

British Columbia Organic Grower


transition

Journal for the Certified Organic Associations of BC - Fall 2016
Volume 19, Issue 4 (\$5.00)

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

Program Administrator



COABC
Certified Organic Associations of BC

In This Issue

Editor's Note	3
COABC News Patch	4
Organic Stories: WoodGrain Farm	8
Footnotes from the Field: Biochar	22
Ask an Expert	20
Financial Tips for Life	28
COABC Order Form	31



Farming on the Edge

Jonathan Knight shares the start-up story of WoodGrain Farm in the Kispiox Valley.

Page 8

Features

Transitioning to Organic	6
Succession Planning	12
Young Agrarians Land Matching	14
BC Seed Trials	16
Organic Okanagan	24



Succession Planning

Read Bob & Sharon McCoubrey's story of passing on the family farm to the next generation.

Page 12

BC Organic Grower

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

Editor: Darcy Smith
Designer: Moss Dance

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:
editor@certifiedorganic.bc.ca

Advertising (rates & copy)
bcogadvertising@certifiedorganic.bc.ca

Non-member subscriptions
(\$20/year plus GST) please contact:

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: WoodGrain Farm, Kispiox Valley, BC. Credit: Jonathan Knight

Unless otherwise credited, all photos property of the COABC or Creative Commons.

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. Your CB has the final authority for approval of inputs.

Editor's Note

By Darcy Smith

Everything is always changing. The sun rises and sets, seasons shift, plants grow, give bounty, die, and grow again. And just as nature never stops to settle down, so too are we always changing. For our Fall 2016 issue, we're exploring what transition means for our organic community—for how we grow, where we grow, even why we grow.



As Michelle Tsutsumi of Golden Ears Farm wisely points out in her article about transitioning to organic (page 6), certification doesn't mean a farmer stops learning, improving, getting better at taking care of the land. Rather, certified organic shows a commitment to that continued growth, to working with Nature's ever-changing cycles.

In our featured Organic Story (page 8), Jonathan Knight explores what it's like to work with Nature in places on the edge. His perspective on where we all exist—places of transition, "neither here nor there," as he puts it—is a beautifully poetic acknowledgement that nothing ever stands still.

When it comes to transitions, there are few more important to a farmer than acquiring land. In Southern BC, of course, this is a growing challenge as land prices skyrocket. We need a little creative thinking to ensure that land continues to be farmed organically, and that a new generation of farmers can get established. That's just what Bob McCoubrey and his wife did when they wanted to pass their farm on—got creative (page 12). We also explore the new Young Agrarians Land Matching Program on page 14 as it embarks on matching farmers seeking land with those who have land to share. On page 24, Wendy Wright inspires us with Organic Okanagan's vision of a totally organic future in the Okanagan Valley.

Now for the technical stuff. On page 17, we get a glimpse into the future of BC's budding seed sector as Shauna MacKinnon shares the Bauta Initiative's BC Seed Trials project. Marjorie Harris shows us how to turn wood into long term soil fertility (page 22), and on page 20, Rochelle Eisen answers all your burning questions about transitioning to organic. And finally, on page 28, Karen Fenske has some financial advice for

farmers planning their retirement—yes, even farmers have to retire eventually!

There's one thing that never changes here at the BC Organic Grower, and it's this: we want to hear from you! If you'd like to write for the Grower, there's no time like the present. Send in your comments, questions, and story ideas to editor@certifiedorganic.bc.ca.

 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.



Canada's Organic Fresh Food Leader

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



ORGANIC WEEK

SEPTEMBER 17-25 2016



Organic Online System

COABC is excited to announce that we are currently developing an innovative online transition tool that will directly populate a BC Organic database. This Organic Online System will streamline the application and certification process, saving you time and paperwork. As well, the tool will facilitate applications for the anticipated increase in transition of new entrants as a result of the government’s initiative to regulate the term organic.

The online information entered by applicants will populate a high functioning database. Currently unavailable statistics on the BC Organic Sector will become available with the creation of this online tool. Data will enable the sector to identify gaps in the value chain, encourage smart growth, and track the impact of organics in BC over the short and long term.

As this is a tool not currently offered to the BC Organic sector, it will position the industry as technology leaders. It will help provide knowledge regarding potential areas for organic growth in BC. This information is essential for the success of new entrants to the sector and will result in well rounded growth of organic in BC!

Organic Brand Working Group

Over the last few months, organic representatives have continued to work with the Ministry of Agriculture to help transition into the new mandatory Organic Regulation coming into effect in 2018. To build consumer awareness, the working group participated in the development of #FarmerFriday videos and print materials (available through the COABC office) for the ThinkBC-Organic campaign.

Currently, the group is looking at ways to increase the capacity of the BC organic sector and at market research needs. Both the organic sector representatives and the ministry view the working group as an important factor in smoothly introducing the new regulations.

On the Road Again!

This Organic Week sees the happy return of COABC’s Organic Roadshow. We’re getting prepped to once again travel our fair province on a speaking tour, bringing you the latest in organic information.

Certification Basics, and Beyond

The lucky folks in Northern BC will welcome Rochelle Eisen for a six stop workshop series that

covers the basics of organic certification, and then some. The workshop will help you assess how close your operation is to being organic and will detail the next steps necessary to take the next steps towards certification. Also look forward to information on the standards and regulations of organic certification and identify resources for transitioning to organic. Rochelle promises that no question will go unanswered, so be sure to hold her to that with some tough questions!

PRINCE GEORGE

Saturday, September 17th
Community Futures Training Room

DUNSTER

Sunday, September 18th
Dunster Community Hall

VANDERHOOF

Monday, September 19th
Community Futures Board Room

FORT ST JAMES/SMITHERS

Tuesday, September 20th
Fort St James Fire Hall/Prestige Hudson Bay Lodge

TERRACE

Wednesday, September 21
Community Futures Board Room

DIY Animal Feed

For those of you on the coast, UBC Farm is the place to kick off Organic Week—by learning how to make home-grown organic poultry and pig feed. The workshop will provide instructions to organic farmers on how

to use a computer to formulate adequate feed mixtures for organic poultry and pigs that maximize the use of home-grown feeds. Recommendations on further home study to provide a more thorough understanding of correct feed formulation will be provided.

Professor Emeritus Robert Blair is an animal nutritionist who has written several textbooks on the nutrition and feeding of organic poultry and livestock. Dr Masoumeh Bejaei is an animal scientist who has formulated many feed rations for animal farms using their locally available feed resources.

VANCOUVER - UBC FARM

Saturday, September 17

1:00-4:30PM

UBC Farm Yurt

With Dr. Blair and Dr. Bejaei

Marketing for Farmers

Farming isn't just mixing your own pig feed—marketing is a bigger part of running a farm business than some people expect. Luckily, the Canada Organic Trade Association (COTA) and COABC teamed up to develop a resource to make marketing easy. Chris Bodnar presents the case study and resources at the Langley Farmers Market.

