

British Columbia
Organic Grower

The Cooperatives Issue!

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A Community of Co-operatives

Farmer Focus explores farming co-ops in BC – get inspired!

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Conference Review

Find out who won the Brad Reid award, and more!

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BC Organic Grower

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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.

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On the Cover: Brassica seeds in hands. *Credit: Thomas Buchan*

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Editor's Note

Darcy Smith

The farmer is sometimes stereotyped as a solitary type, keeping company with his crops, cows, and the occasional (fingers crossed) crow—but at the COABC conference this year, it was hard to miss the wonderful sense of collaboration, togetherness, and encouragement that characterizes the organic community. At every turn, friends and strangers alike were quick to offer advice, aid, and opportunity to fellow attendees. I saw an older generation eager to make space for younger folk to step into leadership roles, and new farmers just as eagerly reaching out for mentorship. It's no coincidence, then, that the theme of this issue is co-operation.



You can relive some of those co-operative conference moments in Michelle's conference recap on page 14. The weekend was full of sessions that explored how we can better work with each other, with nature, and with the rest of the agriculture sector.

If you had any doubt that co-operation was the name of the game this issue, take a quick glance at some of our bylines. You'll find them a lot fuller than usual, as many folk teamed up to share a wealth of information on co-operatives. The more the merrier!

This is certainly true with a special Farmer Focus feature, where Marjorie Harris connects with four co-operative farms (page 8). While you may be intrigued by the different business models, you'll surely be inspired to see what can be accomplished when we work together. The BC Eco Seed Co-op is another shining example of this; on page 16 follow the growth of the co-op from the seed of an idea through its germination and growth to the fruits of the harvest we're seeing now.

Like the idea of co-operatives but not sure how it works in practice? Flip straight to Chris Bodnar's primer on farming co-operatives on page 6, then dig into Moss Dance's look at collective marketing on page 22. Both of these articles are full of great tips on starting and running a co-op – prepare to be bitten by the co-operative bug!

Of course, nature is our first and best partner, so look to Footnotes from the Field (page 20) for info on vegetated buffers. Whoever said “good fences make good neighbours” has obviously never seen a well-planned buffer! Wondering how animals fit into all this? Find out how to keep small flocks healthy on page 23.

Co-operation extends beyond the farm, too, so I'm thrilled to welcome to these pages representation from the BC Ministry of Agriculture in the form of a new column from Susan Smith, Industry Specialist in Organics. She explores late blight in this issue (page 26), and I, for one, will be eagerly awaiting her next column.

Let's keep the conversation (and collaboration!) going – reach out with your thoughts, letters, and story ideas at editor@certifiedorganic.bc.ca. As well, be sure to visit us at our new online home!

 www.bcorganicgrower.ca



Celebrating 25 Years

Pro Organics is proud to represent BC organic producers and to be celebrating our 25th year of supporting local, organic, sustainable farming.

Today, as it was 25 years ago, our mission remains the same: Promoting the growth and integrity of organics from field to table.



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In Loving Memory of Cathleen Kneen

The organic community in BC is notable for the many visionary women who have championed organic as leaders—and it is with much sadness this year that we mourn the loss of another of these great women, Cathleen Kneen.

A committed social justice activist and feminist, Cathleen always brought people together to form

community and foster positive change. In our province alone, she founded the BC Food Systems Network, established farmers' markets, and served on the COABC board. Nationally, she helped found Food Secure Canada, and worked tirelessly as a champion of food sovereignty. She also founded this magazine, which will serve as a legacy to her gift with the written word, and her eagerness to share knowledge.

Cathleen never wavered in her quest to build a better food system. She leaves us a legacy in the orga-

nizations she founded, the people she inspired, and in the friends she made. We can learn so much from women like Cathleen, and Mary Forstbauer, but among the important lessons these inspiring, strong women have for us, one stands out: make every moment count.

We love you and miss you, Cathleen. Thank you for bringing us together.

Bill 11's New (Certified) Organic Era in BC

There's been a lot of buzz in organic circles this year about the BC Ministry of Agriculture's proposal to regulate the term "organic." While food marketed across provincial and national borders, or in grocery stores, must be certified organic in order to use the word organic, no such rules exist at a more local level—farmers' markets, for example.

In February, Minister of Agriculture Norm Letnick introduced Bill 11, the Food and Agricultural Products Classification Act "for the purpose of modernizing, harmonizing and streamlining programs to classify and impose standards with respect to food and agricultural products."

The new regulation promises to reduce consumer confusion around the word organic, while creating a more equitable playing field for growers and producers, and, ultimately, putting us one step further down the path to a resilient, healthy food system.

Read the legislation, and let us know your thoughts!

🔗 www.leg.bc.ca/parliamentary-business/legislation-debates-proceedings/40th-parliament/5th-session/bills-first-reading/gov11-1



*BC Seeds Roundtable at the 2016 COABC Conference
Credit: Michael Marrapese*

Help Consumers #ThinkBCOrganic with #FarmerFriday

COABC is partnering with COTA (Canada Organic Trade Association) and BC's Ministry of Agriculture on a new consumer campaign to raise the profile of BC Certified Organic.

#ThinkBCOrganic evolved out of the highly successful #ThinkCanadaOrganic campaign. We're calling all BC organic farmers to join us in #FarmerFriday. Help connect British Columbians to the hard-working, dedicated people who grow their food – you! How can you participate?

Share weekly #FarmerFriday posts from ThinkBeforeYouEat and COABC on Facebook

Use the tags #ThinkBCOrganic and #FarmerFriday on your own social media posts

Tell your story in a farmer profile featured on national social media (check out previous profiles at ThinkCanadaOrganic.ca/farm)

To submit a profile, email: editor@certifiedorganic.bc.ca

Vandana's Videos – Online!

Did you miss Vandana Shiva's sessions at this year's conference? From her inspiring call-to-action keynote to the BC Seeds Roundtable, Vandana Shiva applied her international perspective and Warrior Woman wisdom to BC's organic sector – and we caught it all on video!

Check them out on the COABC website and share with others who couldn't join us in person:

certifiedorganic.bc.ca/vandana

Benefits Update

The COABC Board has struck a committee to consider quotes for an organizational benefits package. Watch for more information in the coming months.

The BC Organic Grower Has a New Digital Home

Whether you're looking for the latest Farmer Focus article, or trying to hunt down tips on aphid control, now you can easily read and share articles from current and back issues of the magazine. And not to worry, the print edition will still show up in your mailbox every season! We're sharing a little more organic knowledge with the world at:

bcorganicgrower.ca



CO-OPERATION

As a Business Model?

By Chris Bodnar



If you tell most people that they can succeed in business by cooperating rather than competing, they might laugh you out of the room. Competition is, after all, the basis of our market system.

Co-operatives, however, operate within a competitive marketplace, but are based on values and practices of cooperation. And co-operatives have a history of success across a number of sectors.

THE CO-OPERATIVE ADVANTAGE

There's a very simple way that co-operatives are different from other businesses: they exist to meet the needs of their members. Not only that, but their members are also their owners.

This might not seem revolutionary, but in a world of shareholder-focused profits for corporations, co-operatives exist for a different reason. Sure, many co-operatives are profitable but their success is contingent on helping their members succeed by providing a necessary service.

Similar to companies, co-operatives provide legal benefits such as limiting liability and providing a legally recognized structure to raise capital for a business venture. But co-operatives are different from corporations. They are democratically controlled through a one-member one-vote principle. Economic benefits such as profits are returned to members based on the proportion of business the member did with the co-op.

