

British Columbia

Organic Grower



In this issue:

***Learning from Permaculture, A Visit to Wind Whipped Farm,
Local Farms = Local Food in the Kootenays***

Journal for the Certified Organic Associations of BC - Winter 2014
Volume 17, Issue 1 (\$5.00)



Program Administrator:



COABC, 202-3002 32 Ave, Vernon BC V1T 2L7
Canadian Publications Mail Agreement
#40047167

In This Issue

Executive's Report	3
Administrator's Report	4
Editor's Note	5
Organic Resources	6
Managing Confined Spaces	7
Farmer Focus: Wind Whipped Farm	8
Learning from Permaculture	11
Events and Announcements	30
COABC Order Form	31



Wind Whipped Farm

Hannah Roessler tells the story of two young accidental farmers on Vancouver Island

Page 8

Features

Organic Farmer Accreditation	12
COABC 2014 Conference	16
Conference Registration Form	20
Salmon Safe	22
Kootenay Farm School	24
Ode to a Farmer	27



COABC 2014 Conference

Keynote speaker: Melissa Coleman, author of This Life is in Your Hands. Plus workshop details, AGM and more!

Page 16

BC Organic Grower

is received by all members of organizations belonging to the Certified Organic Association of British Columbia. *BC Organic Grower* is published quarterly by COABC. Subscribe online at:
www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca

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

Letters & submissions:

Please contact:
Marilee Peters, Editor
editor@certifiedorganic.bc.ca


Advertising (rates & copy) & non-member subscriptions (\$20/year plus GST) to:

COABC

202-3002 32nd Ave
Vernon, BC, V1T 2L7
Phone: 250-260-4429
Fax: 250-260-4436
office@certifiedorganic.bc.ca
www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca

For general information or to contact your local Certifying Body, call the office – or check our website:
www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca

On the Cover: Alex Fletcher and Virginie Lavallee-Picard.
Credit: Hannah Roessler

Other photos property of the COABC or Creative Commons 

Layout & Design: Moss Dance

Products advertised in *BC Organic Grower* are not necessarily approved for use by organic farmers/processors. Please consult the permitted substance list.CAN/32.3.11 for guidance.

Executive's Report

By Susan Snow

I am writing this as the first real cold weather hits the Fraser Valley, giving me a small amount of time to reflect on the challenges and triumphs of farming in the Fraser Delta. All in all, it has been a good year, but we have still faced the many growing pains of a young farming operation. Now the seed catalogues are coming out, to begin the planning process for another season of hope for great weather and strong yields.



As I look back on the past year, I can't help thinking about the void that has been left in my heart and in the organic industry by the loss of Brad Reid. When we gather on Vancouver Island this February for the COABC Conference we will present the inaugural Brad Reid Memorial Award to someone who embodies the values that were important to its namesake as a builder and caretaker of the Association.

We owe a huge "Thank You!" to our staff and Board Members who worked tirelessly to secure stable funding for the Sector Wide Strategic Plan. Going into year two there is renewed optimism that we can successfully execute the work we have long wanted to achieve. The search has commenced for an Executive Director to lead the organization through the next phase of growth for the organic sector.

This year we have seen our long time Accreditation Board Chair Anne Macey move on to new opportunities. We welcome former committee member Molly Thurston into her new accreditation chair duties.

Whether you grow, create or market within the organic sector, good luck in 2014! 🌱

DISCOVERY ORGANICS



We are a locally owned independent distributor of certified organic fruits and vegetables. We specialize in working with established and emerging local farms – big and small. This includes providing market intelligence about seasonal crop supply in our regional markets and other support services.

Whether you are a new farmer, considering organic certification, or want to expand your production, we are your go-to.


www.discoveryorganics.ca
Tel 604 299 1684



Young Agrarians: UMap

Just launched: UMap, a new online farmer resource map from Young Agrarians.

The first of its kind in Canada, UMap aims to become a centralized information hub for new and existing farmers. Help build it by adding your farm, seed suppliers, favourite publications and more. The map features event and farm listings from the growing Young Agrarians community – as well as markets, organizations, blogs, government resources, and more.

 youngagrarians.org/umap

Administrator's Report

By Jen Gamble


Fall has been a very busy time at the COABC office, with events, projects, and accreditation dominating our efforts. From Organic Week to the launch of the new Vancity Envirofund project, there hasn't been a dull moment.



Currently there are two projects underway: the Organic Resource Toolkits, funded by Investment Agriculture; and Organic Certification and Public Education, funded by Vancity. Both of these projects aim to enhance the organic sector through outreach, education, and the creation of valuable organic sector resources. Each project will continue in the coming year, so keep watching for information about ways you can benefit from these initiatives.

In addition to these activities, excitement for the conference is building. The planning has been moving along thanks to the leadership of our conference coordinators. This year, in keeping with the theme of Work-Life Balance, Melissa Coleman will be the keynote speaker. Melissa has firsthand experience of "growing up organic" with one of the most prominent organic pioneers, Eliot Coleman. Come hear her story.

Registration is also now open! Keep the conference economical for yourself and help us plan by registering early at www.certifiedorganic.ca. Early bird pricing is in effect until January 31, 2013. Join us in Nanaimo at the Coast Bastion Hotel February 21-23, 2014.

Conference updates will be posted on the COABC website and our facebook page. Spread the word and bring your friends. 

 www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca

Last Quarter Achievements

- COABC Board retreat
- Accreditation Board in-person meeting
- Launched the Vancity project
- Finalized 3rd quarter financials



EAT MORE SPROUTS

Organic Sprouts & Greens

Grown in the Comox Valley Year Round!

Look for our sprouts & greens at your favourite grocer or restaurant.

2604 Grieve Rd., Courtenay, BC V9J 1S7
250.338.4860 | www.eatmoresprouts.com

Editor's Note

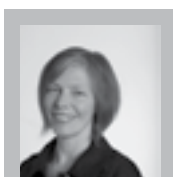
Happy New Year, and welcome to 2014. In the spirit of renewal and regeneration that comes with the changing of the year and the slow emergence from winter's cold into the first hints of spring, this issue of the BC Organic Grower brings you stories that will have you thinking and planning for the coming year.

First and foremost, of course, we are pleased to bring you the details of workshops and activities planned for the annual COABC Conference, whose theme this year will be Work Life Balance. It's a topic that is sure to resonate with all of us who occasionally feel overwhelmed by the many conflicting demands on our time, particularly those of us who daily balance family life with the seasonal ebb and flow of growing businesses. Those kinds of challenges are picked up as well in a thought-provoking article by Vancouver Island's Arzeena Hamir, who reflects on how she's learning as a new farmer to negotiate the gaps between agricultural theory and hands-on practicality, and her gradual acceptance and even embrace of permaculture as a way to bring balance into her life and enhanced productivity to her fields.

New beginnings are the theme at the Kootenay Farm School as well, which this coming spring will be introducing its beginner farmer training program in economically, ecologically, and socially sustainable agriculture. It's an ambitious "crash course" that the program coordinators hope will build new connections between growers and the local community, and lead to more sources of sustainably grown local food for the region.

And in Farmer Focus, writer Hannah Roessler brings us the story of the two dedicated young people behind Vancouver Island's Wind Whipped Farm, who cheerfully admit they never intended to be farmers, but who eventually realized that their paths were leading them towards the unique rewards and challenges of farming. Their "new beginning" was that moment of realization that farming was in fact the right choice.

Finally, as we all wait for spring and enjoy the opportunities for planning and reflection that the colder




Marilee Peters,
editor



Moss Dance,
layout

months bring, take a few moments to read over the winning entries to the first annual BC Farmer's Market Association's poetry contest. Hopefully, you'll find inspiration in those lines, words to remember and savour as the days get longer and the to-do lists get longer still.

Happy reading. And as ever, if you have comments or feedback about anything you read in these pages, please drop me a line at editor@certifiedorganic.bc.ca. I'm looking forward to hearing from you! 

N.O.O.A.

Farm Certification
\$695

Certifier of choice for small/medium scale operations throughout BC

Benefits:

- ~Simple Application forms
- ~Lowest fees with Peer Review
- ~Mentoring, Seminars, Farm Visits
- ~Flexible, Friendly organization

Contact: Cara 250-540-2557 northorganics@gmail.com



A leading manufacturer and distributor of organic and natural products.

Proudly supports BC certified organic farmers.



Organic Resources

FOR THE RESOURCEFUL

By Gunta Vitins


It has been a year of celebration for the BC Organic Community. We have a healthy growing market – as evidenced in The BC Organic Market research report; Organic Week was incredibly successful, raising lots of buzz and consumer attention; several BC municipalities took large steps forward towards a GE-Free BC; and members of our community were lauded for their dedication and successes here at home and further afield.