Chris Bodnar is an organic farmer in Abbotsford. He and his wife, Paige, own and operate Close to Home Organics. Chris holds a PhD in Communication from Carleton University. Before farming, he worked on communication planning for government, arts and advocacy clients. He currently teaches the Business of Agriculture course in KPU's Sustainable Agriculture program.

LANGLEY

Wednesday – 21 September

Langley Farmers Market

Chris Bodnar

All the Juicy Details

Join Christina Prevost, the co-founder of The Juicery Co., a cold pressed juice and nut mylk shop operating out of Pemberton and delivering throughout the Metro Vancouver area.

PEMBERTON

Friday, September 23

Pemberton Farmers' Market

Organic Okanagan Festival

We look forward to the Organic Okanagan Festival every year, and this year is no exception! The theme of the festival's 11th year is Transition to an Organic Future, and COABC is hosting a discussion panel moderated by Bob McCoubrey. Join us for a day of delicious organic food and nourishing conversation about the future of BC's thriving organic sector.

KELOWNA

Sunday, September 25

Summerhill Pyramid Winery, Kelowna

CB Support

Cara Nunn, the administrator for the North Okanagan Organic Association and the Similkameen Okanagan Organic Producers Association, will be presenting the organic certification programs available, including certification requirements, the startup and ongoing costs included, and the assistance and resources available. If you're farming in the Okanagan and seeking guidance on certification, be sure to mark this on your calendar!

KAMLOOPS

Saturday, September 17

Kamloops – Venue TBA

Cara Nunn

Over on the Island...

Candice Appleby the Executive Director of the Small Scale Food Processors Association presents—come out for what's sure to be a gold mine of organic info.

Growing foods organically and food processing are value added activities that could improve your bottom line. Are you ready to take advantage of these opportunities?

This workshop will discuss:

- Current trends and opportunities for providing organic products into the market place.
- Programs and services that are available now to help businesses take advantage of these opportunities.
- The new BC Regulations pertaining to "Organic" labelling.

COMOX VALLEY

Thursday, September 22

3:30pm


Vancouver Island Visitor Centre boardroom

Save the Date!

2017 Conference

The COABC 2017 Conference will be held on February 24-26 in Nanaimo. Locations, presenters, workshops, and registration information will be announced later this fall. Stay tuned!

Congratulations!

We'd like to wish Kristy Wiperman, COABC's office manager extraordinaire, our heartfelt congratulations on her recent marriage. 

Organic Certification

“It’s more than a piece of paper - it comes with a remarkable community.”



Tristan, Avé, & Michelle at Golden Ears Farm in Chase, BC. Credit: Abbie Wilson.

By Michelle Tsutsumi

Community members who visit local farmers’ markets are increasingly asking food growers very pointed questions such as, “Are you organic?” We hear that at least once every market—and it’s so much simpler to be able to answer with a clear “yes!”

Once we decided to engage in the organic certification process, it was a full-on commitment from everyone at Golden Ears Farm to compile the necessary information. It was an enjoyable exercise in learning about the historical context of the land—what had been planted before, for how long, and in what capacity. It also felt like coming full circle, as the farm had been certified organic in the past and was returning to it two decades later. Going through the process has been informative and inspiring for us to better our animal husbandry, crop planning, and record keeping.

Certification doesn’t mean that we’ve made it and now we can coast. Being certified organic provides the public with a commitment to uphold the minimum standards, and doesn’t hold food growers back from going beyond that. We are always looking for ways to grow food more ethically, both for the people involved and the land that we are on. We want to take care of this land (and water!) and acknowledge all that it provides for us.

The most meaningful part of the organic certification process has been the supportive and knowledgeable community that we’ve joined. The depth and diversity of knowledge amongst organic growers and processors in BC is phenomenal. And the amazing thing is that the overall atmosphere is one of collaboration and cooperation. Our regional certifying body hosts regular meetings with information sessions and discussions, and the annu-

al conference hosted by the COABC is both a networking haven and time to geek out about agro-ecology (a winning combination).

A comment we hear frequently is that the certification process is too expensive. The base fee that goes to our certifying body is reasonable when one considers that it covers the administration of files and an annual site visit. COABC's sliding scale membership is also incredibly fair, being based on gross annual organic sales. Our certification fees are less than 5% of our organic income, whether you look at gross or net income.

When considering certification fees, it is also important to recognize the tireless efforts of this grassroots, non-profit organization in advocating for organics on a provincial level. The COABC has helped BC be at the forefront of organic standards in Canada and has been dedicated to educating the public about organics and non-GMO growing. Golden Ears Farm sees the fees as being a public commitment to, and investment in, the values and philosophy of organic agro-ecology: supporting sustainable health and productivity of the ecosystem, growing food in an environmentally regenerative and socially responsible way, feeding the soil and promoting biodiversity.

At the beginning of the process, three years felt like a long time to become fully certified, and yet, here we are – in year three – and it has flown by. Some of our fields were considered certified in the first year; however, hav-

ing the three years to become completely certified has allowed us to really settle into organics and the community that surrounds it. We are grateful for the learning we have enjoyed through this process (even the rough times, which is often when the best learning takes place) and love the good people and friends that we have come to know through organics. Without a doubt, the choice to certify organic was a solid and indefatigable one. 🌱

 goldenearsfarm.com

Michelle Tsutsumi is a part of Golden Ears Farm in Chase, BC, looking after the market garden, 15-week CSA Program, and events with her partner Tristan Cavers and daughter Avé.





*Live well.
Live organic.*

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



FARMING ON THE EDGE at WoodGrain Farm



Photos: (Top) WWOOFers at WoodGrain (left) Spring garden, (right) Harvesting Red Fife wheat. (Opposite) The market garden. Photo credits: Jonathan Knight.

By Jonathan Knight

If you walk out the back door of the little blue farmhouse at WoodGrain Farm, past the acre of market gardens and the old log outbuildings and barns, and back through the forest high along the banks of the Skeena River, there is wilderness. This is real wilderness, where one could

follow ancient footpaths of the Gitksan people and century-old telegraph trails hundreds of kilometers into the heart of the Sacred Headwaters, from where the three great salmon rivers of northern BC, the Skeena, Stikine, and Nass, flow.

I've always been drawn to places on the edge, interested in the transition between where one place ends and the next begins, whether a seashore or a mountainside. This valley is very much where the last patchwork of rural habitation meets the wide open wilderness of the north-west.

“ I’ve always been drawn to places on the edge. This valley is where the last patchwork of rural habitation meets the wide open wilderness of the northwest.”



I wasn’t always planning on being a farmer, but knew I would one day end up on a homestead in a wild place. Yet I was aware that once you choose to live deliberately on a piece of land, you don’t do much else, and I had other lives to live first. During time spent living and travelling around Europe and India in my early twenties, I explored my relationship with food, particularly drawn to old methods of craft food production, culminating in an apprenticeship in organic bread making.

The apprenticeship was followed by a couple of years cycling and WWOOFing across Canada, after which I returned to BC and opened the popular True Grain Bread in Cowichan Bay. In the second year the bakery installed a stone mill, which shortened the links between the farmer and the baker, opening up a treasure trove of heirloom grains and the opportunity to work with local farmers to get grain growing on Vancouver Island. As passionate as I am about craft bread making, I still felt the strong pull backwards, towards the very basics—the grain, or seed, and the soil. In 2008 the bakery was transitioned to its present owners, and I set off with my then-partner on another bicycle odyssey of rural Canada.