While co-operatives are not the primary choice for

DIFFERENT TYPES OF CO-OPS

- ★ Supply Co-operatives provide farmers with inputs at competitive prices
- ★ Marketing and Processing (Producer) Co-operatives market and process goods delivered by farmer members. The co-operatives aim to provide farmers the best price possible for their products by securing large contracts or developing and producing consumer products desired in the marketplace
- ★ Worker Co-operatives exist to provide employment to their owner members
- ★ Consumer Co-operatives serve consumers by sourcing and selling goods

most new business ventures, they are appealing at a time when many citizens distrust corporations that they perceive as acting in the interests of profits for shareholders with little transparency or accountability.

Co-operatives generally have a social perspective built into their operations. The values at the core of co-operatives include self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity, and solidarity. Social responsibility – something many corporate bodies struggle to define – are a basic component of most co-operatives as they exist to serve their membership.

A NATURAL FIT FOR AGRICULTURE

There is a self-help nature to co-operatives. Communities often start co-operatives to provide services that otherwise wouldn't exist. Co-operatives have allowed many farmers to reduce risk and achieve economies of scale by marketing together. This has been an important component for many rural communities, where the local economy and social fabric only exist by virtue of the community members who crafted the society they wanted.

As a result, co-operatives have a long history in agriculture, allowing farmers to work collectively to succeed. Many co-operatives originated in rural com-

munities as local initiatives to provide the population with a service they needed. In most cases, the communities were deemed too small by outside businesses to open up shop – but the communities wouldn't survive without basic services. Enter the co-operative.

Farmers established co-operatives to source their inputs, from fuel and seeds to building materials to construct their homes and barns. They started producer co-ops to market their products – apples, berries, dairy, and grain – to a larger market. Credit unions provided financial services to farmers in communities where banks wouldn't operate or wouldn't serve farmers.

In the late 1940s, co-operative farms offered veterans an opportunity to become farmers, and eventually to purchase the land to continue their own farms.

AGRICULTURAL CO-OPS TODAY

Co-operatives remain an important part of agricultural communities around the world. In BC, flower growers market their products through the United Flower Growers co-operative in Burnaby while cranberry growers sell through their producer co-op, Ocean Spray. Over 500 growers are members of the BC Tree Fruits Co-operative.

Smaller co-operatives are filling important roles as well. Workers co-ops have become a structure for some new farm businesses such as the Vancouver Food Pedalers Co-operative, which grows micro-greens. Glorious Organics is an established workers' co-operative in Aldergrove – and it operates at Fraser Common Farm, a co-operatively-owned farm.

In recent years Merville Organics has emerged as a producer co-op in the Comox Valley for the purpose of marketing member produce through farmers markets and a Community Shared Agriculture program. Members are able to offer customers a wider selection of produce while reducing their individual farms' time and expense spent on marketing.

Nationally, 75-year-old Agropur dairy co-operative has over 3,400 farmer members across Canada. Canadian worker co-op La Siembra works with producer co-operatives to purchase cocoa, sugar, and coffee for their Camino brand products. This allows small-scale farmers to remain viable while supporting local education and health programs through the reinvestment of organic and fair trade premiums back into the community.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Co-operatives provide a distinct advantage to farmers. Producer co-ops help farmers retain the greatest share

INTERESTED IN STARTING A CO-OPERATIVE?

Check out the BC Ministry of Agriculture's Co-op Start-up Guide at

 [www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/bmi7170/\\$FILE/agricultural-cooperatives-startup.pdf](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/bmi7170/$FILE/agricultural-cooperatives-startup.pdf)

The BC Co-operative Association offers a business boot camp in May for co-operative ventures. More info at:

 bccacoop.coop/cooperatenow

of the retail price of products while achieving larger contracts for greater marketing reach. Many of these co-ops also provide services to members, including field research and extension services as well as quality control and product research and development.

Co-operatives can also differentiate themselves in the marketplace by offering a values proposition to consumers that includes social impact and community investment.

In the realm of worker co-operatives and land co-ops, these models offer alternative modes of entry into agriculture for new farmers and creative solutions to the problems of high land costs or lack of family history or support in agriculture.

Ultimately, those involved in the co-operative economy understand that cooperation provides distinct benefits to the broader community. Cooperation recognizes that our individual success within society is best based on the collective success of our communities.



Chris Bodnar co-owns and operates Close to Home Organics with his wife, Paige, at Glen Valley Organic Farm in Abbotsford. They operate a 145-member Community Shared Agriculture program and sell at two weekly farmers markets during the farming season. Prior to farming, Chris earned a PhD in Communication from Carleton University. He now teaches the Business of Agriculture course in Kwantlen Polytechnic University's Sustainable Agriculture program. Chris sits on the board of the Mount Lehman Credit Union.

A THUMBS UP *For the Agricultural Cooperatives of BC*



Co-op members from Glen Valley Organic Farm Co-operative, Glorious Organics, Growing Opportunities Farm Community Co-op, Merville Organics Growers' Co-op & the B.C. Eco-Seed Co-op. Left to right: (back row) Arzeena Hamir, Russell Heitzmann, Chris Bodnar, Paige Dampier, Jen Cody, Craig Evans. (Front row) Clara, Julia, and Roxie Bodnar, Heather Pritchard & Moss Dance. Photo credit: Thomas Buchan

By Marjorie Harris, Glorious Organics, Merville Organic Growers' Co-operative, Glen Valley Organic Farm Co-operative, and Growing Opportunities Farm Community Co-op

No two co-ops are alike—though they often bring together a blend of smart business sense and idealism that lends itself to success, both in the market and in the community.

That's why, for this edition of Farmer Focus, we collaborated—in true co-operative spirit – with a sampling of BC's diverse co-operative farming models. Through the personal reflections of four co-operative farms, we'll explore everything from the economic advantages to social commitment to maintaining a unified vision.

Glorious Organics

- **Workers Co-op:** Incorporated 2006
- **Shareholders:** Five (Open to new members upon application; approval prerequisite is to work with Glorious Organic for one full year before applying)
- **Vision:** Organic crop production business
- **Situated:** On 6.6 acres land held in common by the Fraser Common Farm Cooperative
- **Market Availability:** Farmers' markets under the banner of 'The Organic Farm Connection,' direct to restaurant sales, and a CSA program

 www.gloriousorganics.com

Glorious Organics is a Workers Co-op that runs the farming enterprise on Fraser Common Farm (FCF).

All of the current shareholders of Glorious Organics are also shareholders in Fraser Common Farm which has been cooperatively held for 40 years. The entire property is 20 acres on two titles, allowing for more housing to be built in the future. Only 6.6 acres is intensely gardened while the rest of the acreage is as a wood lot where co-op members forage for nettles, berries, flowers, mushrooms, and more.

Glorious Organics member Susan Davidson points to one of the co-operatives unique traits: three generations currently reside on the farm. The elder members are now all over 65 years old, a few members are in their 40's, and everyone else is under 30 years old. Fellow member Heather Pritchard explains that growth is built into their co-op model: "we are in an expansion phase right now. The growth brings in longevity to the co-op's stewardship of the habitat and farming. It is what I love, to have a very direct relationship with the land, and I have confidence that it will carry on after I leave: a legacy of farming and community."

Positive relationships are always an informal priority during the day-to-day group activities of co-operative property stewardship. However, occasionally more structured facilitated workshops are taken on for specific considerations like group check-ins, reconnections, re-examining purpose, or developing a new vi-



Members at Glen Valley Organic Farm Co-operative
Photo credit: Brian Harris

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Trellising tomatoes at Glen Valley Organic Farm Co-operative. Credit: Brian Harris

sion. The co-op has conflict resolution tools available if the need ever arises.

Growing season is an intense time for Glorious Organics. Keeping up with demand means 10 to 12 employees are hired on to assist in production, harvest, and marketing. A huge variety of salad greens and veggies are grown and this year a mushroom growing workshop will be run to facilitate a mushroom cultivation program.