Sara and Troy Harker of Harker's Organics were recognized as BC's Outstanding Young Farmers. Rochelle Eisen received the Canadian Health Food Association's Organic Achievement Award. Ratana and Arran Stephens of Nature's Path received the Growing Organic Industry Award from the Organic Trade Association. Congratulations to all – and to the sector at large for a job well done!

As we all know, however, it takes constant effort, commitment, and multiple resources to nurture and grow a community, sector, or industry. To help support and grow BC's organic sector, COABC is creating a number of toolkits for producers.

During Organic Week 2013, the national "Think Before You Eat" organic brand campaign was launched, and BC producers can now access marketing resources designed to help promote their certified organic products at farmers' markets and with retailers. This campaign continues year round, with customizable materials for your operation.

Further toolkits will be available online in 2014, including additional marketing resources such as an updated "What is Organic" brochure and other farmers' markets and retail resources; and a web-based guide to help producers navigate the certification process. You'll also see changes and improvements to the COABC website.

The toolkit project is funded in part by the Investment Agriculture Foundation of B.C. through the Agri-Food Futures Fund, Emerging Sectors Initiative, a provincial trust funded from money under the former federal-provincial safety nets framework. 



For more information, please contact a Resilient Solutions Consulting team member:

Rochelle Eisen: rochelle@resilientsolutionsconsulting.org
T: 250-499-2413

Gunta Vitins: gunta@resilientsolutionsconsulting.org
T: 778-772-5996

Brenda Frick: brenda@resilientsolutionsconsulting.org
T: 306-373-7006

 certifiedorganic.bc.ca/promoteorganics

Gunta Vitins of Resilient Solutions Consulting has been spearheading innovative agri-food initiatives in the organic public and private sectors over the past 25 years, across Canada. Her work experience spans government, academia, and the private sector and includes business development, agricultural production, processing, distribution, sales and marketing.

Confined Spaces — Deadly Spaces

Are you at risk?

By Dawn Ianson

Across Canada in recent years, farm owners, workers, and family members have died or been seriously injured from entering confined spaces on their farms. The Canadian Agricultural Injury Surveillance Program reported 37 deaths of farm owners, workers and/or their family members between 1990 and 2000. Fourteen of these deaths were related to manure pits and the release of dangerous hydrogen sulfide gas. Similarly, two deaths were related to root cellars and insufficient oxygen.

Many other farm workers have had extremely close calls. Virtually every farm or agricultural operation has confined spaces, and they are an essential part of the operation. But who would have given a thought to the risks of a root cellar?

When equipment fails, gets jammed, or breaks down it is often at the most inconvenient time. Crops need to be watered, animals need to be fed and pits cleaned, so farm owners, workers, and family members continue to risk entering confined spaces so the work can continue uninterrupted. This risky choice is far from sensible with the knowledge we have today about these environments, and it is unacceptable if you:

- do not know whether the air is safe to breathe;
- are unsure whether all moving parts have been de-energized (e.g. paddles in the milk tank) and locked out;
- do not have appropriate safety and rescue gear; and
- are alone with no one to maintain voice contact with you outside of the confined space.

However, with some advance preparation and planning, you can take control of confined-space safety on your farm and never have to take chances with your life or the lives of others. Death and serious injuries can be prevented by identifying confined spaces and developing, in consultation with a qualified individual, work procedures that eliminate or minimize the hazards of entering confined spaces.

What is a Confined Space?

Confined spaces are not always easy to identify. Start by looking at confined areas where work does not normally take place and where it might be difficult to get




an injured person out of the area. A confined space may be enclosed or partially enclosed and large enough that a person can enter to perform duties. Some examples include: silos; grain bins; manure pits; water cisterns; waste water sumps; and root cellars.

You may find it necessary to consult a qualified person to identify the confined spaces on your farm. Get in touch with the Farm and Ranch Safety and Health Association (FARSHA) representative for your area.

Warning signs

The farmer/farm owner must ensure that all confined spaces are clearly labelled. Every point of access to a confined space must be either:

- secured against entry; or
- identified by a sign or other means, indicating the nature of the hazard and prohibiting entry to either all or unauthorized workers.

For more information, please visit the Farm and Ranch Safety and Health Association. 

 www.farsha.bc.ca

Dawn Ianson is a WorkSafeBC prevention officer working on Vancouver Island, in the Agriculture Sector. She can be reached via email at dawn.ianson@worksafebc.com to get more information.

Stepping Up to the Challenge: Wise and Winsome at **WIND WHIPPED FARM**



Alex Fletcher and Virginie Lavallee-Picard. Credit: Hannah Roessler

By Hannah Roessler

The wind was quiet and the sun was shining as I headed down William Head Road towards Wind Whipped Farm in Metchosin on the southern tip of Vancouver Island. I was on my way to meet Alex Fletcher and Virginie Lavallee-Picard, the two dynamic and incredibly sweet young farmers who are the proud owners and founders of Wind Whipped Farm.

Alex and Virginie met and became friends at Victoria's Pearson College where they were both students. Soon afterwards, they attended the College of the Atlantic in Maine, a small alternative school that focuses on Human Ecology, and is home to a 7-acre organic farm.

"I'm not from a farming background. I'm more of an opportunist," laughs Virginie. "I was more interested in free veggies than the actual idea of farming." However, one year working on the farm led to another. In her third year, she moved on to the farm and, it became clear that Virginie was hooked.

Alex didn't consider farming a realistic career path. "I never really considered it as an option. My parents had come from farming families in Saskatchewan and they sort of saw it as a dead-end with the increasing expansion of industrial agriculture, along with a heavy workload and low income." But despite his family history, Alex got involved in farming at the College, feeling it would give him more clout in his interests in Environmental Policy to have experience working on an organic farm. Something tells me that having the chance to work with Virginie out in the fields wasn't too bad either.

With a strong love for food systems, the environment, and each other, they moved back to Metchosin to Alex's parents' property, trying to decide their next steps. They secured a contract with Pearson College to research the viability of incorporating more locally grown produce into the cafeteria at the school. It proved to be a crucial turning point for these two



farm-dabblers, as a result of a conversation with Tom Henry, the editor of *Small Farm Canada Magazine*. As Virginie remembers, “He said that if we want the college to have more local produce, we should grow it ourselves.”

“He outright challenged us. If you want it, then do it!” Alex laughs at the memory. “He even said that he would come by to give us advice on a good location and till up my parents’ land so we could get started.”

Reflecting on this conversation spurred these two thoughtful environmentalists to consider their options. They realized that one of the largest barriers to accessing local food in their community was the lack of people growing it. They had access to land, an existing

Wind Whipped Delicata squash (above) and tomatoes growing in the greenhouse (below). Credit: Hannah Roessler



Optimize Your Organic Production

✓ Liquid Fertilizers

Provide instant nutrition to plants

✓ Foliar Supplements

Extra boost at critical growth stages

✓ Granular Fertilizers

Enrich soil for long-term nutrient supply

✓ Soil Amendments

Enhance nutrient uptake and improve soil quality



CONTACT Us

FOR OMRI LISTED PRODUCTS

1.866.246.3378

www.blofert.net

207-27353 58 Crescent

Langley, BC V4W 3W7



Product of Canada

cabin on the land that they could fix up, cheap rent and a deep love for working outside. And they already had some farming experience under their belt from their time at College of the Atlantic. It seemed as though it couldn't be easier to make the transition to farming!

They broke ground in 2008, and through to 2009 engaged in what they call "part-time, super-low-budget-farming." "It's hard to know just what we were doing back then," says Alex as they both laugh. Certainly there was a lot of trial-and-error, but they did manage to produce a yield and delivered their produce by bike trailer to their local market.

In 2010 they took to the road on their bikes to tour farms of eastern Canada, learning how other farmers were "making it work." They eagerly absorbed all the farming tips they could, from different ways to clean salad mix to how to build a whizbang garden cart. They found the opportunity to learn from others invaluable, and returned home eager to continue working on Wind Whipped and implement some of their new-found knowledge. They started out with a 5-year plan and began investing in infrastructure—greenhouses, fencing, rototiller, a truck—all the pieces that they needed to be successful in their venture.

In 2011 they began The Local Food Box Program. Members pay \$425 for a 16-week veggie box program. The boxes are delivered to two dropoff locations



"IF WE VALUE THE AGRICULTURAL LANDSCAPE, WE NEED TO ACTIVELY SUPPORT NEW GROWERS"

in Victoria or available for pick up on the farm. Wind Whipped also works with partners from Parry Bay Sheep Farm, Stillmeadow Farm, Winter Creek Farm, Ridgeview Farms and SRS Farms to offer a meat box option containing pork, chicken and lamb, and/or an egg option. They feel that this type of collaboration really adds value to their operation, and as Alex explains, "We access a larger group of customers, and create another local marketing opportunity for a few Metchosin producers. It's great to be able to partner with other farmers in this way."