If you trace the line on the map, Highway 16 heads northwest out of Prince George where it leaves the interior plateau and passes into the broad, pastoral Bulkley

N.O.O.A

**Farm Certification
\$410**

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

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

“ Going into this seventh season of farming, the balance between farming as a business and homesteading as a life choice feels more settled.”

Valley. Past Smithers, the Bulkley flows into the Skeena, and the highway makes an abrupt left to follow the river’s course southwest to Terrace and the coast. At this confluence of the rivers, the northernmost point on the Yellowhead, lie the villages and settlements that comprise the Hazeltons. Instead of following the highway downstream, turning right to follow the Skeena due north for 20km will bring you to the Kispiox Valley, the most northern reach of the Agricultural Land Reserve west of the Rockies and, at one point, home to the second oldest Farmers’ Institute in BC.

When we first pedalled through these parts, we were struck by the mountains and open spaces of the Bulkley Valley, and by the vibrant youthful community around Smithers. We returned that fall with the intent of looking for land, and people kept telling us “you have to check out the Kispiox Valley”, in a way that sounded almost mystical. In a practical sense, the Kispiox enjoys a temperate coastal influence from the Skeena, which makes it noticeably warmer than Smithers just an hour to the east, but with not nearly the precipitation of Terrace two hours to the west. It felt like the right balance for making the most of the shorter but more intense northern growing season.

It also fit another important criteria. I didn’t want to end up living just somewhere along a highway, where there is the tendency to drive into town whenever you need something or are feeling social. The Kispiox Valley is definitely a place unto itself, with a strong character and community. Beyond the Gitksan village at the Kispiox River’s confluence with the Skeena, the valley is home to about 200 folks of mostly rancher/logger or back-to-the-lander origin, with a thriving community hall and annual rodeo and music festival.

The valley was first farmsteaded about a hundred years ago, and this farm was one of the original staked. It had been sitting gracefully fallow for about 30 years when we found it, and began the work of slowly bringing it back to life. A fair number of valley folk today have roots on this farm, and the support we’ve had from our neighbours since the beginning has been immeasurable. Wilfred, an old-time neighbour who tilled our first garden space for us, remembers running and hiding under the bed when the valley’s first tractor was being unloaded on the farm. That rusty W4 is here still.



Photos: (Top) Jonathan and his handbuilt grain mill, credit: Marjorie Harris. (Middle) Kispiox Valley on the map. (Bottom) Jonathan at market. Credit: Jonathan Knight.

When I'm asked for advice by prospective new farmers, it is not to rush into too much, too soon. That first year, we helped get a fledgling Hazelton Farmers' Market going, planted a modest market garden on freshly tilled old pasture (with no rototiller), bought the sweetest Jersey cow named Elsie, sheep for the pasture, pigs for the tillage, and a hundred laying hens. Never mind that the buildings were all in need of serious repair, the house was decrepit, there wasn't an intact line of fence on the place, we had no haying equipment, and I was also committed to help get a small social enterprise bakery in town off the ground. Whether the decisions we made to jump in with both feet had much of a bearing on it or not, the outcome was that by the second year I was alone on the farm.

Well, not quite alone. There were always the WWOOFers. My experiences WWOOFing have been invaluable in a lot of what I have learned how to do (and not to do!), and I am privileged to be able to offer that in return. No matter how hectic things can feel at times, I try and always keep in mind that the experience this person is having here may just well be changing their lives. It had changed mine.


More permanent help soon arrived. Andi and Ryan came fresh off a SOIL apprenticeship and partnered for a season of market gardening, where we quickly out-produced the demand in Hazelton and started to regularly attend the Bulkley Valley Farmers' Market down the road in Smithers. Next came Angelique and Lynden, first as WWOOFers and then for two seasons as market gardeners. They, with their new daughter born on the farm, are moving on this spring. But, as with Andi and Ryan and their new twins, to another place just around the corner. The valley's population has grown by seven.

Going into this seventh season of farming, the balance between farming as a business and homesteading as a life choice feels more settled. Growing systems are figured out, perennial weeds are getting worn down, fences are keeping animals put, buildings are staying up, the farm is established at the markets, and farm earnings are forecastable. It's now easier to make deliberate choices, about where to focus and what to cut back on. Hay needs to be brought in for the winter, but otherwise the balance can be tipped from side to side. Grow more for the markets, or work on improving self-sufficiency on the farm. Farm to earn money, or farm to reduce the money needed to be earned. Feed and nurture your community, or feed and nurture your soul.

When I manage to stand back far enough to get a good vantage point of the farm as a whole, it is neither here nor there. Not what it was in the past, and not what it will become in the future. I have incredible admiration for the work that was done by the original homesteaders, clearing the land and building the hand-hewn log house with an axe, but I wouldn't wish to be in their shoes for a moment. My respect is not diminished for the later gen-

eration who raised cattle here because they might have sprayed Tordon, those were different times. The thistles survived it nevertheless. Nowadays, the soils are healthy and being improved with each season. The fertility of the fields is passed through the animals to the market garden. Innovations like drip irrigation, electric fences and hay balers are the envy of those who have farmed here before us.


The farm provides our vegetables and fruit, grains and bread, dairy and cheese, meat and eggs, and our livelihoods. But others will come and go, and hopefully settle close by, and this place will continue to evolve with the people who live here. The farm will remain on the edge, of what it has been and what it might become.

Jonathan Knight organically farms WoodGrain Farm with his partner Jolene Swain. 

 www.woodgrain.ca



Organic Grocer
organicgrocerweb.ca SINCE 1993



WORKING WITH OUR SUPPLIERS AND LOCAL FARMERS SINCE 1993 FOR A BETTER TOMORROW

508-7380 KING GEORGE BLVD.
SURREY, BC V3W 5A5
604-501-0116

Passing on the Farm

A Succession Planning Story



Two generations of farmers working together: Matt, Molly, Bob, and Sharon. Credit: Bob McCoubrey

By Bob McCoubrey

After more than 35 years of growing tree fruits and vegetables on our small farm in Lake Country, it was time to think about retirement. Our joints were telling us to ease up on the physical work and our son and daughter had moved on to other towns and careers.

The idea of selling the property was a bit scary, as we had become attached to the land and the houses. The main house was just a year or two shy of its 100th birthday, and the “guest house” was one my father had built for a previous owner when my parents first moved to the area to take up farming, back in the late 1940’s. Both houses had heritage value for us.

The land had supported our family well over our time on the farm. Sharon and I had transitioned the land to certified organic status beginning in 1989, and we didn’t want to see new owners abandoning what we had achieved by going back to conventional farming methods. We were reluctant to list the property with a realtor, taking a chance on the intentions that new owners might have.

