observation has surfaced. Despite hearing from numerous existing farmers about their choices to discontinue their organic certification, the majority of the YA group will be going through the organic certification process.



When asked why, the resounding answer was all about community and sharing experiences with people who are interested in similar things – being part of a group that lives life from certain underlying values and beliefs (e.g., being stewards of the land, working alongside nature rather than against it, and building social, cultural, and economic sustainability within their communities).

Who would have guessed that a random farm tour would evolve into a thriving, expanding network of young, or new-to-farming, agrarians in the South Interior? Synchronistic seeds have been planted. Germination was successful. YA - South Interior is flourishing! 🌱

 youngagrarians.org

Michelle Tsutsumi is the Assistant Farm Manager at Pilgrims' Produce and contributes to a thriving local food community through the Food Action Society of the North Okanagan and Young Agrarians - South Interior.

spreadsheets. Despite best efforts, we made mistakes and the parts of the program that relied on volunteers were hit-and-miss.

Moving to an online program allowed us to streamline our sign-up procedure, better communicate with members, manage harvest lists, sales records and packing lists, produce weekly delivery route sheets and even print our box labels. By using the online store option, members have been able to purchase additional items in their boxes. In a recent delivery, extra store orders increased the value of that week's CSA deliveries by 50 per cent. Our members report an increased satisfaction with their experience and our lives are much easier.

The following programs can be used by farmers for CSA management as well as by buying clubs to manage orders and deliveries.

Farmigo



After investigating a number of options we chose to use this program. In the Farmigo system, the grower sets up pick-up locations, delivery routes and share options. Subscribers can then sign-up and manage their accounts online. Farms can choose to accept payments through Paypal, a merchant account, electronic cheque and or personal cheque.

During the delivery season, farmers can design box contents, generate harvest and packing lists, print box labels and delivery routes and generate personalized emails to subscribers. A mobile app allows the farmer to manage subscriptions on the go, including sending email confirmations to customers when deliveries are made.

Farmigo provides an exceptional user interface and support. The program is intuitive both for farmers and customer. It's easy to use and the interface is attractive. After signing up with Farmigo, farms are paired with a

support person who provides weekly training sessions and holds the farm to a work plan to ensure the CSA is ready to accept sign-ups by the target date identified by the farm.

Farmigo charges 2 per cent of the value of deliveries with a \$150 monthly minimum. You only pay for months when you have a delivery. With this fee structure, Farmigo is best suited to CSA programs valued at least \$7,500/month.



Small Farm Central

Another option for CSA management is Small Farm Central. In addition to CSA management, Small Farm Central also offers web site design services for farms that need a new or updated web presence.

The Small Farm Central software is ideal for farms where cost is the determining factor. Small Farm Central offers many of the same services as Farmigo, but might be more attractive to smaller farms for their pricing options.

Fees are based on the number of members (packages start at \$30/month for 50 members or less) and there is no extra charge for additional items purchased by members through the farm's online CSA store. The monthly fee, however, is charged whether or not the CSA program is delivering in a given month.



Regardless of what program you choose for your record keeping and/or business management, your data will only be as good as the database that stores your information. To set up your account to function the way you want it to work will require a number of hours of work doing data entry and organizing your farm's information. Start planning now for a transition next season to ensure you have enough time in the off-season to prepare. 🍀

Chris and his wife, Paige, run Close to Home Organics at Glen Valley Organic Farm in Abbotsford. They run a 120-member CSA program and sell at two farmers markets in the Lower Mainland. Chris is happy to share the result of his wasted time playing with new technological products. Hopefully it'll save you some time in return!



Rosemary tincture. Credit: Jessy Delleman

Six years ago she found a wonderful opportunity to work as the caretaker and farm manager at Ravenhill Farm. The farm had previously sold herbs to restaurants, but the owners had reached an age where they were unable to keep up with the demands of farming. This is where Delleman came in, further expanding the growing area and breathing new life into the farm, delving deeply into medicinal plants and herbalism, and re-opening the farm to the public on Sundays.

The farm is ten acres in total, with about two acres in cultivation: a quarter acre is dedicated to vegetables and the rest is wholly devoted to medicinal and culinary herbs and perennials.

Delleman makes her living on the farm selling her herb seeds and plant starts, and a delicious assortment of herb-infused honeys and teas. Her reasons for running a seed business give us a glimpse into Delleman's natural ability as an encouraging and generous teacher.

"Some herbs, like cilantro for instance, do so much better when started directly from seed in the garden," she says. "So, I began offering seeds along side my herb starts to help facilitate this."

She has not continued the farm's legacy of selling fresh herbs to restaurants – yet. "I think that there is a market for it for sure, and I'm interested in

contributing to it, but I just don't have the time at the moment," says Delleman, with a laugh.

Learning How to Value-Add: Herbal Workshops

It is easy to understand why she has her hands full, as she also recently started a series of herbal medicine-making and seed-saving workshops on the farm. Ravenhill Farm is simply the perfect location for workshops – as soon as you arrive, the view across the valley wraps you in its beauty, and Delleman's calm and contemplative presence assures you that she will be an excellent guide during your learning process.

The farm is a living classroom, and the tender care that has gone into it and all the plants is clearly evident.