Continued on page 21...

WHICH WOULD YOU RATHER EAT?



EAT BETTER. EAT ORGANIC.



Kamloops Kelowna Langley Penticton Vernon West Kelowna | www.naturesfare.com

LOCAL · ORGANIC · BISTRO · PRODUCE · GROCERY · VITAMINS · SUPPLEMENTS · BEAUTY · HOUSEHOLD

What Organic Farmers Can Learn From Permaculture

By Arzeena Hamir

I'm a relatively new farmer: my husband and I moved to our 26-acre property on Vancouver Island in 2012. I also come to farming with an extremely conventional educational background: an undergraduate degree in Crop Science at the University of Guelph.

So when I heard about permaculture and food forests, the first thing to that came to my mind was "What on earth?! How can plants grow to their full potential all crammed in like that?" To this day, I still hold a certain degree of that bias. One thing that you never hear from permaculturalists is the word "competition." According to permaculturists, plants will find the nutrients and light they need, and there's no talk of the risk that they may rob each other of these necessities.

Although I was initially sceptical about permaculture, my first seasons on the farm had knocked much of my self-assurance and I was suddenly open to looking at my farm through a new lens. I've started thinking of my operation through its limiting factors to see if there are some permaculture principles that can answer them.

Limiting Factor #1: Labour

Although I have two children, they somehow become scarce and invisible whenever there's any transplanting or weeding to be done. I have about an acre in production and for the last year it's been primarily myself with a few hours of help from farm workers. Needless to say, the time I've spent weeding, despite the fact that I mulch heavily, has been incredible. It's an ongoing fight that can cripple a farm.

Come July of this past year, it finally clicked that I just couldn't spend the summer in battle. I had begun dreading going into the fields, which didn't bode well for a lifetime spent on my farm.

In permaculture, weeds are viewed very differently. At worst, they are nutrient accumulators, bringing scarce minerals to the surface of the soil. At best, they are fine food crops in of themselves. So I started introducing the chickweed, lambsquarters, sheep sorrel and

Continued on page 28...



Polyculture rules! Planned and unplanned intercropping of leeks and New Zealand spinach (above) and volunteer lettuce with chickweed (below). Even the weeds (chickweed) are marketable - and they keep soil cool and moist in hot summer weather. Credit: Arzeena Hamir.

Organic Farmer Accreditation Project

Professional Accreditation for a New Generation of Farmers

By Rochelle Eisen and Heide Hermary

According to the 2006 Census of Agriculture, there are more than 600 certified organic farmers and processors in BC. There are also 2,767 “uncertified organic” producers, many of whom are small scale operators. A significant proportion of these small scale producers, particularly in urban environments, report that they cannot comply with the Canadian Organic Standards.

In some cases this is because they do not have reliable long-term access to land and are unable to meet the land tenure requirements in the standards. Others are intimidated by the product certification process, or cannot justify the costs. So while these farmers may be working to the standards, they have no recognized means of distinguishing themselves in the marketplace, nor do consumers have any assurance that these producers are meeting the standards.

Consequently the marketplace is flooded with a plethora of product claims—“uncertified organic,” “beyond organic,” “unsprayed,” “organical” (as opposite of chemical), “local” (with the unspoken implication that it must obviously be organic)—as these farmers try to communicate their growing practices to customers. This leads to confusion in the marketplace and an ever-expanding chasm between those who are certified and those who are not. Something has to change.

In 2012 the COABC Small Scale Certification Research Project identified education-based farmer accreditation as an alternative approach to inspection-based product certification. This was not such a crazy idea—professional credentials are the norm in many service industries, including the landscape sector. Why not extend that model into organic farming?

The Project

In July 2013 the Society for Organic Urban Land Care (SOUL), in partnership with Island Organic Producers Association and Similkameen Okanagan Organic Producers Association, received funding from COABC’s Organic Sector Development Program to develop a model education-based organic farmer accreditation process parallel to SOUL’s accreditation for organic land care practitioners.



Credit: Moss Dance

The goals of the project were to:

1. Expand the scope of the Organic Land Care (OLC) standard to include a food production section
2. Develop the model professional accreditation process for organic farmers.

The Organic Land Care Standard

As we drafted the food production section to the standard, it became clear that urban environments demanded further requirements in addition to the Canadian Organic Standards. A higher level of due diligence is necessary as urban environments can be highly polluted, and the historic use of a site is not always known.

It also became apparent that, due to food safety concerns, commercial food producers needed to be held to a higher standard of practice than home gardeners and ornamental landscapers, the original primary focus of the OLC standard.

We are grateful for the excellent input we received from our many reviewers, and we believe that the new standard presents a comprehensive guideline particularly for urban farmers. We also foresee the OLC standards being of benefit to urban food policy makers.

The Proposed Accreditation Program SOUL pioneered education-based professional organic certification in 2003 when it published the first Organic Land Care Standard. After a decade of experience, SOUL has adopted a 2-tiered certification process:

- Accreditation – granted after the completion of a 1-week (30 hours) course on the fundamentals of organic land care, and passing an exam.
- Certification – granted after additional comprehensive education and 2 years experience. There is also a requirement for 6 continuing education hours per year.

The new organic farmer accreditation program will mirror the organic land care accreditation, but with a focus on food production. Successful individuals would be identified as Accredited Organic Farmers. The second certification tier could be developed if demand exists.

The Course

The accreditation course will deal with the underlying scientific concepts and ecological principles of organic practice, the connection between soil, plant,

Potential Benefits of Professional Accreditation

- Unifying the organic community by legitimizing small organic farmers.
- Doing away with unverifiable and misleading production claims by giving small farmers a viable option to distinguish themselves.
- Increasing consumer awareness of the environmental benefits of organic farming practices.
- Giving municipalities a regulatory framework they can incorporate into their food policy decisions.
- Accredited Organic Farmers are already familiar with organic standards, and will find it easier to seek product certification once they become more established.
- Mandatory entry-level education will raise the knowledge level of new and small organic farmers, and increasing their chance of success.
- The size of the organic farming community will increase.

animal and human health in a farming context, and how all this relates to the Canada Organic Standards. The objective of the course is to communicate a holistic land management decision-making framework.

Although presented in the context of food production, it will not be a production course, and does not provide all the knowledge required to be a successful organic farmer. Rather it will be a perfect complement to structured farm-based apprenticeship programs teaching hands-on production skills.

The Exam

The exam will be similar to the current organic land care accreditation exam, but the questions will be cast in a farming context. The exam has 150 questions, and is completed within 3 hours. It can be taken online or as a paper-based exam.

The Certificate

A Certificate of Accreditation will be issued to those who pass both the course and the exam, stating: "This farmer has completed intensive training and passed an exam to demonstrate an understanding of the principles and practices of organic agriculture." Since

it is anticipated that farmers will be displaying the certificate in public, it will also provide the following definition of organic agriculture:

“Organic agriculture is an ecological production management system that promotes and enhances biodiversity, biological cycles, and soil biological activity. It is based on minimal use of off-farm inputs and on management practices that restore, maintain, or enhance ecological harmony. The primary goal of organic agriculture is to optimize the health and productivity of interdependent communities of soil life, plants, animals and people.”

Accreditation is valid for one year, and must be renewed annually.

Accredited Organic Farmers are not restricted to organic practices, since farmers working as employees may not have the power to make those decisions. However they must sign an affidavit that food sold in conjunction with the promotion of this accreditation has been produced according to the SOUL Organic Land Care Standard.

This accreditation does not entitle organic farmers to promote their products as “organic” or “certified organic” or to bear the SOUL logo, as this is not a product certification scheme. However, nothing prevents accredited organic farmers to also seek certification for their products to the Canadian Organic Standards.

The Costs

Cost is often cited as a deterrent to product certification. This program has some significant up-front costs in the educational component, but the yearly maintenance cost is considerably lower.

- Course - \$695.00
- Exam - \$100.00
- Proctor - \$50.00 to \$80.00
- Accreditation Fee - \$100.00
- Yearly Renewal - \$100.00

However, one might argue that education is necessary in any case before embarking on a business venture, and the course could be seen as part a comprehensive educational program including apprenticeships, internships and other paths.

Potential Objections

The most common objection we encountered to our proposal was that this program might increase confusion in the marketplace. Are we now adding yet

another label to the “uncertified organic”, “beyond organic”, “local” and “unsprayed” array of unverifiable and misleading claims that already exist? The goal, of course, is to do away with those claims by giving producers who cannot satisfy the land tenure requirement of the Canadian Organic Standards and other small producers a viable option to legitimately participate in the organic agriculture community. Essentially we are inviting everyone in under the tent called Organic Standards. Sure, the tent is wider than before, but at least it is the same tent. Our hope is that education-based organic accreditation will stop the “we vs. they” mentality we are seeing.