The Fraser Common Farm hosts both communal and individual housing and maintains a discrete balance between sustainable food production techniques and woodland habitat conservation.

Merville Organics Growers' Cooperative

- **Participating Farms:** Amara Farm, Ripple Farm, Green Arrow Farm, Kloverdalen Farm
- **Non-profit Marketing Co-op:** Incorporated 2015
- **Shareholders:** Five
- **Vision:** To support its members to sell organic produce and value added products through three main outlets: CSA, direct to restaurants, and farmers markets
- **Situated:** On five independently managed farm business land-bases
- **Market Availability:** Tofino Chef's Guild, Comox Valley Farmers Market, Campbell River Farmers market, CSA program

 www.mervilleorganics.ca

Merville Organic Growers Co-op is a combination of market co-op and production co-op. Founders Arzeena Hamir and Moss Dance first came together in 2012 in an informal partnership inspired by Saanich Organics.

“It made sense for us to collaborate,” says Arzeena, “I was starting my first season and Moss had run a small CSA for a year. We were both looking for a way to expand and working together reduced the time both of us spent advertising and going to markets.” That first year of their collaboration saw them taking turns transporting produce from both of their farms to market and running a 30 share CSA, says Arzeena.

As more farms joined in by 2015, they incorporated through the BC Co-op Association. Merville Organic Growers’ Co-operative marketing umbrella is now home to four organic farms, whose joint shareholders are Arzeena Hamir, Moss Dance, Neil Turner, Robin Sturley, Kira Kotilla, Russell Heitzmann, and Calliope Gazetas.

The co-op shares equipment and resources located at Amara Farm, including a walk-in cooler, wash station, produce transportation, tables, tents, display bins, bulk purchases for packaging, and common signage. They also pool hands for farm labour for short term work parties (think CSA veggie washing), and for specific crop activities, such as blueberry blossom stripping, setting wireworm traps, snapping scapes, and harvesting garlic.

Economic and marketing benefits play a role in strengthening the co-op. Drought hit the Comox Valley hard last year, and Arzeena and her fellow co-op members found it a major benefit to have built in redundancy planning for certain crops. That way, if a crop failed on one or two farms, another farm could fill the gap and the co-op could avoid catastrophe.

For Arzeena and the other co-op members, clearly defining responsibilities has been very important: “Russell is the CSA manager, I’m the market manager, Robin is our restaurant liaison. We each have the autonomy to develop each role as we see fit and if we need help we ask for it. We are all stakeholders, and because of that we all take on leadership roles.” Russell adds, “Sharing the workload of selling produce gives us all more time to actually grow food. When we do work for the co-op it benefits everyone.”

Frequent and clear communication is the key to the co-op’s success, says Russell. “If anyone has an issue or suggestion, they bring it to the group. We know that everyone is going to hear each other out and take

concerns seriously. It really helps that we’re all good friends. And good cooks! We share meals together often, not just before meetings but also just in a social context. I think it helps us remember why we are doing this. We meet once a week, at each farm in a rotation, for dinner, socializing, and business meetings.”

The social commitment to the groups’ goals is supported by strong relationship building both informally and through formal business meetings and visioning retreats. Informal relationship building happens very naturally when packing for the CSA together when doing other common work together. A retreat for strategic planning and visioning is usually planned for November, once the fervour of the busy season has cooled.

Glen Valley Organic Farm Co-operative

- **Home to:** Close to Home Organics, Earth Apple Organic Farm, Pitchfork Organic Farm, Mina’s Honey Pot
- **Agricultural Production Co-op:** Incorporated 1998
- **Shareholders:** 50 (\$5000 per “par value” share. Unlimited shares are available)
- **Vision:** to ‘feed and educate present and future generations by co-operatively holding, stewarding and sustainably farming our land’
- **Situated:** on unceded Stó:lō First Nation territory and is a diverse mix of fertile loam, woodland, and wetland along the south bank of the Fraser River in Mt. Lehman BC
- **Market Availability:** Langley Farmers Market, Lonsdale Quay Farmer’s Market, Trout Lake Market, Nat Bailey Market, and a CSA program

 www.glenvalleyorganicfarm.org/gvwp

“Glen Valley Organic Farm (GVOF) thrives today because of the determined social investment and long-term vision of its founding members in 1998,” says Chris Bodnar. Chris is thankful for the co-operative model: GVOF has made organic farming a viable career choice for himself and his partner Paige Dampier, who live on the farm with their three children. He recounts how in the beginning some founding shareholders mortgaged their own homes to put up the money for financing. Vancity played a fundamental role in GVOF’s creation by lending the mortgage, providing a \$20,000 grant, and offering an interest rate reduction – all of which helped the co-operative pay off the mortgage in 2007.

Chris emphasizes the depth of the social investment the 50 non-resident members contribute as he walks me past the large labyrinth planted in flowers.

He tells me how Jo Wilson, 82 years old, steadfastly rides her bicycle out on summer weekends to joyfully tend to all of the flowerbeds and the amazing flower labyrinth. Mina's Honey Pot offers another glimpse of the diversity of opportunity offered by the co-operative model of GVOF. A hobby project of shareholders Tricia Carpenter and her granddaughter Mina, they began their apiary in 2010. Their beekeeping project dovetails into farming activities with the goal of increasing crop production through pollination and producing sweet rewards of honey for the co-op, market, and friends.

Since its formation, GVOF has been home to a succession of organic farming businesses that help to meet the co-ops mandate to provide access to certified organic food for shareholders and the local community. Once again, succession of farm businesses is underway. Jeremy Pitchford, of Pitchfork Organic Farm, is being succeeded by Shirelle Cote of Earth Apple Organic Farm. During the two year planned transition, Shirelle has already planted an orchard and Jeremy is preparing an organic seed production business. Chris & Jeremy both came on board nine years ago when they succeeded from John Switzer.

Jeremy recalls his gratitude for John's long four year mentorship, teaching the newbie farmers the skills of the trade, and for the ongoing harvest of John's farming foundations. He affirms the value of taking every opportunity to engage with other shareholders over lunch or meetings to manifest the co-operative vision into a living, on-the-ground, dynamic farm.

The co-op members' social investment is further solidified by participation in every aspect of planning and consensus decision making by the various management teams. Shareholders meet regularly over shared meals, frequent business meetings and special events. There are many perks for the non-resident shareholders, such as discounts on organic produce, and access to the forests and farmland for gatherings, special events, and environmental stewardship opportunities.

Glen Valley Organic Farm Co-operative is an active member of several like-minded organizations including the BC Association of Regenerative Agriculture, the Community Farm Network, FarmFolk/CityFolk, and the BC Association of Farmers Markets.

Growing Opportunities Farm Community Co-op

- **Non-profit Community Service Co-op:** Incorporated 2013
- **Shareholders:** 12 (\$20 per share)
- **Vision:** A Community Farm Co-op designed to provide members with the skills and the experience of farming, food processing, food gathering, cooking, freezing, and further, to assist people to be more food secure by working together
- **Situated:** 3 leased locations in the Nanaimo area farms (12 acre + 5 acres parcels + 1 greenhouse)
- **Market Availability:** Nanaimo Foodshare, Bastion Farmers Market, Bowen Road Farmers Market, Cedar Farmers Market

 www.facebook.com/Growing-Opportunities-Farm-Community-Co-op-154403288071749

The Growing Opportunities Farm Community Co-op was started in 2009 on Providence Farm in the Cowichan Valley. According to co-op co-founder Craig Evans, the inspiration arose when FarmFolk CityFolk, and The Land Conservancy (TLC) hosted a meeting exploring different ways to engage people in using and preserving farmland. From those initial meetings a group of roughly 30 "nebulous anarchists" started farming together on an acre of land leased from Providence. "The priority was to grow food for ourselves and learn the skills required to work together," says Craig.