Our Okanagan location meant we could benefit from the overheated real estate market. Land prices were high. However, that meant many of the people who might share our values and plans for the land might not be able to afford the inflated prices. After a lifetime of living

here, close to family and friends, we wanted to stay in the area, which would mean buying in that same overheated real estate market, leaving us unwilling to sell for a discounted price to encourage like-minded buyers.

As we struggled with what to do, we were fortunate to meet Molly Bannerman and Matt Thurston. Recent graduates in agriculture from the University of Guelph, and fresh from a year of WWOOFing and touring in the United Kingdom, they were about to get married and were thinking of settling down on an organic farm. It seemed like a perfect match. They both found good jobs related to farming, and we began a three to four year “dance” to see if we could put a deal together.

There was a period when they leased the farm and lived in the small house, followed by a few years with us running the farm again, while they moved in to town, only to come back to rent an acre to grow some vegetables. It became clear that we all wanted to make it work for Matt and Molly to acquire the farm.

The farm had all of the basic equipment needed to grow the crops we had been producing, and we had recently built a cold storage facility, which would make it easier for the Thurstons to grow, store, and sell their crops while continuing to work off farm. The biggest challenge was to find a way to finance the sale in a way that the cash flow could handle the debt servicing requirements.

“ A paradigm shift needed to happen in our minds about how to manage our needs and assets. The key turned out to be rethinking how we would invest for the future.”

A paradigm shift needed to happen in our minds about how to manage our needs and our assets. I had always thought we would sell the farm, buy a retirement property, invest the remainder of the proceeds, and live happily ever after. The key turned out to be rethinking how we would invest for the future.

Financial advisors told us to avoid high risk investments as we moved into retirement in an effort to keep our assets safe. That would mean lower but stable returns from financial products such as term deposits. We wouldn't be making a lot of money, but we could see that we would have all we needed to enjoy life.

As we looked for a solution, we recalled the help given to us by the seller, when we bought the farm back in 1973. After scraping together a down payment and borrowing the maximum available to us on a first mortgage from Farm Credit Canada, we still needed to find 20% of the purchase price. The seller took a second mortgage on the property, with payments of only the interest for a number of years to keep our cash flow requirements low while we got ourselves established.

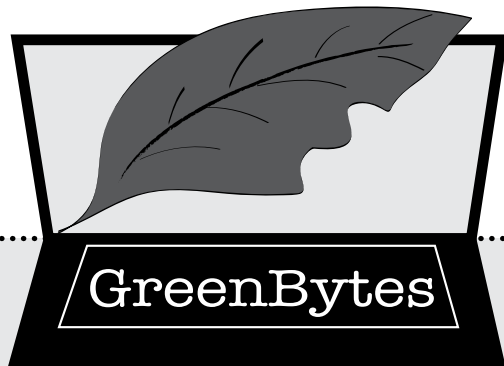
The real estate market had changed in the 38 years since we started farming. Interest rates were much lower, but the principal amounts were significantly higher. The financing solution we needed would have to put even more importance on keeping the cash flow required to service the debt as low as possible. In the final agreement, we took 30% of the sale price in cash, financed through a first mortgage by the Thurstons. The remaining 70% was financed through a second mortgage that we hold, with payments of only the interest, at a rate slightly higher than what low risk investments would pay us, but lower than what a second mortgage would cost on the open market. After 4 years, half of the second mortgage was to be paid out, leaving 35% of the sale price in the second mortgage for the full 10-year term.

Some would suggest that we were putting ourselves in a much higher risk position than we would experience by investing in penny stocks on the Vancouver Stock Market; however, we had come to know and trust the Thurstons, and thought the risk was acceptable. Our lawyer did his job well, pointing out all of the things that could go wrong, and suggesting contract wording that would protect everyone's interests. But, being an organic farmer himself, he understood our desire to believe in our new partners in farming.

So in 2011, we moved our belongings to a quiet property where we enjoy a bit of gardening and watching the weather on the lake. The financing arrangement met all of our needs. We never looked back and have not regretted any of our decisions.

Five years into the agreement, the Thurstons are ahead of schedule with their payments, and the farm is thriving. The transitions—into retirement for us and into farming for Matt and Molly, have been smooth and painless. All we had to do was to decide to invest in the future of organic farming by trusting and investing in the next generation of organic farmers. 🌱

Bob McCoubrey is a retired organic orchardist in the Okanagan's Lake Country. With his wife Sharon, he farmed eight acres for 38 years before turning his efforts to mentorship, writing, volunteering, and community building.



The Canadian Organic Input Directory

Wondering if that product is approved for use in organic? There's a better solution than sifting through long lists! OFC has launched the Canadian Organic Inputs Directory (COID). Manufacturers of inputs suitable for organic agriculture can contact us to find out how to get their product listed. Visit the site now and give it a try:

 organicinputs.ca

Young Agrarians LAND MATCHING



The Shifting Paradigm of Land Access in Southern BC

Photo credit: Salt & Harrow Farm

By Darcy Smith

At Blue Heron Organic Farm on Vancouver Island, Kris Chand and his wife Maria had been farming organically for several decades. The couple was starting to think about retiring; at the same time, they saw a rising demand for organic food. Happy with the size of their own farm business but wanting to provide opportunities to young farmers and establish a succession plan, they turned to a solution that increasing numbers of farmers and land owners are adopting¹—they leased out an unused field after attending a Young Agrarians Land Linking Workshop.

Kris had always wanted the piece of land next to their farm that they'd originally bought as a buffer to be managed organically. "By leasing it, we could ensure that the land next door to us would be consistent with our philosophy. It is something that is important to us, that we as a society increase sustainable agriculture, particularly that which practices the organic way of doing things," Kris says. "Young agrarians have one heck of a time getting access to land. We wanted to make it possible for somebody."

He's right – the number one struggle identified by new and young farmers in southern BC is the prohibitively high cost of land. Land and housing prices are some of the highest in Canada and areas with good access to markets, such as the Lower Mainland, far exceed what a new

farmer can make off the land base. Many of the younger generation, just entering the job or housing market, can scarcely afford condos, much less an acreage that will support a thriving farm business.

Yet the desire to farm, to find a piece of land and put down roots and build a successful business, keeps growing. Leasing land gives new and young farmers the opportunity to get their farm businesses off the ground without the high cost of buying land or the necessity of moving away from friends, family, and markets to find cheaper land. The majority of farmers in BC are age 55 and up, and less than 5% are 35 and younger.² 66% of farmers plan to retire in the next 10 years, and almost half of retiring farmers don't have a succession plan.³ Leasing land provides an option for farmers like Kris, who want to ensure their land continues to be farmed into the future.

Leasing land is a real, viable solution—however, it comes with its own set of unique challenges. Namely, how do farmers and land owners find each other, and how do they establish a successful land match that is beneficial in the long run for both parties and the land?

Enter the Young Agrarians Land Matching Program. The program, first of its kind in BC, is adapted from Quebec's successful Banque de Terres (Land Bank), which has been matching farmers to land for several years (most recently finding homes for a farmer growing hops and

another who makes maple syrup). Young Agrarians has teamed up with the City of Surrey to roll out the Land Matching pilot in the Lower Mainland and develop an online registry for land seekers and land owners (youngagrarians.org/maps).