Another objection we’ve heard is: “how are customers to know the difference between certified organic products and products grown by an Accredited Organic Farmer?” Because they are dealing with an Accredited Organic Farmer, customers can now rest assured that there is no difference in the way the products are grown, except some may be labeled “organic” or “certified organic” and others may be associated with an Accreditation certificate.

Of course, it will require some customer education, but let us not forget we are talking about small producers who are most likely selling directly to customers, rather than through wholesale channels. There is nothing stopping larger producers from taking the program, but there are fewer options where such marketing could be of benefit. This accreditation will actually strengthen the organic label by doing away with unverifiable claims, and directly educating consumers in the ecological benefits of organic agriculture.

The third type of objection is around policing: how can we ensure that accredited organic farmers are actually doing what they are supposed to? Are they subject to regular inspections? This is where we see the greatest difference between inspection-based product certification and education-based professional accreditation/certification. Each is a third party verification process, but professional credentials are granted to individuals based on knowledge and experience.

What we have learned over the last decade of certifying land care professionals is that education is extremely powerful: we cannot un-see something once we have seen it. Again and again students have told us that their education has been life-changing, paradigm-shifting, and they are grateful for the tools to begin doing things differently. They already knew they should, they just didn’t know how. We are certain the same will be true for organic farmers.

A really important part of the program will be com-

munity building, finding ways for all organic farmers to form supportive networks and continue sharing their knowledge and learning from each other. Peer pressure is very powerful too, and so in some way this is a move back to the good old days where farmers inspected each other. None of us have “arrived”, there is always something new to learn, and we need to foster opportunities for lifelong learning.

Even though we have heard some thoughtfully voiced objections to farmer accreditation, the vast majority of feedback has been highly supportive of the idea. Many new urban farmers are already asking where they can sign up! 🐾

Heide Hermary has spent the last decade developing and teaching organic horticulture curriculum for Gaia College. As co-founder of SOUL she was instrumental in the development of the Organic Land Care Standard and SOUL's certification program for organic land care professionals.

Rochelle Eisen is a standards junkie who has been working in organics for over 20 years as well as with other certification systems. Like Einstein, she believes “What is right is not always popular and what is popular is not always right” and that assurance programs are a means to level the ecological playing field.

Excerpts from the Draft Organic Lawn Care Standard, 6th edition:

Food Production

Environmental Toxins

Required:

- Verifying the non-commercial and/or non-toxic historic use of the site.
- Where the non-commercial and/or non-toxic historic use of the site cannot be verified, and where testing for soil toxins is not feasible, installing food gardens in raised beds in uncontaminated soil with a root barrier preventing root access to the soil below.
- Protecting crops with row covers from airborne toxins in industrial fallout areas, along major streets, and from pesticide use on neighbouring properties.
- Using potable water and ice when it comes in contact with food and food sources during post-harvest handling.

Prohibited:

- Growing food plants in soil with heavy metal background levels (ppm) greater than the following agriculture numbers extracted from the Canadian Environmental Quality Guidelines (Arsenic 12, Chromium 64, Copper 63, Lead 70, Nickel 50, Zinc 200).
- Using polluted water collected from streets, driveways and other surfaces, including the first flush of rainwater collected from roofs.

Crop Nutrient Management

Required:

- For commercial food production in residential and ur-

ban agricultural settings, thoroughly composting all manure according to the compost requirements in the Canadian Organic Standards.

- In rural agricultural settings, adhering to the Canadian Organic Standards in the use of manure.

Preferred:

- Using crop rotations and green manures in addition to other inputs.

Prohibited:

- Using fertilizers and soil amendments in a way that leads to contamination of crops, soil or water, by plant nutrients, pathogenic organisms, heavy metals or residues of other prohibited substances.

Livestock

Required:

- In urban settings ensure livestock systems do not attract or harbour rodents.

Specialty Crops

For all aspects of apiculture, maple, mushroom, greenhouse and wild crop management the Canadian Organic Standards shall be followed.

The entire draft standard can be found online at:

[www.organiclandcare.org/files/4th_OLC_Standard 6Ed -20131119.pdf](http://www.organiclandcare.org/files/4th_OLC_Standard%206Ed-20131119.pdf)



COABC's Conference provides educational and networking opportunities for new and established farmers, as well as for the general public. We feature educational topics presented by knowledgeable speakers who are experts in their field.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER - MELISSA COLEMAN

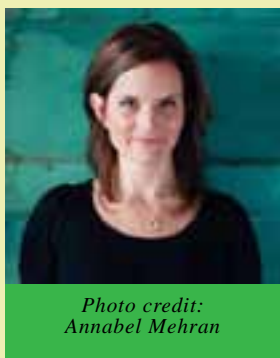


Photo credit:
Annabel Mehran

Melissa Coleman is the author of *This Life Is in Your Hands: One Dream, Sixty Acres, and a Family's Heartbreak*, a *New York Times* bestseller, Indie Next Pick, People's Pick in *People Magazine*, and a nonfiction finalist for the New England

Book Award and Maine Literary Award.

Melissa is a columnist for *Maine Home + Design* magazine, blogs at *Bright-Minded Home*, and organizes the Super Famous Writers Series at The Telling Room, a Portland writing center for children and young adults. Her father, Eliot Coleman, is one of the most influential organic farmers in the country, a trailblazer in the localvore and the whole food movements. She lives in Maine with her husband and twin daughters and can be found online at: www.melissacoleman.com.

CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS

- Trade Show and Poster Presentations: a marketplace of products and ideas to challenge your imagination.
- Practical and interactive workshops all day Saturday and Sunday morning.
- COABC AGM Sunday 10:30am-12:30pm.

GENERAL INFORMATION AND ACCOMMODATION

The 2014 COABC Conference will be held in Nanaimo at the Coast Bastion Hotel. The Coast Bastion Hotel is located at 11 Bastion Street, in the heart of charming downtown Nanaimo, near the Departure Bay ferry terminal and within walking distance to the seawall walkway, restaurants, bars and boutiques of all kinds. The Coast Bastion Hotel is full-service, with a variety of amenities including a fitness centre, spa, business centre, salon, and more. The hotel is even pet friendly, in case you need to bring your furry companion. For more information please visit: www.coasthotels.com/hotels/bc/nanaimo/coast-bastion-hotel.

The Coast Bastion Hotel is holding a block of rooms for COABC Conference participants for \$99.95 per night and up, depending on room type. To take advantage of this great deal, please book your room by January 20, 2014. The price will increase after this period. To make a reservation please visit the hotel website (website address above) or call them directly at 250-753-6601.

Other accommodation options in Nanaimo include:

- Best Western PLUS, Dorchester Hotel Nanaimo 1-800-661-2449
- Ramada Nanaimo 250-716-2009
- The Grand Hotel Nanaimo 1-877-41-GRAND
- Days Inn Nanaimo 1-877-754-8171

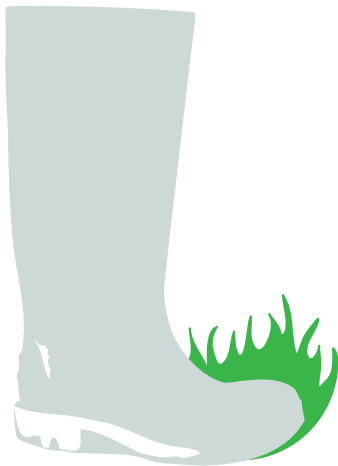
SILENT AUCTION

Every year our creative community provides an amazing range of items to be auctioned, including: clothing, books, art, food, wine, tools, seeds, and much, much more. If you would like to donate an auction item, just bring it with you to the conference. Auction items will be on display from 6pm Friday until 9pm on Saturday.

THANK-YOU *2014 Conference Sponsors!*



GOLD



SILVER



SPECIAL NEEDS

If you have dietary, child care or other requirements, please contact the conference organizers at info@aelagroconsulting.com.

TRADE SHOW

The COABC Trade Shows is a great way to showcase your products. We welcome suppliers of approved inputs, seeds, appropriate technology, marketing tools, resource materials and more! Producers, distributors, retailers, processors – please book your Trade Show tables online at <http://coabc2014.eventbrite.ca/>.