The following year saw the group expand, and soon after that, they formally registered two co-ops: Farmship Growers Co-op, a for-profit co-op, and the non-profit Growing Opportunities Farm Community Co-op in 2013. The glue that holds the shareholders to the common vision, Craig says, "is just the joy of working together, that sense of sister and brotherhood in the fields and greenhouse, and the chatter over social media with friends."

They work with all skills and abilities, and continue to support people with mental health and learning challenges. Jen Cody, who volunteers with Growing Opportunities, sums it up: "In our culture, working co-operatively is a skill set we need to actively teach

each other in order to demonstrate how effective we are when we our skills are combined.”

Growing Opportunities is currently involved in a Carrot Seed Research Project, (see the Spring 2014 issue of the BC Organic Grower, Vol 17, Issue 2) through the Bauta Family Initiative on Canadian Seed Security, and manages the volunteer and educational programming for Farmship Growers Co-op.

*Written by Marjorie Harris, BSc, IOIA VO, P.Ag.
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Resources

In British Columbia the BC Co-operative Association and Vancity Credit Union play major supporting roles in helping to establish and maintain co-ops through legal assistance, financial funding and business networking. If you are thinking of forming a co-op they are sure places to start your enquiry.

BC Coop Association

Carol Murray, Executive Director,
murray@bccca.coop

 www.bcca.coop

Vancity

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2016 COABC Conference

Legacy, Inspiration, Rejuvenation



Top: Vandana Shiva delivering her keynote address Saturday morning. Bottom left: Natalie Forstbauer offers a touching tribute to her mother, Mary Forstbauer with Annie Moss & Carmen Wakeling. Bottom, right: Annie Moss celebrating as she receives the Brad Reid Memorial award with COABC president, Carmen Wakeling and board members Andrea Turner and Cory Brown. Credit: Michael Marrapese.

By Michelle Tsutsumi, Conference Coordinator

This year's conference was filled with anticipation about our illustrious keynote speaker and the many engaging session topics. There were also undertones of sadness, both from the ongoing ripples from losing Mary Forstbauer in the fall and the more recent passing of Cathleen Kneen—two tenacious and spirited women who were persistent in facilitating organic agriculture and food sovereignty, both in BC and across Canada.

As we acknowledged the deep contributions of these two, we also took time to recognize the legacy of the elders in our community. One of the more impactful sessions was Stories from the Vanguard of the Organics, where panelists who were there when it all went down described the history of the organic community and the commitment it took to get to where we are today. For some of the younger folks in the room, the words resonated and compelled them to be more involved at an organizational level.

Vandana Shiva's keynote address was an impressive interweaving of so many elements: the sacred art of seed saving, how food and access to land contributes to much unrest, the significance of farming nonviolently with the earth, and how food is everything. Shiva's message was inspiring and helped to rejuvenate people (myself included) who were feeling disheartened by how exhausting agriculture can be – and how hard on your mind, your body, and your heart.

With Resilience as the focus this year, it became clear just how strong the organic community is. Comments were overheard about how this conference had a real sense of togetherness and there was a rich diversity of backgrounds in attendance, from post-secondary students and retailers to new entrants to organics and long time farmers, from Certification Body administrators to agrologists. The Friday Open Space Discussion hosted several tables focused on topics such as apprenticeships, seeds, CSA's, and chemical/GMO drift. It was invigorating to see lively talk and a healthy mix of young and older alike.

During the Friday Reception, we were thrilled to experience conference firsts: having wine from Kalala Organic Estate Winery and a cask of Crannóg Ales' Wobbly Toddler. Pemberton Distillery (whisky) and Dogwood Brewery offered up additional sampling. Chef Inna prepared an abundant spread of organic food, ranging from lovely charcuterie platters on Friday to most delicious pork belly slices for breakfasts and a satisfying range of vegetarian options.

The Trade Show was packed and it was hard to walk down the foyer at times. Mini social media sessions were a hit, providing short bursts of information on how to fit social media into your farming schedule, best



Top: Seed experts planting inspiration at the BC Seeds Roundtable (from left: Chris Thoreau, Vandana Shiva, Arzeena Hamir, Jess Howardson, Mel Sylvestre). Bottom: Eager traffic at the annual seed exchange. Credit: Michael Marrapese.

practices for copy and text, as well as how to grow and engage social media followers. Thank you to COTA and COABC for facilitating these.

Feedback from the sessions was very positive, with crowd favourites being the presentations on healthy honeybee colonies, small scale hops production, and setting SMART goals for your business plan. The strong emphasis on seeds this year was well received. Both basic and advanced seed saving presentations were offered and it was standing room only in the BC Seeds Roundtable, where panelists shared the current status of seed in BC and Vandana Shiva provided her global perspective.

MC Jordan Marr was fabulous and creative in keeping the program running on time (and catching up after an initial delay) and encouraging people to fill out their evaluation forms - and for the record, I would never sneak onto someone's field to spread salt. How could he say such a thing?! ;) A highlight on Saturday was Carmen Wakeling's presentation of the Brad Reid award to Annie Moss, in recognition of her steadfast work in promoting organics. Annie was so modest in receiving the award; however, it is entirely well deserved.

A heartfelt thank you goes out to the event sponsors, planning committee, volunteers, hotel staff, and food donors, who made this such an unforgettable and momentous weekend – truly regenerative on so many levels. 🌱

Cooperative Hands



The B.C. Eco Seed Co-op is Supercharging BC's Vibrant Seed Scene

Heather Pritchard (left) and Jen Cody (right) of the B.C. Eco Seed Co-op survey carrot seed head development. Credit: Michael Marrapese

By David Catzel, Hannah Lewis, Mary Alice Johnson & Mel Sylvestre

Seed diversity has been ever changing over the last century. As small farms were abandoned or amalgamated into huge monocrop businesses, the newly formed large agricultural corporations drove the demand for single varieties of hybrid seed. At the same time, large corporations also absorbed many of the smaller seed companies, and still control most of our seeds today.

In the process, these large seed companies dropped many of the old tried-and-true open pollinated varieties. Public and private breeding programs responded to this shift by focusing on hybrid—and later GMO—varieties; the maintenance of open pollinated seed virtually disappeared.

Heirloom Revival

Networks of farmers and home gardeners noticed and were distraught by the loss of their favorite heirlooms. They responded by forming groups such as The Heritage Seed Program (later Seeds of Diversity Canada) and Seed Savers Exchange in the USA. More recently there has been a revival of the small scale seed industry as well as various platforms such as Seedy Saturdays for seed savers to trade and preserve all the unique , diverse germplasm that had been passed down to us by our agrarian ancestors.

If such a revival has now taken root, then what would be the logical next step in working towards a more seed-secure system? For many years, farmers have been discussing this topic at various gatherings and conferences. The interest was such that the BC Seed Gathering was initiated in 2012 to create space for those discussions to happen. It became clear that one of many next steps to tackle seed security should be to address the needs of farmers to access larger quantities of reliable, regionally grown, quality seed. This would be a monumental task for one person and it was obvious that it would take a team to succeed – or even better: a cooperative.

Beginnings of the B.C. Eco Seed Co-op

At the 2012 BC Seeds Gathering, a group of experienced seed growers and farmers came together to se-

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riously explore collaborative seed production. By the fall of 2014, a core group of those farmers had formed the BC Eco Seed Co-op (BCESC). As of early 2016 the BCESC has now eight producer-members throughout

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Mel Sylvestre teaching about seeds at UBC Farm. Credit: Michael Marrapese

five different regions of BC comprised of experienced seed growers and farmers, and has launched an online store offering more than 50 varieties of seed crops. Although the creation of the BCESC seems to have happened easily, these achievements were the results of many conference calls, face-to-face meetings, and collaborative discussions about everything from a business governance structure to isolation distances for specific seed crops.