In this hands-on, personalized model, a Land Matcher screens farmers and potential land opportunities, ensuring that farmers are business ready and the land is suited for agriculture. Then, much like a dating service, the Land Matcher connects farmers and land owners who have similar visions and needs. If there's a spark, the Land Matcher facilitates a "dating" process, where the farmer and land owner get to know each other and start to map out their land agreement. From there, the farmer and land owner draw up a legal arrangement with the Land Matcher's help, which is then reviewed by a lawyer.

For program participants, much of the especially finicky legwork has already been established, including navigating the regulatory, zoning, and other farm specific issues surrounding leasing land. Farmers and land owners make use of resources such as guides and checklists to support them through the land matching process, as well as lease templates, saving valuable time trying to figure out if, for example, a leasing farmer will be able to live on the property, how much of an investment it will be to farm there, and whose responsibility it is to manage what components of the property. This helps reduce stumbling blocks for farmers and land owners who simply don't have hours to spend researching the ins and outs of setting up a stable land agreement.

While the program is in its pilot year and providing services in the Lower Mainland, the ultimate goal is to provide an on-going matchmaking service across Southern BC – and successfully create land matches that lead to hundreds more acres of sustainably farmed land.

Kris would love to see that happen. He successfully found a young farmer to lease his land when he connected with Sara Dent, Young Agrarians Co-Founder and BC Coordinator, who put Kris in touch with Seann Dory. The new farm business, Salt & Harrow Farm, is now mid-way through its first season, selling a dazzling array of gourmet veggies through a CSA and at markets across Vancouver Island and Vancouver. To those in his situation, Kris says "I would encourage other farmers, especially in the organic sector, who are about to retire or have existing farmland that they can't manage, to think in terms of the barriers that motivated young agrarians have – and try to make it possible for them to do it." 🌱

The Young Agrarians Land Matching Program is a collaboration with Quebec's Banque de Terres (Land Bank) and a partnership with the City of Surrey. Funding is provided by Vancity and the Real Estate Foundation of British Columbia. Young Agrarians is a partnership with FarmFolk CityFolk. youngagrarians.org



★ GOT LAND?

Farmers: Looking for land? Ready to start a farm business?

Land Owners: Have land? Want someone to farm it?

We're looking for you!

Young Agrarians is piloting a Land Matching service for 2016-2017 in the Fraser Valley – Lower Mainland and is reaching out to farmers and land-owners to find viable farmland opportunities and facilitate the connection and agreement process with business-ready farmers.

If you're interested or would like more information, please contact Darcy Smith to get involved:

📧 land@youngagrarians.org

Find farmland and land access tools at:

📧 youngagrarians.org/land

Darcy Smith is the Young Agrarians Land Matcher for the Lower Mainland. A farm enthusiast and backyard gardener, she wears many hats in the farming community - in addition to her work on land matching with Young Agrarians, she is COABC's communications officer and editor of this publication.

References:

¹Statistics Canada. Census of Agriculture. 2011. Figure 11: Land tenure as a proportion of total farm area, Canada, 1976 to 2011.

²Statistics Canada. Census of Agriculture. 2011. Table 004-0017 - Census of Agriculture, number of farm operators by sex, age and paid non-farm work, Canada and provinces, every 5 years, CANSIM.

³CFIB, Business Succession Planning Survey, Agri-business results, Mar. - May 2011, 602 survey responses.

The BC Seed Trials

Scaling Up Ecological Seed Production in BC



Photo: BC Seed Trials Field Day in Chilliwack, BC. Credit: Chris Thoreau



BC Seed Trial varieties (left.) Credit: Jeremy Pitchford. Inspecting golden beets at UBC Farm (right.) Credit: Chris Thoreau

By Shauna MacKinnon

British Columbia is home to a vegetable industry worth \$2.8 billion annually, but nearly every seed planted to grow those veggies is produced outside of Canada. While local, organic vegetable production is on the upswing, seed production is lagging. That may not appear to be a problem when browsing through a thick seed catalogue, but behind the seeming abundance of seed available there is a narrowing of diversity and neglect of varieties that perform well under organic or non-industrial agricultural practices.

The Bauta Family Initiative on Canadian Seed Security was initiated four years ago with a mission to conserve and advance seed biodiversity, keep seed in the public domain, and promote ecological seed production. In BC, passionate seed growers have long been at work in support of these same ideals, but the lack of commercial-scale seed production still prevented most BC farmers from using BC seed in their market operations. To fill this gap, the Bauta Initiative, carried out by FarmFolk CityFolk in BC, is focusing on increasing the quality, quantity and diversity of ecologically grown BC seed.

We do not need to look far for inspiration. Just over the border, Washington State has a well-established and very profitable seed production industry. Like the coastal areas of BC, Washington's cool valleys west of the Cascades are one of the best areas in the world to grow seed for cool weather crops like spinach, beets, and brassicas.

- Washington state's Brassica vegetable seed crops gross from \$1,500 to over \$6,500 per acre¹
- Washington growers earn over \$5 million on beet seed crop alone²
- The vegetable seed industry is a significant contributor to the diversity and economic viability of Washington state's agricultural community

Going from a small number of experienced seed growers producing seed for backyard gardeners to seed production for commercial growers is not a simple transition. The BC Seed Trials project is helping to facilitate that transition by harnessing the passion and experience of BC seed growers and rising interest in diversifying local agricultural production to lay the foundation for a BC seed industry.

BC SEED TRIALS

If your goal is to grow seed for the best performing and regionally adapted crops, it is crucial to know which existing varieties perform best under local conditions. The BC Seed Trials project is seeking to do just that by trialing numerous varieties of beets, spinach, and kale on farms throughout BC to better understand which varieties are best suited to BC seed production. The three-year project began in early 2016 through a collaboration between the Centre for Sustainable Food Systems at UBC Farm, the Bauta Family Initiative on Canadian Seed Security, and FarmFolk CityFolk.

The project includes variety trials, seed quality tests, and field training aimed at engaging farmers in seed development. The research is participatory, which means BC vegetable farmers will be directly involved in growing and evaluating the crops. Academics and farmers will be working together to help identify varieties that perform best in local conditions and are good candidates for local seed production.

The first year is off to a strong start with 14 farm participants primarily representing growing conditions in the Lower Mainland and on Vancouver Island. BC Seed Trials Lead Researcher, Alexander Lyon, along with UBC Farm Seed Hub Coordinator, Mel Sylvestre, are overseeing the organic "mother" site at UBC Farm, where a full set of trial varieties (in triple replicates) will be grown, while Renee Prasad from the University of the Fraser Valley is coordinating growing efforts at Wisbey Farm in Chilliwack, the BC Seed Trials conventional "mother" site.

The "baby" sites on participating farms are trialing a subset of beet, spinach, and kale varieties. Each participat-

ing farmer observes and records how well each variety grows (germination, vigour, presence of disease, pest damage) and the quality of the harvestable product (upright stature, uniformity, visual appeal). This information is collected and provided to the BC Seed Trials research team, which will analyze the data to determine the best performers.