POSTER SESSIONS

We are pleased to offer free space for poster presentations related to innovative organic production. Contact the conference organizers with your poster idea and to book space. info@aelagroconsulting.com

REGISTRATION

Please see page 20 of the BC Organic Grower for the registration form.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS AND WORKSHOPS

Four Season Harvest

Presenter: Clara Coleman, Four Season Farm Consulting

Clara will discuss the benefits of soil blocks, seed starting and variety selection, appropriate crop planning using movable high tunnels, various pruning and trellising techniques, successful soil bed preparation (indoors and out), effective sales, and marketing methods for small scale farmers.

Innovative Methods of Carrot Seed Production in Unheated High Tunnels

Presenter: Jen Cody, Growing Opportunities Farm Community Cooperative

In partnership with the Bauta Initiative, and funded by a grant from the Organic Sector Development Program, this four-year project just wrapped up its first year. Participating farmers from the project will share the results and learnings from trials of organic carrot seed production in high tunnels at four farms in different regions

of BC. The goal of the project is to develop best practices for farmers interested in growing carrot for seed in areas where Queen Anne's Lace (*Daucus carota*) is present. This is a major challenge to growing carrot for seed because Queen Anne's Lace will readily cross with domesticated carrot varieties, compromising the seed's genetic integrity. High tunnels offer isolation from outside insects that might transfer pollen from Queen Anne's Lace to carrot flowers.

Hazelnuts Varieties and Disease Resistance

Presenters: Haley Argen and Thom O'Dell, Nature Tech Nursery Ltd.

Hazelnuts are a good low-input crop well-suited to organic production with lots of options for value added products. Haley Argen and Thom O'Dell started Nature Tech Nursery in 2010, in part to help revive the BC hazelnut industry by importing new varieties that combine disease resistance with substantial yield increases. They will briefly review hazelnuts as a crop and the industry here, talk about the new varieties and the BC Hazelnut Grower's Association trial which is underway, and discuss agroforestry applications of hazelnut trees.

Panel Discussion: Hosting Farm Apprentices: Challenges and Opportunities

Presenters: Jordan Marr, Evelyn Pereira, Kevin & Anamarie Klippenstein

Join a panel of farmers experienced with hosting apprentices to discuss some of the most common challenges and problems that arise when offering farm apprenticeships. Panel members will share their strategies for minimizing conflicts, offering a good farming education, and keeping apprentices happy and motivated from start to finish. Attendees will be invited to share their successes and failures with regards to this topic.

Business Planning for Small-Scale Farms

Presenter: Chris Bodnar, Close to Home Organics

This session will provide you with the practical tools and knowledge you need to run a successful small-scale agriculture business. Key to the process is developing a solid business plan. If you are starting your own business, this session will help guide you through writing a business plan. If you aren't sure whether you're ready to start your own business, this course will help you

organize your thoughts around business planning and how to approach potential ideas. In addition to the personal work of identifying goals and developing business ideas, Chris will also cover the nuts and bolts of running a business. This includes tax planning, insurance requirements, labour management, developing systems and processes, marketing, legal structures and record keeping. We will review formulas that can help you test the viability of your business idea and determine rates of return on your personal investments of time, energy, and money.

Growing Success Panel

Presenters: Andrew Arkesteyn-Vogler (Crisp Organics), Carmen Wakeling (Eatmore Sprouts & Greens Ltd.) and Hermann Bruns (Wild Flight Farm)

This panel session will focus on growing your small business to one of a medium scale. Andrew Arkesteyn-Vogler will talk about his experiences over the past three years growing his small farm into a successful market garden operation. Carmen Wakeling from Eatmore Sprouts will share her story of growing a small sprout farm into a successful medium-scale venture that ships sprouts throughout the province and beyond. Hermann Bruns will offer tips for adding value to your farming operation, sharing his experiences in growing his farm operation to include on-site packing and storage options.

Value-Added Ventures

Presenters: Annamarie and Kevin Klippenstein, Klippers Organic Acres

In this session the Klippensteins will share their experiences of growing their small market gar-

den operation to include value-added dried fruits and preserves. Join them to learn about the regulations involved and the challenges they needed to overcome to include processing in their farm production.

Professional Credentials for a New Generation of Organic Farmers

Presenters: Rochelle Eisen & Heide Hermay, Society for Organic Urban Land Care (SOUL)

There are currently over 600 certified organic farmers and processors in BC, but there are also close to 3,000 "uncertified organic" producers in BC. A significant portion of the uncertified organic producers are small-scale operators or new farmers who in most cases cannot comply with the land tenure requirements of the Canada Organic Standard or who feel it is not economically feasible to secure organic product certification. Until now, organic certification has been product-based, involving an inspection process that guarantees organic farmers are following organic standards. COABC's 2012 Small Scale Certification report suggested that a farmer certification system was worth exploring. The new education-based personal accreditation developed by SOUL offers an alternative approach to communicating an organic farmer's commitment to organic principles. More information, including a full history of the project and essential documents are at: www.organiclandcare.org/farmer-accreditation.html

Pesticides: where do we come from, and where are we going?


Presenter: Dr. Warren Bell, Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment (CAPE)

This overview of pesticide use and historical and political patterns shows the steady pattern of moving away from oil-based chemical solutions towards biological pest controls -- and how much work is needed to reach this goal.

Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) Basics for Small Farms

Presenter: Anna Railings, KPU Sustainable Agriculture & Food Systems

Standard Operating Procedures are an excellent way for farmers to document their routines, identify hazards, comply with standards and improve efficiency. Especially for farms with employees, apprentices, WOOFers or volunteers, SOPs can help save time during training and develop better practices in day-to-day farm duties. In this session, Anna will cover the rationale for SOPs and provide guidelines on developing these procedures for your farm operations.

More presenters to come! Visit us at our website to find out more. 

 www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca

ANNOUNCEMENT

COG-IOIA Basic Crop Inspection Training

Feb 24 to Feb 28 2014
Nanaimo, BC

Please see Events & Announcements on page 30 for more details.



“WORK-LIFE BALANCE”

BC Organic Conference & AGM

Coast Bastion Hotel – Nanaimo, BC

February 21 – 23, 2014

REGISTRATION FORM

Registration Deadline is January 31, 2014.

Late registration subject to \$25 additional fee.

Name: _____ Farm Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Prov.: _____ Postal Code: _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____ Fax: _____

I am a member of (certifying body): _____

Please choose from these options:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Full Conference:	Includes pass to Friday night reception, Saturday and Sunday COABC workshops, tradeshow, and Saturday Night Organic Feast, entertainment and Silent Auction.	\$195
<input type="checkbox"/>	Saturday Conference & Feast:	Includes pass to the Saturday COABC workshops, tradeshow, and Saturday Night Organic Feast, entertainment and Silent Auction.	\$135
<input type="checkbox"/>	Late Fee	(postmarked after January 31, 2014)	\$25
	TOTAL		\$ _____

_____ I would like to volunteer to assist during the conference.

I have the following dietary requirements: _____

The item I can donate to the auction is (describe): _____

The food I can donate for the meals is (describe): _____

Program Administrator:



Please make your cheque payable to COABC and mail it, along with this form, to:

COABC, 202-3002 32 Ave, Vernon, BC V1T 2L7

Cancellation Policy: *The COABC will refund registration fees less a 25% service fee only until February 14, 2014. Cancellation requests must be made in writing to the Conference Coordinator at the address noted above. Refunds will not be provided after February 14, 2014. Refund payments will be prepared after the conference.*

... Wind Whipped Farm, continued from page 10

The land of Wind Whipped Farm is a gorgeous and peaceful 10-acre parcel on the ocean, worth far more today than when it was purchased in the early 80s. For new young farmers starting out, it might seem as though Alex and Virginie have everything they need to be successful—but it's still not easy. As Virginie explains, "we are so very lucky compared to others, but we still have land and housing barriers. We can't have housing for workers, and our cabin is more of a seasonal dwelling than a home. Farm-worker housing is really needed."

And more than that, they are lacking in what they really need: a strong agricultural community. Alex explains that, "We just don't feel as though we are quite part of a thriving agricultural community. There are a few really big pieces missing. There are some great farmers around, but not a lot of young farmers who can continue the farming tradition in this area, because prices are so high. Also, there is no Agricultural Community Plan, something that we sorely need." Virginie agrees. "How do we have conversations around keeping new farmers in Metchosin? As far as I know, this conversa-

tion isn't happening at the municipal level. If we value the agricultural landscape, we need to actively support new growers to live here."

After a wonderful morning full of interesting conversation, I stroll up the hill from their cabin and leave the farm, loaded with squash, garlic and tomatoes. It's clear to me how the problems these two have outlined can spell trouble for a future generation of farmers in this community. But it's also clear how lucky Metchosin is lucky to have these articulate and motivated young farmers to help point things in the right direction.

 windwhippedfarm.com

Hannah Roessler has farmed in Nicaragua, Washington, and BC on organic farms, permaculture projects, mixed-crop cafetals, and a biodynamic vineyard. She is finishing her MA in Environmental Studies at the University of Victoria.