"It's great for students to be able to come to a farm and meet the plants. It is really meaningful for them to be able to be connected with medicine making through the whole process, harvesting on site and preparing the plant. I like knowing that I can offer something that is needed in the community, something that is also unique," says Delleman with a smile.

"I like that I can offer not only lessons about health and plants, but also wisdom about the con-

nection that comes from working with plants. Sometimes the medicine of plants comes from simply spending time with them.”

Market Opportunities for Medicinal and Culinary Herbs

While herbs are a small niche market in Canada, according to Agriculture Canada, the fresh herb market alone is valued at over one million dollars. The herb market can be organized into four main areas – fresh herbs, dried herbs, medicinal and aromatic markets, each with specific cultivation, processing, marketing, and regulatory requirements.


While there are certainly opportunities, one of the major challenges to herb growing is the lack of agronomic data regarding growing herbs in BC. Farmers will have to experiment and learn on their own, or they can learn from local growers like Jessie Delleman.

Delleman sells her wares through her website and at various markets in Victoria. While she admits that herbs are a small niche market, she sees extensive opportunities.

“I see this as a market that was needed in the community. And being able to have this other way of

bringing in money through teaching is great, because it’s a natural extension of the services that I am already offering. There really aren’t that many people specializing in growing herbs, especially medicinal herbs. Though it’s not a huge money-maker yet, it is certainly expanding as people become more aware of the benefits of herbs and natural medicine,” says Delleman.

There seems to be a lot of potential for this niche market to take hold in other communities where people value local, organic food as part of a healthy lifestyle.

“The natural progression of people wanting to grow their own food and eat local is also to then start thinking about regaining the power to heal ourselves, each other, and the earth in the same way,” says Delleman. 

 ravenhillfarm.ca

Hannah Roessler has farmed in Nicaragua, Washington and BC on organic farms, permaculture projects, mixed-crop cafetals, and a biodynamic vineyard. She has her M.A. in Environmental Studies from the University of Victoria, where her research focused on local knowledge and adaptive capacity of small-scale organic growers in the face of changing climate.





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The BC Farmers' Market Association's 2013 conference in Kamloops was a success. Visit their website at www.bcfarmersmarket.org/markets/2013-conference-agm to read the conference proceedings and presentation slides.

The Canada Organic Trade Association has completed the first phase of their comprehensive study of the Canadian organic marketplace. This is the first data on the organic market since the Canadian government regulated the sector in 2009 and combines consumer research with the most recent market sales data. The findings offer valuable insights into market size, growth trends and Canadian consumer receptivity. The full report is online at www.ota.com/otacanada/statistics_project.html.

The Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute, the Vancouver and Toronto Food Policy Councils' New Report on Municipal Food Policy has been released. The report "Municipal Food Policy Entrepreneurs: A preliminary analysis of how Canadian cities and regional districts are involved in food systems change," is the first scan of municipal and regional food policy development in Canada. It reveals that a growing number of communities right across the country have launched food charters, food strategies and action plans, and created food policy councils. Learn more at: <http://tfpc.to/canadian-food-policy-initiatives>.

The National Farm Animal Care Council's Pig Code of Practice Public Comment Period ends August 3, 2013. For information on how to provide input, visit: www.nfacc.ca/codes-of-practice/pigs.

Pacific Northwest Plant Knowledge Cards highlight 65 edible and medicinal plants from the Pacific Northwest coastal region. The cards describe traditional uses and ways of harvesting each plant, featuring seasonal indicators and a legend to help quickly identify uses of each plant. To preorder a set or more information, contact Jen McMullen at mcmullen.j@gmail.com.

Farm Folk City Folk's Feast of Fields – a 4-hour wandering harvest festival – will be held on Vancouver Island, in the Okanagan, and in Vancouver, this fall. Farm Folk City Folk will be celebrating their 20th anniversary at this, their biggest fundraising event. For more information visit: www.farmfolkcityfolk.ca/events/feast-of-fields/

Young Agrarians regularly hold potlucks at different locations throughout the province. Watch for one near you at www.youngagrarians.org/category/potlucks

Survey on farmland demand and access in British Columbia needs your participation. The survey is part of research being conducted at the University of British Columbia on the challenges to land access and farm establishment faced by beginning and young

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farmers in BC, alongside research on potential opportunities for land access through various alternative tenure models (land trusts, community farms, cooperatives, etc.). The goals are to inform program development and policy that supports the success of new generations of farmers and to assess the potential for various land access and tenure models to contribute to preserving an actively farmed land base in BC. The survey can be filled out by prospective farmers, current farmers, and non-farmers alike. It is online and can be completed at the following link:

www.fluidsurveys.com/surveys/dennis-WX/characterizing-farmland-demand-in-bc/

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☐ Farmer exemption form:

www.sbr.gov.bc.ca/documents_library/forms/0458FILL.pdf

Other enterprises exemption form:

www.sbr.gov.bc.ca/documents_library/forms/0490FILL.pdf

Item	Units	Unit Price	Quantity Discount	Quantity	Total
Stickers 1" round	1000 pc roll	\$13.50	10 rolls \$120.00		
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(Revised April 2013)

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