At the end of three years, the BC Seed Trials will have helped to determine the best stock varieties for seed production in a number of crops that are well suited to our climate. But perhaps more importantly, a network of BC farmers will be well versed in the trial design and crop evaluation that is crucial for successful seed trials and plant breeding. These farmers will have practiced the first steps of choosing plants with the best genetics for improving varieties and growing superior seed as we work to scale up BC ecological seed production.

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
Cara Nunn: T 250-540-2557
simokorganics@gmail.com

OMRI Canada Makes It Easy



- Save Time
- Reduce Risk
- Manage Your Certification

Download a complete list of products verified for use in your organic farm or garden.



Visit OMRI.org/omri-canada

OMRI Listed – Naturally Trusted



Photos: (Top) Beets in bins ready for evaluation. Credit: Alex Lyon. (Opposite, left) John Navazzio seed growing workshop in Nanaimo July 2016. (Opposite, right) Mel & Alex evaluating beets at UBC Farm. Credits: Chris Thoreau (Opposite, bottom) Golden beet evaluation. Credit: Alex Lyon.

BC ECO SEED CO-OP

A great complement to the BC Seed Trials in this endeavour is the BC Eco Seed Co-op.

The BC Eco Seed Co-op was incorporated in 2014 in an effort to help BC seed growers scale up their seed production while marketing that seed on growers' behalf. The co-op allows growers to pool production and marketing resources while providing educational opportunities to growers to help them provide high-quality bulk seed to BC vegetable farmers. The BC Eco Seed Co-op represent a shift away from multiple individual seed companies selling packet seeds to backyard gardeners towards growers collectively growing bulk seed to sell to farmers.



The BC Seed Trials project is funded in part by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the B.C. Ministry of Agriculture through programs delivered by the Investment Agriculture Foundation of B.C. Additional funding is provided by the Centre for Sustainable Food Systems at UBC Farm, the Bauta Family Initiative on Canadian Seed Security and Whole Foods Market.

Shauna MacKinnon has been working on food issues for over a decade, from running environmental campaigns to holding the position of BC outpost for the Canada Organic Trade Association. She recently joined the BC Seed Security Program, a collaboration between the Bauta Family Initiative on Canadian Seed Security and Farm-Folk CityFolk.

★ GET INVOLVED

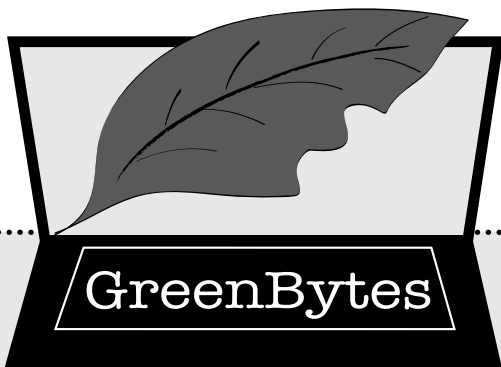
If you are interested in being involved with the BC Seed Trials please get in touch as we will be expanding the number of farmers and regions involved next year. Even if you are not growing a seed trial crop you can still be a part of the research. Many of the BC Seed Trials farmers will be hosting field days this season to bring the experience and observations of the wider farming and chef communities into the research process. Join a field day and be a part of the discussion of what characteristics are most desirable for plant breeding in your area, how to select for these, and the importance of strengthening our local seed system.

Follow the research journey at the bcseedtrials.ca blog, on Facebook, Instagram, and Flickr. Visit the BC Eco Seed Co-op at

 bcecoseedcoop.com

Resources:

- ¹http://mtvernon.wsu.edu/path_team/EM062E.pdf
- ²<http://69.93.14.225/wscpr/LibraryDocs/BeetSeed2010.pdf>



Fall Farm Tours & Workshops

Young Agrarians events:

CHASE

September 20
Golden Ears Farm Corn Roast


SALT SPRING ISLAND

September 24
Bullock Lake Farm Contra Dance with
the Merry McKentys
\$12 advance/\$15 at the door

PENDER ISLAND

October 8
Twin Island Cidery and Valley Home
Farm Tours

Find out more at:


 youngagrarians.org/events

More events:

RICHMOND

October 15-16
Production of Asian Medicinal Herbs
with Peg Schafer of the Chinese Medicinal
Herb Farm
Kwantlen Polytechnic University

Find out more at:

 youngagrarians.org/workshop-asian-medicinal-herbs




**Your Local Choice
for Over 20 Years**



choicesmarkets.com
committed to our customers, our communities and our planet



Transitioning to Organic

FROM CONFUSION TO CLARITY



By Rochelle Eisen, B.Sc.(Agr), P.Ag

We asked farmers transitioning to organic for burning questions they've been dying to ask. From paperwork to fence posts, standards junkie Rochelle Eisen has the answers they—and you—have been seeking!

Q: How much detail does my record keeping require for the inspector (crop seeding, planting, rotations, dates, etc...)?

A: The more detail the better as the inspector will try to establish if you had enough seed/transplants for the amount of the crop produced. Also, rotation plans, green manure seeding dates, and input use records are necessary to establish if good organic ag practices are in place. Sales records, crop seeding dates, and harvest dates are helpful with yield estimations, especially if plantings are staggered. Such detailed records help you to become a better farmer, as you have the necessary details at your fingertips to help you plan and identify your successes.

Q: If I need advice with paperwork can I ask my inspector?

A: Verification officers (VOs) cannot assist with paperwork except to explain the requirement/standard, as it would be considered consulting and giving you an advantage over other operators. Some certifiers offer workshops and others have someone who can answer your questions. Otherwise, provincial specialists are sometimes helpful. In the end it might be best to hire a consultant. Certifiers sometimes keep list of available consultants.

Q: Do I have to use all certified organic seed (what if there is no organic option)?

A: Yes, organic seed is required. When you can't find the variety you are looking for in the quantity and quality you need, you can use non-organic untreated seed. BUT (there always has to be a but, n'est ce pas?) you can't play that card year in, year out for the same variety. Most certifiers will expect you to explain what your plan is to help develop an organic source over the coming years, and this question will be asked annually. And just to round out this answer... as it is the most logical next question is "what does a commercial availability seed search look like?" and the answer is, most certifiers expect growers to contact three credible organic sources to establish the lack of supply. Such searches are to be repeated annually.

Q: Can I use saved seed, such as the garlic I saved from last year's harvest?

A: Assuming the operation is organic or even in transition—the answer is an emphatic yes, as the seed was raised organically. This has to be tempered by the question: is it wise? It all depends on if you have clean and true to type seed. For example, garlic is one of those crops prone to seed borne diseases such as white rot. Saving your own seed if there is any level of infection may be your own undoing.

And as mentioned, transitional seed is acceptable too, as it was raised organically—it just comes from land that hasn't met the 36 months from last prohibit substance requirement and can't be sold as organic. See SIC Q113 for further insight:

"Does the requirement to use organic seed, tubers etc. (5.3) preclude the use of seed grown on transitional land

within the same operation? (113) Answer: Seed grown on transitional land is acceptable as it meets the requirement of 5.3 and as it has not been grown using prohibited substances or techniques.”