Organic Grocer
organicgrocerweb.ca SINCE 1993

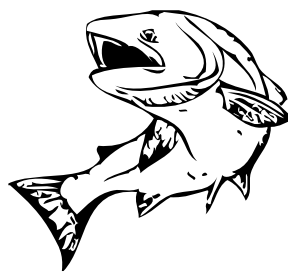
74th & King George Hwy, NEWTON VILLAGE **604-501-0116**

OPEN 8 DAYS A WEEK Mon - Fri 9 - 6:30 • Sat 9 - 6:30PM • Sun 10:30 - 6:30PM



Celebrating 21 years! 1993-2014

Salmon-Safe



By Costanza Testino

For most BC organic farmers, being organic means more than simply avoiding persistent synthetic pesticides, fertilizers, and GMOs. It means nurturing the ecosystem and establishing a local and sustainable model of agriculture that supports the health of people, while contributing to the protection of the environment. So its no surprise that of the 40 Salmon-Safe certified farms, ranches and vineyards across British Columbia, 24 are organic, leading the charge in protecting local rivers and the fish stocks that rely on them.

Salmon-Safe is a relatively new eco-label that recognizes progressive, environmentally-friendly management practices that protect Pacific salmon habitat and enhance water quality on agricultural and urban lands. Some of the most fertile farm lands coincide with salmon habitat, however proximity to a body of water is not a requirement of Salmon-Safe certification.

The program began in Oregon in 1996, and was launched in BC in 2010 by the Pacific Salmon Foundation and Fraser Basin Council. It is now one of the leading regional eco-labels in the Pacific Northwest – with more than 85,000 acres certified in critical West Coast agricultural watersheds ranging from northern California to the Fraser River and the Salmon River in British Columbia.

Similar to organic certification, Salmon-Safe is a third-party certification program. It relies on independent inspectors to assess farm-management practices against a thorough set of biologically-based standards. The standards have been developed by scientists and farmers with the intention of promoting landscape-level conservation and protection of biological diversity.

Since salmon are a keystone species in the Pacific Northwest and their conservation is tightly intertwined with the health of a much larger ecosystem. Many organic practices go hand-in-hand with Salmon-Safe standards. Standards are organized into seven categories covering key areas of habitat vulnerability most critical to salmon survival:

In-stream Habitat Protection and Restoration

Stream channels provide habitat for salmon and other aquatic species by naturally stabilizing stream banks



The Salmon-Safe logo displayed on raspberries and squash.

and accumulating large and small woody debris. Woody debris slows stream flows, and provides shelter and nourishment.

Riparian and Wetland Vegetation Protection and Restoration

Intact riparian zones and wetland protection are critical to maintain water quality and the health and function of streams and the species within them. Wetlands are like salmon nurseries where fish can feed and grow, away from fast-flowing stream waters.

Water Use Management

Water withdrawal from waterways can reduce in-stream flows, and reduce habitat for aquatic species that live in water and feed salmon.

Erosion Prevention and Sediment Control

Sediment delivery to fish-bearing streams is a major cause of habitat degradation, particularly for gravel beds where salmon spawn. Sediment can coat eggs, depriving them of oxygen. Potential upland sources of erosion are farm roads, agricultural fields and pastures.

Integrated Pest Management and Water Quality Protection

Salmon survival depends on clean water free from harmful levels of fertilizers, pesticides, organic waste and other pollutants. These contaminants can travel long distances in stormwater runoff to receiving streams.

Animal Management

Nutrients and pathogens from livestock operations can degrade water quality. Fecal contamination of streams and water bodies can be prevented by adequate manure storage and handling methods.

Landscape-level Biological Diversity Enhancement

There is a growing body of evidence suggesting that agriculture benefits from greater biodiversity. This category ensures that farm practices support and enhance biodiversity for fish, wildlife and vegetation throughout the farm.

The similarity in standards has made Salmon-Safe accreditation relatively easy for many organic farmers. But as a program that focuses on water and fish, Salmon-Safe does require extra attention to natural pesticides – such as copper sulphate, which is harmful to young fish – and to irrigation water quantity that can deplete the water supplies salmon need to migrate upstream. For many organic farmers committed to sustainability, these are not prohibitive requirements.

The process to get certified is pretty simple. Once farmers have reviewed the standards, they can contact Salmon-Safe to schedule an assessment. Prior to the site visit, farmers should prepare some baseline information, including a map of the property, pesticide records, irrigation management information and any habitat restoration documents. The assessment consists of an approximately 45-minute interview and one to two hour site visits. The Salmon-Safe inspector will then compile a report identifying conditions (if any) that the farmer will need to address to comply with the standards, as well as non-binding recommendations for continuous improvement of land management practices and promotion of ecosystem health.

Once certified, the farm receives several benefits to help market its products, including use of the Salmon-Safe logo on certified products, a Salmon-Safe gate sign and other promotional and educational materials. These materials help educate consumers and retailers

Making Sumas Safe for Salmon

Located in the Sumas Prairie, Crisp Organics is among the Salmon-Safe certified farms that are helping protect the Fraser River – one of the greatest salmon watersheds in the world.

Prior to becoming a co-owner of Crisp Organics, Andrew Arkesteyn-Vogler worked in fish hatcheries and as a salmon life-cycle educator. So he is well aware of the importance of the Fraser Basin, and of the different ways farmers can impact salmon and watersheds. Beyond just avoiding farming practices that will negatively impact the aquatic ecosystem, farmers have a unique opportunity to take positive actions that restore and improve salmon habitat.

“The Sumas Prairie is some of the most intensive farmland in BC. It used to be a healthy watershed but it is now farmed edge to edge,” says Andrew. “If farmers in the area were to set aside even just a five foot buffer along their irrigation ditches, it would go a long way towards getting salmon back into what was once one of the most productive lakes and wetlands, and home to many native species, including sturgeon and geese,” he points out, adding, “And then I could catch salmon in my backyard!”

To encourage biodiversity for wildlife and vegetation throughout the farm, Andrew has planted a wide variety of trees and plants in the buffers along the ditches. “The willows, birches, cottonwoods and blackberry are homes for insects and provide shade to keep the water cool.” Encouraging native vegetation along stream banks also reduces erosion that could impact salmon spawning areas.

Andrew has been working for the past three years to convert an abandoned nursery into the thriving farm that Crisp Organics is today. Since getting Salmon-Safe certified last year, he has been actively addressing conditions to minimize impacts on fish habitat identified by the Salmon-Safe assessor.

“We are currently working to stabilize the roadways and control sediment movement into drainage ditches,” says Andrew. The problem has proven more difficult than expected, but he’s trying to find a creative solution. “I have spoken with people who work in fisheries, and we have tried different experimental things to solve the issue including using sock-like sediment traps, but none has worked so far.” The Salmon-Safe assessor continues to work with Andrew to identify a solution that will work without compromising his field operations.

Continued on page 29...

Kootenay Farm School

Creative Education for Grassroots Agriculture



By Kootenay Farm School Staff

Recent research into the economic, social, cultural and environmental health of the Columbia Basin has affirmed what Kootenay residents can see happening all around us. Between 2006 and 2011, according to The State of the Basin 2013, the area being farmed in our region shrunk by almost twenty percent. During the same period we lost 1 in 10 farms and the average age of the Basin farmer rose from 54 to 57.

We know that these changes are today's norm and that the obstacles on our region's road towards food security are hardly unique. At the same time, we also know that both our region's successes and its challenges are shaped by our particular geography, ecology, heritage, and culture. The progress we achieve is borne of our place in the world, our lands, our people, and the ways we come together.

The College of the Rockies Creston Valley campus recognizes this, and has established the Kootenay Farm School to bring people together to discover,

teach, and support non-capital intensive, ecologically-sound, human-scale agriculture.

Education for a New Generation of Farmers

At the heart of COTR's Kootenay Farm School is the Beginner Farmer Training Program. Seed funding from the BC Ministry of Advanced Education is being used to design and deliver ten months of intensive education for aspiring farmers. Beginning in February 2014, students will spend Thursdays, Fridays, and most Saturdays gaining a footing in plant science, soil stewardship, permaculture design, market, fruit, and seed crop production, animal husbandry, apiculture, and small farm technology.



Growing A New Crop of Farmers

Kootenay Farm School's mission is to preserve and cultivate farming wisdom in our region. We are working to:

- record and pass on the knowledge of veteran agriculturalists;
- inspire and train new entrants into agriculture;
- foster trust and understanding between existing and new farmers; and,
- help ensure that the wisdom embedded in Kootenay farmland itself is not squandered.