Some of the founding members of the BCESC already had seed companies and were offering mostly small-sized seed packets, although some had a few varieties of seed in greater volume. Other members had been growing some seed for themselves, but wanted to scale up their production. By pooling resources and seed, the hope is to fill a gap within the seed production system by providing locally-adapted, ecologically-grown seed for farmers, the large-scale homesteader, the small, medium, and large-sized market gardener, and perhaps even for groups of community or backyard gardeners to buy in bulk and save on cost. The model is based on the concept that if each member of

the co-op commits to producing a few crops in volume, everyone will have access to a greater diversity of regionally grown seed in the quantities needed by many farming operations.

Quality Over Quantity

While recognizing the need for greater volume, the BCESC is not interested in increasing quantity if it means reducing quality. Both aspects are to be prioritized. So how can the BCESC ensure seed quality?

There are many variables of seed production that influence the quality of seed such as good production practices, cleaning methods, selection and breeding, isolation and population size, original germplasm, and age of seed offered. There is also testing for seed purity, germination rate, seedling vigour, and field performance. Within the BCESC, while all members have high standards in one or another of the areas that contribute to seed quality, as a collective the highest standards were to be adopted. After hours of discussions leading to the creation of the BCESC Quality Assurance Program it became clear that seed quality

would increase through the collaborative work of the co-op members.

Growing Out Together

One of the ways to assure quality and ongoing improvement is by performing crop trials. Through growing out each other's seeds, trialing on other farms, and performing side-by-side trials, the co-op assures a more relevant assessment of the member's work as seed producers. As farmers selling their produce, the members also have the opportunity to test customer interest for new varieties in the marketplace. This has developed a feedback loop that will continue to increase seed quality into the future and enable the co-op to ship out seed everyone can all be proud of. BCESC members are first and foremost farmers themselves and fully aware that the seed sold needs to be dependable.

Climate Change Ready


The collaborative work allows the BCESC to offer seeds that are more adapted to the northern growing conditions of BC with higher resilience to the ever-changing climate. Seeds are, after all, a work in progress; they should never stop in time. They are the prod-



*Carrot seed heads.
Credit: Michael Marrapese*

ucts of millennia of interspecies interactions and are constantly held, formed, and reformed by many factors. While it is true that everyone has a part to play in the movement towards a more seed-secure system, coming together collaboratively strengthens bonds and helps solidify the movement. Together, the BC Eco Seed Co-op hopes to contribute to a resilient and thriving local BC seed sector.

Want to learn more about the BCESC, buy seed, or join the co-op in making BC more seed secure? Visit the website:



 bcecoseedcoop.com



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The Two Faces of the VEGETATED BUFFER

By Marjorie Harris BSc, IOIA VO, P.Ag.

Recent studies by the BC Ministry of Agriculture show that pesticide air blaster applicators create a pesticide residue burden of 10% concentration in the spray drift 30 feet from the application site! A vegetated buffer can be a multi-functional operational bonus for the organic enterprise, in addition to meeting the COR standard requirements for preventing unintended contamination by prohibited substances via air flows.

The primary function of the vegetated buffer is to stop dust particulates and spray drift. Seven key features are considered in the design plan: height, density, orientation, length, width, continuity/uniformity, and cross-sectional shape. As such, trees and shrubs are layered to either trap and capture air flow by dense foliage porosity or to modify air flow into a chimney to cause dispersion and dilution.

The outer vegetated buffer face can work to shield and reduce pollution from incoming spray drift, dust, and odours, while the inner vegetated buffer face can provide habitat for sacrificial crops and beneficial organisms. Windbreaks, shelterbelts, and vine covered trellis/fencing can all be designed as effective vegetative buffers to address environmental interface pollution issues.

Conifer trees, especially the wild-type Excelsa Cedar, have been found to have the best type of density for providing air flow porosity, and year round protection from interface pollution of all kinds. In dry areas like the Southern Okanagan these moisture dependant hedges will require some drip irrigation and that cost needs to be balanced with the overall value to the organic operation.

The inner facing surface of the vegetated buffer can be companion planted with flowering plants and shrubs to increase overall biodiversity, and to provide food sources and habitats for beneficial, birds, insects, am-

★ CAN/CGSB - 32.310-2015

Clause 5.2 Environmental Factors

5.2.1 Measures shall be taken to minimize the physical movement of prohibited substances onto organic land and crops from:

a) adjacent areas

Clause 5.2.2

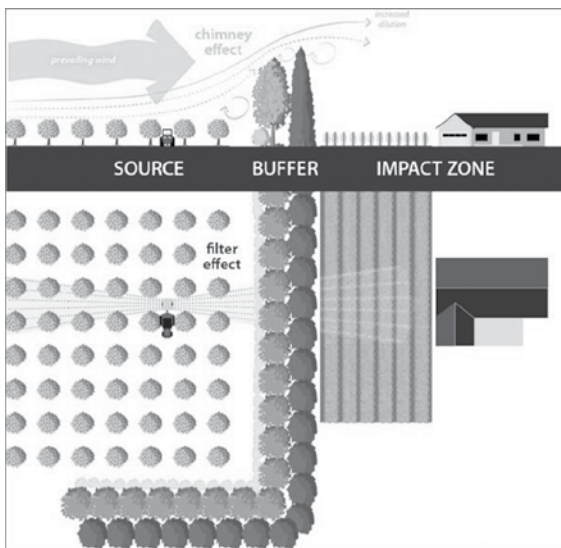
If unintended contact with prohibited substances is possible, distinct buffer zones or other features sufficient to prevent contamination are required:

- ★ Buffer zones shall be at least 8 m (26 ft 3 in) wide;
- ★ Permanent hedgerows or windbreaks, artificial windbreaks, permanent roads or other physical barriers may be used instead of buffer zones;

phibans and native pollinators. A healthy population of beneficial organisms can go a long way to increasing crop yields and controlling garden pests.

A flower packed habitat will attract nectar-feeding insects such as bumbles bees, butterflies and hoverflies, which lay their eggs where there is an abundant supply of aphids for their larvae to feed on. Studies have demonstrated that alfalfa, mustard, yarrow, coriander, cosmos, French marigold, and nasturtium all attract an increase in a wide variety of predatory lady bugs.

Also, consider planting native flowers, plants, and herbs to boost the habitat biodiversity for native pollinators. Often, hybrid plants with large, showy flowers have little or no pollen.



One of the best plants for attracting native pollinators is hyssop. Hyssop's strong aerosol aroma also helps to protect brassicas by masking their scent from white cabbage butterflies. Members of the mint family are favorites of Tachinid flies, hover flies, and parasitic wasps; try planting mint, lemon balm, catnip, and pennyroyal.

Todd Carnahan, author of *Gardening with Native Plants*, recommends the drought tolerant ocean spray brush, nodding onions, and kinnikinnick, which doubles as a great ground cover and produces red berries in the fall.

The vegetated buffer will provide nesting areas for solitary bees and many other beneficial organisms. Remember to construct some rocky areas, puddles and muddy patches too catch fresh water to meet their daily water needs.

The good news for those who would like to explore the value in establishing vegetated buffers is that funding is available through the Environmental Farm Plan Program to offset some of the major costs associated with risk assessment, design, and planting, making the application process all the more worthwhile.

The Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) Program BMP funding is managed through ARDCORP (www.bccac.bc.ca/ardcorp/program/environmental-farm-plan-program) as follows:

Whole farm initial risk assessment is free and completed with the help of an EFP Planning Advisor. The vegetative buffer design and plan is required to implement a vegetative buffer and is covered up to \$2000.