Q: I have had much discussion with other farmers, certified organic and those considering certification alike, about use and re-use of treated posts. Is a treated post that is already on your farm allowed to stay on your farm only if it remains in place, or is it acceptable to move and reuse posts within the farm as we change or rebuild fencing?

A: Good news—existing inventories can be used anywhere within your farm (see subclause 5.2.3 b of CAN/CGSB-32.310). Be sure your certifier is aware of this existing inventory so there are no surprises when the VO does their site visit, or when your certifier reviews your Organic Plan and the VO report.

Q: What’s the difference between green manure, manure and compost?

A: Manure is animal waste. Green manures are plough down cover crops grown purposefully to build soil health. Compost can be made from animal or plant material and any combination thereof. Refer to the ‘compost definition (3.15 in CAN/CGSB 32.310) and the ‘compost feedstocks’, ‘compost from off-farm sources’ and the ‘compost produced on the farm’ listings in PSL Table 4.2 for complete details. Manure management requirements are outlined in 5.5 of CAN/CGSB 32.310.

Q: What’s the amount of time required between compost application and harvest?

A: From a standards perspective, compost can be applied any time of the year, but compost containing animal waste or other risky feedstock that may contain human pathogens has to be effectively composted first. Otherwise, the material must be applied to the land 90 days before harvest when the crop doesn’t touch the soil. That would be the case with tree and cane fruits. 120 days is required pre harvest for any crops that commonly touch the soil (potatoes, lettuce, strawberries, etc...). Think about it this way—120 days is required unless the crop is obviously off the ground.

Q: What is required for mulching materials?

A: Plant materials from organic sources must be used as mulch but if organic sources are not available, then crop materials, such as straw and hay, that haven’t been treated with any prohibited substances for at least 60 days pre-harvest can be used as mulching material.

Q: Can I get animals I already own certified? (i.e. dairy cows)

A: Dairy herds and individual herd animals can be transitioned, but it takes 12 months of organic management before the milk collected can qualify as organic. None of the animals transitioned can ever qualify as organic meat

animals. To qualify as organic meat, animals must have been born by an organic dam or the transitioning dam must be under organic management by the onset of the third gestation period.


Q: What’s the most appropriate way to label my transitional organic products?

A: Transitioning farms or “farms in conversion to organic” selling all their products within BC may identify their products as “transitional” or “in conversion to organics” or other similar language on all marketing materials including websites signs and labels. But they cannot refer to their operation or transitional products as “organic”, “organically grown”, “organically raised”, or “organically produced”. For products being shipped out of province the only acceptable phrases are “in transition” or “transitional” or “in conversion”. The word “organic” cannot be included in any of these claims.

Q: What type of signage may farms in transition use?

A: A farming operation in transition or conversion is not “organic” and must not mislead consumers with false organic claims. For example, a transitioning farm, certified by a COABC regional CB, may not call itself “Joe’s Organic farm” or use the word “organic” “organically grown”, “organically raised”, “organically produced” or similar words, including abbreviations of, symbols for and phonetic renderings of those words, in any signage. The British Columbia Certified Organic Program allows “in transition/conversion to organic” claims on signs, labels, and other marketing tools to be used by transitioning operations. However, for operations shipping out of the province, this phrasing is not acceptable to the Canadian Organic Regime. Transitioning operations may not use either the provincial or national organic logos. Check with your CB if they have a transitional logo you can use.

Q: How should I market transitional organic products?

A: Label your products as transitional or in conversion and be sure to tell your story/journey to your customers. Some of the distributors, especially those who specialize in organics, may also be interested in your product if it fills a gap. Don’t hesitate to approach. 

For more Organic Standards FAQs, visit COABC’s Grow Organic Toolkit:

 certifiedorganic.bc.ca/cb/certification.php#faqs

Rochelle Eisen is a standards junkie who has been working in organics for close to 30 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.

 resilientsolutionsconsulting.com



BIOCHAR

Turning Wood into long Term Soil Fertility



Zbigniew Wierzbicki of Elderberry Lane Farm, proudly displays his biochar kiln. The kiln is an in-ground kiln 3 ½ feet in diameter and 6 feet deep with a drainage pipe at the bottom to release any built up fluids.

By Marjorie Harris BSc, IOIA VO, P.Ag. with many thanks to Zbigniew Wierzbicki of Elderberry Lane Farm for sharing his knowledge and experience.

Hooray! Biochar has arrived in the new PSL Nov. 25th 2015 edition!

Biochar is considered an excellent way to increase long term soil fertility. As an early pioneer in the farm production and use of biochar, Zbigniew Wierzbicki of Elderberry Lane Farm has always been eager to share the dos and don'ts of his biochar experience. Zbigniew is a strong advocate for the appropriate on-farm use of biochar and its correct production techniques.

The first question is; what is 'Biochar'? It seems to have appeared out of nowhere onto the COR PSL. The term Bio-char (biomass derived black carbon) was only coined in 2006 by Dr. Johannes Lehmann at Cornell

★ Permitted Substances lists for Crop Production

Table 4.2 - Biochar

Produced through pyrolysis of forestry by-products which have not been treated with or combined with prohibited substances. Recycled biochar from contaminated remediation sites is prohibited.

University's Crop and Soil Sciences department. Interest in biochar stems from the relatively obscure history and puzzling existence of the Terra Preta (literally 'black soil') or 'dark earths' scattered throughout the Amazon Basin which have caused much recent scholarly discussion, research and theorizing.



Close-up of finished biochar in the kiln.
Credit: Marjorie Harris

The current consensus is that Pre-Colombian peoples between 2500 to 500 B.P. created the Terra Preta by adding burnt agricultural wastes and pottery kiln ashes to their gardening soils. The Terra Preta soils were first reported in 1542, by the Spanish explorer Francisco de Orellana, to the Spanish court about his discovery of fertile lands supporting a large civilization living in the Amazon rain forest. However, by the time further expeditions arrived, the indigenous Amazonian populations had succumbed to European diseases and the existence of their civilization along with the fertile soils drifted into myth and legend.

In 1885, Cornell University professor, Dr. Charles Hart described the Amazonian 'dark earths'. Finally in the 20th century research and interest in the Terra Preta took

off after Dutch soil scientist Wim Sombroek reported pockets of rich soils in his 1966 book, Amazon Soils.

Amazingly, these soils created more than a thousand years ago still demonstrate sustainably fertility that support astounding growth potentials compared to their neighbouring poor quality soils. They are rich in mineral nutrients and contain high concentrations of organic matter, on average three times higher than in the surrounding soils.

THE PYROLYTIC PROCESS

The pyrolytic process involves heating the biomass materials in the absence of oxygen. This causes a chemical

Continued on page 30...

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



www.horizondistributors.com
604.524.6610 | 1.800.663.1838

Organic Okanagan

BY 2020!