Kootenay Farm School is always looking for students, teachers, mentor and host-farmers, partners, funders, and friends. Visit www.cotr.bc.ca/kootenay-farm-school or www.facebook.com/kootenayfarmschool. Email farmschool@cotr.bc.ca.

Phone 250-428-5332 extension 4181.
Or stop by the COTR Creston Valley campus.

Livelihood classes will cover whole-farm thinking, business planning, marketing, recordkeeping, and working with regulations and supports. Life Place classes will look at what it means to farm and live 'in place' and will teach skills and strategies for assessing, accessing, and regenerating land.

The program will aim to train new farmers not just to farm, but to farm here, in the Kootenays. Training has been designed to help students become integrated into the Kootenay food web – connected to peers, elders, and consumers. Almost twenty Kootenay farmers, food systems workers, food retailers, food services professionals, and other educators will instruct classroom components of the program. Two dozen Kootenay farms (and counting) have agreed to host students for farm tours, project-based education, or regular on-farm learning.

Students will also gain experience through participation in a market garden collaboration between Kootenay Farm School and the Yaqan Nukiy (Lower Kootenay) Band of the K'tunaxa First Nation. 2014 will be the second season that the Lower Kootenay Band and COTR cooperate to grow food for the 267-person Yaqan Nukiy community. Students will take part in bringing the two-acre site into full production.

RANCHO COOLING

Frozen, Refrigerated, and Dry Storage Facilities

Megan Payne

250-938-5062

cooling@ranchovignola.com

www.ranchocooling.com

3155 Pleasant Valley Rd • Armstrong, BC • V0E 1B2

Similkameen Okanagan Organic Producers Association



Join other growers committed to maintaining the integrity of organic farming in British Columbia

- Affordable certification fees
- ISO options available

For more information, contact
Julie Hinton: T 250-499-7080
soopa@nethop.net



SOUTHERN IRRIGATION

Intelligent Water Solutions



Lay Driptape And Mulch In One Pass!

- Reduces Labour
- Conserves Water
- Eliminates Weeding

- Mulch
- Driptape
- Driptape/Mulch Laying Equipment

CHILLIWACK 44160 Yale Road West
LETHBRIDGE 3305 - 2nd Ave. North


1.800.663.2615
1.877.663.2615

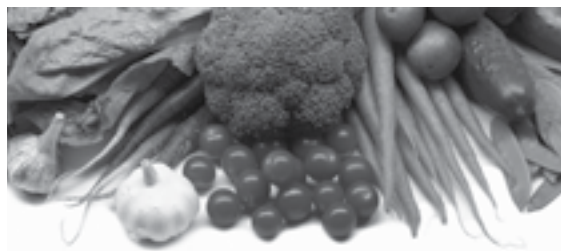
www.southerndrip.com

Partners and allies from around the Kootenays, and especially the Creston Valley, are pulling together to help support Beginner Farmer students. Thanks to contributions from local and regional government, service clubs, businesses, co-operatives, and non-profits we are closing in on our goal of providing each student with a significant bursary. It is our community's way of showing that we are ready to invest in a new kind of agriculture.

A Hunger for Local Food

The 2013 State of the Basin report included some positive indicators in addition to the upsetting numbers on farm decline; extensive surveying determined that 75% of Basin residents prefer to buy local food. However, currently only 5% of the food consumed in the Kootenays is grown here.

Kootenay Farm School hopes to help close that gap. In addition to the Beginner Farmer Training Program, we are offering talks and skills-building workshops year-round. We have begun carrying out research to help advance bio-regional food security and are working towards applied research, including for organic sector development. 



Celebrating 23 Years

Pro Organics is proud to represent BC organic producers and to be celebrating our 22nd year of supporting local, organic, sustainable farming.

Today, as it was 22 years ago, our mission remains the same: Promoting the growth and integrity of organics from field to table.



4535 Still Creek Avenue, Burnaby, BC V5C 5W1
Tel: 604-253-6549 or 1-800-461-1122

 www.cotr.bc.ca/kootenay-farm-school



Organic, naturally. For thirty five years, Horizon Distributors has supplied retailers with premium quality, organic, natural and gourmet products in the dry, chill and frozen categories. Our 5,000 SKUs provide healthy alternatives for your customers, whether they are long-time natural foods consumers, or those with special dietary needs searching for new options.

A market leader in Western Canada for decades, Horizon is the parent company of a national network of Canadian businesses distributing organic and natural foods, health and beauty aids, supplements and household products.

The Horizon Group comprises the following well-established companies, which supply more than 20,000 SKUs to 4,000 outlets across Canada:

- Horizon Distributors, Burnaby, BC
- PSC Natural Foods, Victoria, BC
- Christmas Natural, Burnaby, BC
- Tara Natural, Burnaby, BC
- Organic Horizons, Guelph, ON
- Corwin Distribution, Concord, ON
- Directa Distribution, Pointe-Claire, QC



COABC
Certified Organic Associations of BC



MEMBER
Organic
TRADE
ASSOCIATION



CHFA



bullfrogpowered

www.horizondistributors.com
604.524.6610 | 1.800.663.1838

Page 26

BC Organic Grower, Volume 17, Number 1, Winter 2014

Ode to a Farmer

Poetry Contest Winners Have Unique Connections to BC Agriculture Sector

By Georgia Stanley

This fall, the BC Association of Farmers' Markets announced the winners of its first ever Ode to a Farmer Poetry Contest. Five winning poems were selected by a panel of professional writers and poets, to wrap up the 4th annual Farmers Appreciation Week in BC from September 8th -15th, 2013.

The award for best overall poem was given to Jillian Merrick for her poem 365 Farmers. Jillian Merrick lives in Prince George where she coordinates the Beyond the Market program at Community Futures Fraser Fort George, a collaborative project designed to build, strengthen, and diversify the agricultural industry in BC's North.

The fifth annual Farmers Appreciation Week (FAW) will be held September 8th - 15th, 2014. The event raises public awareness of the important contribution to life in BC made by local farmers.

Best Overall Poem

365 Farmers

By Jillian Merrick

J is for January. A joyous month. A new year. Wood burning. Wildlife in the fields. Peace and calm as the days grow long.

F is for February. A frigid month. A month cut short because even the coldest of days cannot ward off the whispers of life found in the pages of seed catalogues.

M is for March. A month of momentum. What starts as creaks and cracks in the old farmers' backs, grows to a steady hum.

A is for April. A month of accomplishments. Seeds are sown, fences are fixed, and farmers stand fierce against the spring floods.

M is for May. A maternal month. Slippery calves in warm stalls, safe from spring chill. Seeds like students, lined in rows, ready to grow.



Young people show appreciation for farmers at the Penticton Farmers Market in celebration of Farmers Appreciation Week. Credit: Denise Blashko

J is for June. A jolly month. Market doors open and smiles are aplenty. Small babes on four legs frolic in fields, joyful and consumed by the moment.


J is for July. A jealous month. Schools and offices dim their lights, and families cruise the highways in search of sunny lakeside serenity, but the farmer's toil continues.

A is for August. An arduous month. Fields as far as the eye can see are cut, cured and curled up into bales. Swift hands harvest endlessly. The auction bell rings in the distance.

S is for September. A stockpiling month. Time to count your chips. Did the gamble pay off? Can hearts and spades compete in a world obsessed with diamonds?

O is for October. An organic month. Earthly decay fills the air as life recedes to the soil. Life is sacrificed for feast, and meat for many meals fills the freezer. Death completes the circle.

N if for November. A neighbourly month. Work is packed away. Farmers gather for annual reflection and reconnection. Mark your calendars.

D is for December. A month deep in dreams. Long dark nights give the gift of sleep. With fields tucked safely under blankets of snow, farmers find peace under blankets in bed. 

pigweed at our farmers market stand and including it in our CSA bins. We have a fairly large clientele who use our greens to make smoothies and they're constantly looking for a non-kale flavour. They loved the new greens. And although I couldn't market any of the thistle, I suddenly found myself looking at it more positively as I cut it off at the base. The "chop & drop" technique saved my sanity.

Limiting Factor #2: Water

Although we have the most beautiful, loamy soil I've ever worked, our farm has only a shallow 20-foot well which supplies just the house. We have two 5,000-gallon cisterns that collect rainwater but despite the fact that we only use drip irrigation, they ran dry at the end of July this year. Calling in the water truck is a \$150 cost each time.

I was initially growing transplants and spacing them along the dripline, thinking that this was the most efficient way of using the small amount of water I had. The transplants would struggle along, often with the surface of the soil drying out between them. I'd then turn to the carrot bed, full of carrot and chickweed, and marvel at how moist the beds were as I harvested the chickweed for salad mix. The weeds really helped trap the moisture in the soil much better than the straw mulch I was using.