★ Buffer Benefits

A short list of benefits from a vegetated buffer:

- Enhances crop yields
- Provides habitat for biodiverse beneficials (birds, insects, amphibians)
- Reduces wind erosion
- Shelters livestock, crops and structures (homes outbuildings, roads);
- Captures water runoff, nutrients, increase moisture resilience
- Filters and reduces spray drift, dust and help control odors;
- Provides wildlife travel corridors and habitat;
- Increases moisture capture
- Reduces light and noise pollution

This can be completed by an EFP Planning Advisor or qualified professional.

Once the plan is approved, under the EFP BMP program, producers can apply for a cost share incentive of 60% up to \$15,000 for installing a vegetative buffer. A guidebook entitled *Vegetative Buffers for Intensive Agricultural Operations in British Columbia* will be published later in 2016. 🌿

For further information about the funding program and the soon to be released guidebook please contact: David Trotter, M.Sc., P.Ag. | Agroforestry | Sector Development Branch, BC Ministry of Agriculture | p: 604-556-3148 | cell: 778-549-6641 | david.trotter@gov.bc.ca.

 smartfarm.bc.ca

Marjorie Harris BSc, IOIA VO, P.Ag.
marjorieharris@telus.net

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Todd Carnahan, *Gardening with Native Plants*.
Diagram Credit Ministry of Agriculture.

Get your Produce in a Pile!

COLLECTIVE MARKETING FOR VEGGIE FARMERS



Credit: Boomer Jerritt

By Moss Dance

“Our goal is to lessen the marketing workload on our members so they can spend more time farming.”

I was lucky to witness the flourishing of the Saanich Organics farming (and marketing!) co-operative when I lived and farmed on southern Vancouver Island. In their book *All The Dirt: Reflections on Organic Farming*, Saanich Organics farmers Robin Tunnicliffe, Heather Stretch, and Rachel Fisher describe an amusing scene—it may be familiar to you, too. Picture three stressed out, overworked farmers, hauling produce in small, worse-for-wear pick-ups - all of them headed to make deliveries to the same restaurants!

Back in 2012, they might as well have been describing me. At my new farm in the Comox Valley, I was spending four and a half hours every Tuesday delivering 25 CSA shares to members' doorsteps after a morning of frantic harvesting and packing shares.

But that all changed when I met Arzeena Hamir and Neil Turner at Amara Farm in 2013.

As soon as we met, Arzeena and I started hatching plans for a growers' co-operative. Thanks to those clever Saanich Organics farmers, I was feeling pretty excited about the idea of collective marketing by this

time. The only issue was, we needed three members to start a co-op! So we began with a two-farm Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program. We also took turns at the local farmers' market where we sold each others' produce under the Merville Organics banner. By uniting under Merville Organics, our marketing efforts could be more concise and targeted.

By 2015, several of our apprentices graduated onto their own farms, and some new young farmers were setting up shop in town. We finally had our founding member quorum and took the initial steps towards “inco-operating” through the BC Co-operative Association.

WHY COLLABORATE?

I'm not going to lie: collaboration takes a lot of extra work at the beginning. Setting up tracking systems, establishing effective group dynamics, and doing the legwork of starting up a shared business is a huge commitment. It took many long meetings and volunteer hours from our members to get started. As we begin our second year, our co-operative still relies mostly on volunteer labour from our grower members to keep things running. For many farmers, co-operative or not, marketing comes at the end of a long list of things that just can't wait, like thinning the carrots. Still, in our view, the benefits outweigh the challenges.

Despite the volunteer hours we spend running the co-op, our goal is to lessen the marketing workload on our members so they can spend more time farming. Here are a few of the best results of our work together:

INCREASED MARKETING REACH

People power is real when it comes to marketing a farm—we've seen this time and again when our seven grower members combine their contacts in the community to spread the word about our products.

For example, when we post about our CSA on our co-op Facebook page, we can reach a portion of our 800 followers (thanks to Facebook's limiting algorithms we can't reach them all at once for free). If each member shares that post, we exponentially increase our online reach. Friends, family members, and co-workers who know us personally take an interest and spread the word for us. This kind of grassroots marketing is essential in small communities.

ABUNDANCE & VISUAL APPEAL

Working together, we not only increase our marketing reach, we also increase the variety and consistency of the products we supply to our markets. A three-farm market table overflows with produce. This in turn revs up interest in our market stall—the more variety you've got, the more people you're going to attract to your table!

SHARED INFRASTRUCTURE

Thanks to our marketing co-op, our new grower members are saving on farm start-up costs by sharing essential equipment such as a walk-in cooler, wash station, delivery vehicle, harvest totes, packaging materials, and co-op office. We hire a bookkeeper for the co-op which means financial record-keeping is much simpler for all of our members. As well, we share marketing resources—everything from printed materials to social advertising, thus reducing the cost and the workload for all.

GROWER MEMBER SPECIALIZATION

Sharing in the larger tasks of operating a farm business means our grower members can specialize in roles that they enjoy and excel at such as customer relations, farmers' markets, marketing, or sales tracking. The increased number of growers also enables each farmer to specialize in growing crops they have success with instead of trying to grow a full array of crops to fill their own CSA program. Several of our members have expertise in marketing and the co-operative as a whole gets to reap the benefits!

SUGGESTIONS FOR STARTING YOUR OWN MARKETING CO-OPERATIVE

If you are interested in starting your own marketing co-op, here are a few suggestions:

- ★ Get together and host a meeting with farmers in your community who you think you would enjoy working with (liking each other is essential)
- ★ Look for common ground: What challenges are growers facing? Do you have shared goals & values?
- ★ Brainstorm opportunities: What could you do together that you can't do alone?
- ★ List needs & resources: What do you have that you can share? What do folks need to improve their farm businesses?
- ★ Start small: collaborate on something simple & manageable in the beginning and expand on your successes

HARVESTING GRASSROOTS MEDIA

We use three social media platforms and one in-person platform to get the word out about our CSA programs and our annual spring plant sale. During CSA season, we post our weekly blog to all of our social media platforms.

FACEBOOK

Facebook is definitely the workhorse in our social media strategy. All of our members have active personal Facebook accounts, and this has definitely helped us to gain a good following on our Merville Organics Facebook page. It's not all free, but it's not expensive either. The reality is, Facebook doesn't want you to get much exposure for free, especially if you're running a business. That's why we "boost" posts strategically to increase our reach at key times in the season.

TWITTER

Developing a good following on Twitter can take a long time, and a bit more strategic thinking. If you really want to drive traffic to your Twitter feed, it's important to re-tweet, post relevant content, and not just plug your sales. In our experience, Twitter isn't a popular social media platform in our community—so it means our reach is a bit more far-flung and therefore doesn't help much when we are selling CSA shares.

Continued on page 30...

KEEPING YOUR FLOCK HEALTHY



Credit: Thomas Buchan

By Caitlin Dorward, Caroline Chiu & Kent Mullinix (Institute for Sustainable Food Systems, Kwantlen Polytechnic University) and Clayton Botkin (BC Ministry of Agriculture)

BC's Fraser Valley is recognized as a major centre for commercial and supply-managed poultry production including layers, broilers, and turkeys. Also prevalent in this area is a small-scale poultry sector; the BC Ministry of Agriculture estimates that there are as many as 10,000 small flocks in the Fraser Valley alone. Many are “backyard” flocks kept for personal egg production or for direct-market egg sales from the farm gate. Some are kept by poultry fanciers dedicated to breeding and showing. No longer solely a rural pursuit, small backyard flocks are now allowed (subject to bylaw stipulations such as lot size) in many BC municipalities including Victoria, Kelowna, Kamloops, Vancouver, City of North Vancouver, Delta, Port Coquitlam, Surrey, and Maple Ridge.

Although the Fraser Valley's 10,000 small flocks, at an individual level, account for few birds compared to the numbers kept in commercial operations, they play an important role in the local food system – and their small scale does not exempt them from the same poultry health and biosecurity concerns faced by the

commercial sector. During the highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) outbreak in December 2014, for example, the disease was detected in two backyard flocks.

Recognizing that small lot poultry producers also benefit from training in biosecurity and health management best practices, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Institute for Sustainable Food Systems (Kwantlen Polytechnic University—KPU) recently partnered to host a four-part “Keeping Your Flock Healthy” course at KPU's Langley campus. This free course held over four two-hour sessions was intended for owners of small flocks looking to learn more about poultry diseases and ways to prevent them. Course instructors included Clayton Botkin (Industry Specialist, Poultry and Regulated Marketing, BC Ministry of Agriculture) and Dr. Victoria Bowes (Avian Pathologist, BC Animal Health Centre, BC Ministry of Agriculture), both North American experts in their fields. Dr. Daniel Schwartz (Canadian Food Inspection Agency) was also a guest presenter.

Those who attended came from across Metro Vancouver and the Fraser Valley and were small flock poultry owners who kept chicken as a hobby, for business, or for home consumption. Attendees expressed interest in learning more about disease management, general flock health, required lab tests, application of organic practices, protection against predators, information sources, licensing, scaling up, and industry regulations.

CONSIDERATIONS IN CARING FOR YOUR SMALL FLOCK

HOUSING

The first session included an introduction to poultry production and small flock housing. Newcomers to small flocks were able to take advantage of an introduction to poultry production and small flock housing. If you have a small flock, it's important to seek out the regulations pertaining to small flocks and direct marketing of eggs, including the supply management or "quota" system – and learn about keeping your flock, premises, and product healthy.

FOOD SAFETY

From a food safety perspective, the food-borne illness salmonella is one of the biggest concerns for egg producers of all scales. Currently, testing of eggs for direct-market sale is not required, but of course providing safe, healthy eggs is a goal for all small-scale



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farmers, and testing for Salmonella should be a consideration. As such, small-scale egg producers should be aware of the risks posed by salmonella and how to mitigate them. For example, cracked or soiled eggs



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including those laid outside of the nesting box should never be sold or consumed. Egg candling and proper egg washing routines should also be implemented.

CHICKS & FERTILE EGGS

When it comes to small flock health, the source of chicks or fertile eggs is an important starting point. Small lot producers should take time to get to know any hatchery or other source from which their chicks are purchased. Ask questions about the hatchery's quality control program, salmonella monitoring, vaccinations, health programs and accountability process. Before choosing breeds for your flocks, do some research about what breeds are appropriate for your area's climate and for the purpose of your operation (e.g., egg production, meat production, etc.).

SMALL FLOCK HOUSING

Small flock poultry housing is also a critical factor for small flock health. As a rule of thumb, remember that proper housing for your birds is just as important to their health as your own home is to yours! A simple checklist that can be used to evaluating the quality of poultry housing for all breeds is: Feed, Litter, Air, Water, Sanitation, and Security (FLAWSS). Use this checklist as a starting point but also familiarize yourself with any specific needs or housing requirements of the breeds in your flock to ensure you can provide them.

DIAGNOSING DISEASE

According to Dr. Bowes, a basic understanding of poultry anatomy (parts) and physiology (purpose/function) can help small and large flock owners diagnose, or at the very least notice, potential health problems in their flock so that they can be addressed on site or brought to the attention of your veterinarian. The most common poultry diseases can be caused by viruses, bacteria, and parasites, and include avian influenza, E. coli, and mites.

4 STRATEGIES TO PREVENT DISEASE

Strategies to limit the spread of disease are another important aspect of small flock management. Small flock owners need to conduct a critical examination of the premises where their flock is kept in order to identify potential points of pathogen entry. Once you have identified these points, you can develop and implement strategies to minimize the chance that disease causing organisms will gain entrance. In general, developing such a biosecurity protocol entails the following steps:

- ★ Access management: reduce the risk of pathogens being carried into and out of the flock premises
- ★ Health management: ensure that the flock is in good health, from chick to slaughter



Photos: Michelle Root

AVIAN INFLUENZA

Information on Avian influenza outbreaks in Canada, including the December 2014 outbreak in B.C., and advice from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, on how to prevent and detect disease in backyard flocks is available at

www.inspection.gc.ca/animals/terrestrial-animals/diseases/reportable/ai/eng/1323990856863/1323991018946

- ★ Operational management: assure all procedures of your operation enable management of the health and well being of the flock and premise; barn area is always clean
- ★ Know and understand the procedures: be up to date with any issues and ensure that everyone involved with managing the flock and premise know the procedures for proper management.

The workshop concluded with information about techniques for humane euthanasia and plenty of time for questions from participants to the workshop instructors.

A small poultry flock can be the perfect business model, or a great way to produce your own food. No matter your goal, understanding how to promote the health and wellness of your flock is in your best interest, as well as the birds'! 🌿

The “Keeping Your Flock Healthy” course is presented annually by the Ministry of Agriculture. If you are interested in attending a future course, or would like to be added to a contact list for small flock poultry related information and events, contact Clayton Botkin at clayton.botkin@gov.bc.ca. Copies of the Small Flock Manual distributed to course participants are available at:

www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/farming-natural-resources-and-industry/agriculture-and-seafood/animal-and-crops/animal-production/small_flock_manual.pdf

General information and resources about poultry in B.C. are available at:

www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/agriculture-seafood/animals-and-crops/animal-production/poultry

The Institute for Sustainable Food Systems at Kwantlen Polytechnic University supports regional food systems through applied research, extension, and community engagement. For more information about our work or if you are interested in partnering with us on an event or project, check out:

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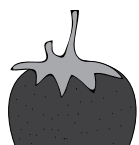


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Protecting BC Potatoes FROM LATE BLIGHT

By Susan Smith P. Ag., Ministry of Agriculture

Solanaceous crops such as potatoes and tomatoes are hosts to late blight, the most destructive disease of potatoes in British Columbia. The pathogen causing late blight, *Phytophthora infestans*, thrives and produces spores under humid or moist environmental conditions. It causes infection only when free water is present on plants. Our wet weather conditions and cool to moderate temperatures make Lower Mainland BC an area where late blight can progress and spread very rapidly in Solanaceous crops grown both commercially and in home gardens.

On potatoes, symptoms of late blight first appear as large, soft, water-soaked spots with a light green halo on the leaves. Symptoms will also commonly develop on stems and leaf petioles which turn brown or black. In humid, wet conditions, a white, fuzzy mould can be seen on the underside of the leaves. As the disease progresses, the whole plant may die back to the ground. If late blight is present at harvest, tubers may become infected resulting in a firm brown rot that starts at the skin and eventually affects the whole tuber. Although symptoms appear slightly differently on tomatoes, the organism causing late blight is the same one seen in potatoes.

In addition to persisting in the soil and on infected plant tissues for a period of time, the late blight pathogen can cause infection through structures called sporangia during cool, wet, or humid weather. Sporangia can easily spread to distances of up to 20 km via water, wind, and wind-blown rain and cause infection in healthy Solanaceous plants. For this reason, when late blight is in an area, commercial potato growers are at risk of greater crop losses from disease outbreaks in the field and later when potatoes are in storage.

Potatoes and tomatoes are popular crops for the home garden and community gardens throughout the Lower Mainland. Late blight is a disease of both potato and tomato that, if not managed for, can easily be spread from gardens to commercial potato fields in the area. This can also be a means of introducing new and more vigorous strains (genotypes) of the late blight pathogen. To minimize and hopefully prevent this from oc-



curing, there are steps that gardeners should be taking to help reduce the pressure of harmful and costly potato diseases to local growers.