So began my first experiment with polyculture. Because I still have a bias of plants competing with each other if they're too close, I decided to take some baby steps. I planted my peppers normally, and in alternate rows I planted watermelon. As the watermelon grew, it crawled in and around the peppers, never actually crawling up them. It seemed to be a good combination of plant architecture.

I tried a similar experiment with leeks and New Zealand spinach, this time in the same bed, with two rows of leeks growing in the middle and the spinach on either side.

The added benefit of the polyculture was that I had less weeding to do! Stacking benefits is another principle of permaculture and I was especially happy to see this principle in action.

Saving Seeds...

Although seed saving isn't just a principle of permaculture, I hadn't really looked at it seriously until I put my spring seed order in. I have some history in the

seed business, having worked for West Coast Seeds a decade ago. I had always thought of seeds as a fairly cheap input. And then I put in my first full-season order. Over \$800 later, I realized that the price of seed has increased considerably in the last decade. I can't say that the price of vegetables at market has followed.


So, even from a solely economic point of view, seed saving made sense. I decided to try seed saving from just a couple of the overwintering vegetables: Improved Siberian Kale, and a patch of green salad bowl lettuce and magenta spreen which had survived the winter of 2012. I diligently clipped off any brassica flowers from the other spring greens to ensure there was no cross-pollination in the kale, and by August I had some fairly dry pods to begin harvesting. I was pleasantly surprised to end up with 3 pounds of kale and a pound of lettuce seed. I'm still trying to clean the spreen but that's a good winter project.

One of secondary benefits of seed saving is that you get a carpet of seedlings around your mother plants. So not only have I got a nice supply of seed that I can sell, but I also have baby greens to add to salad mix through the fall and winter.

Other experiments on my farm have included planting strawberries in between our fruit trees, sheet mulching with coffee sacks and seaweed around the base of the fruit trees to keep weeds down, and planting comfrey as a nurse crop under the apple trees. For the latter, I actually had to dig up comfrey from another farm, as I didn't have any growing on mine.

With every experiment, I ask myself how it will impact my two limiting factors of water and labour. The strawberries went in because I was sick of mowing in between the widely spaced fruit trees. Sheet mulching was also a labour saving device to cut down on mowing, and it helps to conserve water.

... and Saving Sanity

Although my vegetable rows may not be weed-free and the farm may look chaotic, I've saved my sanity and I'm actually looking forward to the next season. Permaculture principles continue to impress me and I think I'll be experimenting with new techniques in the years ahead. 




www.mervilleorganics.ca

... *Salmon Safe*, continued from page 23

about the role farmers play in protecting healthy and functioning ecosystems essential to salmon.

Growing development pressures on our watersheds have put salmon and their homes increasingly at the forefront of social consciousness. In 2013, Pacific salmon were named as BC's official fish emblem, and during summer salmon regularly dominate the headlines. So there is no question that salmon conservation is an important issue for British Columbians. For BC consumers who increasingly expect environmentally-friendly choices in the marketplace, Salmon-Safe provides a reliable certification that has proven successful in the United States and is now gaining recognition in BC.

"Salmon-Safe is still a new brand in BC and it will take time before the average consumer will recognize it. But when customers see our Salmon-Safe sign at the Farmers Market, they ask what it is about," says Andrew Arkesteyn-Vogler of Crisp Organics, "and the early adopters are interested in it." For farmers like Andrew, becoming Salmon-Safe has little to do with

attracting new customers; the program simply aligns with what he believes in. For him, it's an opportunity to "drive change by inspiring other farmers to become better stewards of the land". 

 www.salmonsafe.org/bc

Costanza Testino works for the Pacific Salmon Foundation as the Salmon-Safe B.C. Program Manager - Agriculture Initiative. She delivers high profile education campaigns and works with an extensive network of stakeholders to raise the profile of Salmon-Safe and promote certified farmers.



Your local
choice for
over 20 years



choicesmarkets.com



/ChoicesMarkets



@ChoicesMarkets

Events & Announcements

Announcements

Learn Organic Vegetable Production Online - The Organic Farming Institute of BC launches its third course in an online series of organic trainings. The latest addition, Organic Vegetable Production, is intended for individuals wanting to begin organic vegetable production on any scale, or to improve practices in an existing operation.

Special Introductory Pricing for ORG 103 is \$350.00 CDN

Events

Basic Crop Inspection Training, Feb 24 - 28 2014, Nanaimo, BC. The Canadian Organic Growers (COG) and the International Organic Inspectors Association are co-sponsoring a Basic Crop Inspection Training in Nanaimo, BC from February 24 to 28 2014 following the COABC 2014 Conference.

This course is a comprehensive training on the Canadian Organic Standards with four days of instruction, which includes a field trip to a certified organic farm and a half-day for testing. Students will learn about the certification process, applicable organic standards, how to inspect organic farms, audit trail (record keeping) requirements, approved materials, assessing soil fertility, regulatory requirements, risk assessment, investigative skills, inspection report writing, inspector eth

ics, communications skills, and whole systems awareness.

For more info contact Ashley St. Hilaire at COG: ashley@cog.ca or 1-888-375-7383. DEADLINE TO APPLY IS MONDAY JANUARY 10TH 2014

UBC Farm Symposium

Join the UBC Farm on Friday February 7th, 2014, for the 2014 UBC Farm Symposium, a full and free day of presentations and group activities providing insights on our food system sustainability, with topics ranging from hops production, institutional food procurement, and community education.

Date: Friday February 7th, 2014

Time: 9am-2:30pm

Location: The Old Barn Community Centre Upstairs Meeting Room

Cost: Free! Lunch is \$5 (optional)

Registration: <http://symposium.ubcfarm.ubc.ca/registration/>

Leading the Local Food Revolution

The 2014 Conference & AGM of the BC Association of Farmers' Markets will be held February 28th - March 2nd, 2014 at Granville Island, Vancouver, BC. Nominations are open until February 1, 2014 for Best Market, Manager & Vendor in the 2013 Farmers' Market Awards. Celebrate outstanding Farmers' Markets, Farmers' Market Managers and

CLASSIFIEDS

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

Events listings are free!

For more information, contact Moss at:

bcogadvertising@certifiedorganic.bc.ca

Market Vendors for the extraordinary contributions they make to our communities. Nomination forms are available on the BCAFM website (www.bcfarmersmarket.org), and need to be submitted by February 1, 2014.

Pacific Agriculture Show, Tradex Exhibition Centre (Abbotsford Airport), Abbotsford, BC. January 30 - Feb 1, 2014. Thursday thru Saturday 9:00am - 4:30pm. Admission \$12, seniors and 4H \$10, kids under 14 FREE!



ORDER FORM

Enterprise Name: _____

Contact Name: _____

Address: _____

City/Province: _____

Postal Code: _____ **Phone Number:** (____) _____

Certification Body & No.: _____

Date Ordered: _____ **Date Required:** _____

PST Exemption (for packaging materials)

Option 1:

☐ PST Number: _____

Option 2: Certificate of Exemption

☐ 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		
Stickers 1 1/4" square	1000 pc roll	\$10.50	10 rolls \$90.00		
Twist Ties 10" (15,000 per case)	1000 pc	\$13.00	Full Case-\$165.00		

The packaging materials above are only available to COABC Certified Organic members and are PST exempt for qualifying enterprises (see above).

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? _____

Promo Materials: available to everyone	Member \$	Non-member \$	Tax		
Bucket Hats size M or L *	\$15.75	\$15.75	PST taxable		
Ball Caps	\$13.10	\$13.10	PST taxable		
Green T-shirts L or XL *	\$18.00	\$18.00	PST taxable		
Natural T-shirts (Logo) M or L *	\$7.25	\$7.25	PST taxable		
Natural T-shirts (Plain) S, XL or XXL	\$5.00	\$5.00	PST taxable		
Organic Tree Fruit Management	\$19.95	\$25.95	No PST		
Sub-total (before taxes and shipping):					

*Limited quantities available - please contact the COABC office for availability

GST # 887782431

Postage Rates

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

GST will be added to postage amounts

Rates vary and will be calculated at the office

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

TO ORDER ONLINE VISIT:
WWW.CERTIFIEDORGANIC.BC.CA

Good Money™

invests in the local sustainable food system to promote a healthier future.

A Vancity microloan and line of credit equipped Harkness & Co. Butchers to provide ethically sourced, local cuts of meat, and share the secrets of their waste-not-want-not philosophy with friends and neighbours.

Our microloan program looks beyond the numbers and gets behind businesses that provide local, natural food.

vancity.com/LocalNaturalOrganicFood



Vancity
Make Good Money.™

Harkness & Co. Butchers, Vancity member.

Good Money (TM) and Make Good Money (TM) are trademarks of Vancouver City Savings Credit Union.