In 2014, the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada – through Growing Forward 2, a federal-provincial-territorial initiative – were pleased to fund an education and awareness program for home and community gardeners. The BC Potato and Vegetable Growers Association developed information materials and delivered outreach events to raise awareness of harmful plant pests of commonly grown solanaceous crops. In addition, management tips were provided to reduce the risks to neighbouring commercial potatoes. The brochure developed can be found on the BC Certified Seed Potato Growers website:

bcseedpotatoes.com/sites/default/files/files/Pemberton_Brochure_final.pdf

Prevention of Solanaceous diseases starts by planting disease-free tomato transplants and potato seed. Growers are strongly encouraged to only plant certified seed potatoes and to never plant potatoes grown for table-

stock or potatoes purchased for eating. This should be avoided because a potato tuber is a part of its mother plant and can carry its diseases and viruses. Certified seed potatoes (both the mother plant and its tubers) are inspected and tested to ensure that they do not exceed accepted levels of critical diseases. Non-certified potatoes have the potential to carry many economically harmful diseases – and when used as seed, can be the source of problematic viruses that could spread to nearby potato crops. Using certified seed potatoes is a good start for a successful disease-free crop.

Other important practices for preventing and minimizing the severity of late blight in potatoes and tomatoes include:

- Minimizing humidity by avoiding overhead irrigation
- Growing short-season varieties during periods where weather conditions are less favourable to late blight
- Preventively applying available, registered fungicides suitable for organic production (Note: always read and follow product label directions carefully)
- Learning to identify the symptoms of late blight

- Carrying out regular crop monitoring, from plant emergence to harvest, looking for late blight symptoms on the leaves, petioles, and stems of plants. Note: when disease is suspected, avoid spread of inoculum (i.e. spores) to healthy plants. Do not enter clean fields or planted areas with clothes, boots, gloves, pruning, tying equipment, vehicles, etc. that were used in planted areas infected with late blight
- Removing infected plants and carrying out a thorough clean up of infected plant materials, unwanted tubers, fruits, and volunteer plants. Dispose by either burning or removing in sealed bags. Do not dispose of diseased plant materials in your compost.
- Practicing crop rotation with non-solanaceous crops to minimize build-up of inoculum in the field.

For more information, please contact Susan Smith at the BC Ministry of Agriculture by email: Susan.L.Smith@gov.bc.ca.

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INSTAGRAM

Instagram is great for farms! We live in image-rich environments—whether we’re growing microgreens or raising sheep—and people LOVE farm pictures. We use Instagram to build a story about our farms, who we are and what we are offering to our community. It’s not so much about hard sales with Instagram, it’s more about the slow process of relationship building.

“LIKE” EACH OTHER

Our philosophy as a co-op is that there is no competition, only more room for collaboration. We take this approach in social media too. When that amazing local yoghurt company is launching a new flavour, or a new locally-owned feed & supply store is opening in town, share that news on your social media feeds!

Building this network of businesses who support each other’s work means we are creating fantastic new local economies where community members can clearly see where to redirect their dollars. Think of it as overthrowing the stodgy, competitive capitalist system, one “Like” at a time.

IN PERSON AT FARMERS’ MARKETS

If you’re running a CSA, potential members really appreciate the chance to talk to a real person and ask questions about the program. It also helps that we have solid weekly face-to-face connections with people at the market—that kind of trust helps people to take the leap to try something new. The marketing tactic on this one is so simple: put up a sign at your booth that says, “Ask us about our CSA program!”

CO-OPS LOVE CO-OPS

Don’t be shy about reaching out to the co-ops in your community if you’re starting your own collective venture! The beauty of co-ops is that they are creating a culture of collaboration, and what could be more exciting than more people joining in? 🌱

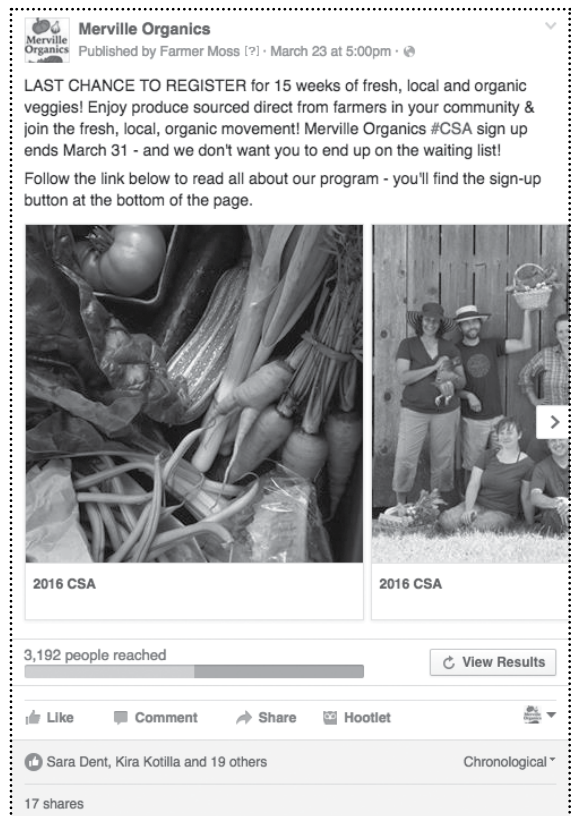
Moss Dance is an organic farmer & founding member of the Merville Organics Growers’ Co-operative. She also works with the Young Agrarians on Vancouver Island.

RESOURCES

All The Dirt: Reflections on Organic Farming - Heather Stretch, Rachel Fisher, Robin Tunnicliffe

BC Co-operatives Association (BCCA)

[bcca.coop](http://www.bcca.coop)



BOOSTING POSTS ON FACEBOOK

We boost Facebook posts 5-7 times per year, usually with a budget of \$14-25 per boost. Here’s the breakdown of our strategy:

- ★ Spring CSA launch
- ★ #CSA Day
- ★ Spring CSA - one week before the sign up deadline
- ★ Spring plant sale announcement
- ★ Spring plant sale reminder (2-3 days before the event)
- ★ Fall CSA launch
- ★ Fall CSA - one week before the sign up deadline

www.mervilleorganics.ca

Facebook: MervilleOrganics

Twitter: @MervilleOrgCoop

Instagram: @mervilleorganics



Certified Organic Associations of BC

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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)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Option 1: BCAC Farmer ID # : _____ Expiry: _____
<input type="checkbox"/>	Option 2: PST Number: _____
<input type="checkbox"/>	Option 3: Certificate of Exemption Farmer exemption: 0458FILL.pdf Other enterprises exemption: 0490FILL.pdf or request the appropriate exemption form from the office.

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	\$13.50	10 rolls \$120.00		
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 Are you Certified? 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		
Natural T-shirts (Plain) S * or XXL	\$5.00	\$5.00	PST taxable		
NEW!! COABC T-shirts Designed by Brian MacIsaac Men's size S-XXL & Ladies sizes S-L	\$17.85	\$17.85	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.

Please do not send payment before receiving invoice.

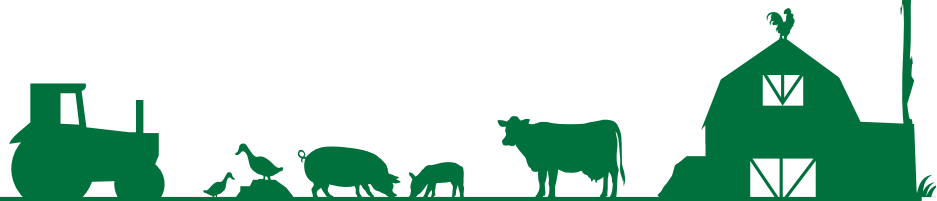
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