Photos: Organic and Bio-Dynamic vineyards at Summerhill Pyramid Winery. Credit: Gabe Cipes. And the Organic Okanagan Committee from left: Rheece Hartte, Michael Lavigne, Gabe Cipes, Robert Dixon, Wendy Wright, Stephen Cipes, Tirso Gonzales and Matthew Jensen. Absent – Eric von Krosigk, Perlah Shulamis, Camilo Pena. Credit Matthew Jensen.

By Wendy Wright

Organic Okanagan is a grassroots movement with a vision to transition the entire Okanagan Valley to 100% organic by the year 2020. A big dream? Maybe. But we aren't alone - there are millions of regional, provincial, national, and international organic champions, who all know in our hearts, minds and guts that the time is now for this pan-transition to organic agriculture.

Our committee was formed in July 2015, after visionary Stephen Cipes, founder of Summerhill Pyramid Organic

and Bio-Dynamic Winery, shared his organic manifesto and call to action. We are passionate community leaders who are creating a comprehensive organic network, by collaborating with farmers, industry, and consumers.

Our goal is to bring balance and harmony back to our environment and to nurture and regenerate the land and while doing so, become ecologically and economically resilient.

We had the incredible opportunity to meet Dr. Vandana Shiva at the inspiring COABC Resilience Conference on February 28, 2016 in Vernon and Dr. Shiva spoke with two of the Organic Okanagan Committee founders, Gabe Cipes and Dr. Tirso Gonzales. Excerpt below, plus you can view the full 13 minute video at organicokanagan.com.

Gabe Cipes: We want to see the whole Okanagan Valley go organic and we are working towards that. How would you imagine us transitioning this whole valley and perhaps beyond, to organic in five years from now?

Dr. Shiva: Well that is the vision we work with, where we are working on making regions free of chemicals, free of GMO's in the cotton area, but also free of exploitation because the industrial system is a system of exploitation and that is the only reason farming is becoming an unviable occupation. When it is the most important form; so as regions start to close the economy in circles and cycles of renewability rather than its long distance chains of exploitation. That is how the entire world's farming systems will change.

Gabe: How do we inspire our policy makers and our governments to support organic agriculture instead of the conventional, like in Denmark or Bhutan?

Dr. Shiva: Well you know, in places like Bhutan they had visionary leadership and said we are not going to measure growth and GDP which only measures how fast you are destroying the earth and societies. We are going to measure gross national happiness and the well-being of our people.

There is lots of living to do!

Are you ready?

With over 25 years of business planning and development, including 9 years in BC agriculture and time with COABC, Karen uses her skills and expertise as a Financial Consultant with Investors Group. Comprehensive planning can help improve your financial well-being in all life stages.



Whether you need succession planning, estate plans, retirement equations, inheritance stewardship options, or income protection, she will work with you to create a "do-able plan." She provides service to clients in the Okanagan, Lower Mainland and on Vancouver Island.

For an appointment: #250-545-9188 or

Karen.Fenske@investorsgroup.com

#200—2899 30th Ave
Vernon, BC



Insurance products & services distributed via I.G. Insurance Services Inc. Insurance license sponsored by The Great-West Life Assurance Company. Trademarks, including Investors Group, are owned by IGM Financial Inc. and licensed to its subsidiary corporations.

Gabe Cipes understands the importance of organic farming education and believes "we must involve more individuals in the food system, using small scale organic agriculture and indigenous teachings, as the best and most creative the way forward."



SOUTHERN IRRIGATION
Intelligent Water Solutions

View our product guide online:
www.southerndrip.com



SPRINKLERS & CARTS

A size for any pasture, arena or garden.



Irrigation reels, PTO pumps and sprinklers now in stock!

CHILLIWACK 44160 Yale Road West **1.800.663.2615**

www.southerndrip.com

Celebrate Organic Week

SEPTEMBER 17-25

🌿 Organicweek.ca

📘 [/organicweek](https://www.facebook.com/organicweek)

🐦 [@organicweek](https://twitter.com/organicweek)

📷 [@organicweek](https://www.instagram.com/organicweek)

Look out for Organic Week materials in retail stores! Canadians have never been so interested in learning where their food comes from – and like any healthy relationship, organic gets better the more you get to know it.

How will Organic Week 2016 engage consumers?

With ad features in: Globe & Mail, alive Magazine, Sage Magazine, The Organic Report, NOW Toronto, Georgia Straight, Vitalite Quebec & Vista Magazine

At 300+ community events across Canada

With national media coverage – past Organic Weeks were covered by CBC, CTV, Global News, Huffington Post, Sun News, Viva Magazine, Edible Magazines, The Globe and Mail, Alive magazine, and many of your local media.

We invite everyone to Summerhill Pyramid Winery in Kelowna to celebrate and support this Transition to an Organic Future at the 11th Annual Organic Okanagan Festival on Sunday September 25th! The OOF is part of Canada's National Organic Week September 17 – 25th, 2016 and the COABC will be hosting a transition themed panel discussion.

The Okanagan Greens Society and partners produce the annual Organic Okanagan Festival (OOF) to be the most accessible and enjoyable organic celebration in the Okanagan Valley. We host a dynamic event and aim to educate with entertainment, showcasing vital information and thriving organic initiatives in the Okanagan community. Participants learn and engage in an exchange of goods, ideas, art and inspiration, which in turn nurtures a healthy community life-cycle. 🌱

Wendy Wright is a cofounder of Okanagan Green Society, Organic Okanagan Festival, and a proud Organic Okanagan committee member. Mother to Ella and Oren who love organic Okanagan farms!



On social media: Join the celebration with the hashtags #OrganicWeek and #SpotCanadaOrganic. Encourage consumers to join the #SpotCanadaOrganic contest, where they can win prized for sharing photos of the Canada Organic logo.

🌿 CONNECT WITH ORGANIC OKANAGAN

📘 [facebook.com/organicokanagan](https://www.facebook.com/organicokanagan)

🐦 [@organicokanagan](https://twitter.com/organicokanagan)

📷 [@organicokanagan](https://www.instagram.com/organicokanagan)

📌 [pinterest.com/organicokanagan](https://www.pinterest.com/organicokanagan)

📺 [youtube.com/c/organicokanagan](https://www.youtube.com/c/organicokanagan)

📍 plus.google.com/+organicokanagan

🌿 Organicokanagan.com

Organic Okanagan Declaration



WE HEREBY WITNESS THE OKANAGAN VALLEY TO BE A WILDERNESS TREASURE AND HEREBY DECLARE IT TO BE A “DIAMOND ON OUR EMERALD PLANET” FOR ALL TO BEHOLD.

We the undersigned do hereby declare that the Okanagan Valley, British Columbia, Canada, as a unique highly fragile agricultural and residential region that is threatened and endangered.

We hereby declare that we shall transition all of our lawns, gardens, municipal areas, parks, school playgrounds, sports and recreational areas, orchards, vineyards and farms of all kinds, to certified organic practices celebrating full community participation by the year 2020, with progress reports on creating this world model upon each of the four solstice and equinox dates.

We understand that in nature we are all interconnected, we live by and for each other, one whole living entity that includes all there is. Our highest intention is the perpetuation and protection for all on our planet.

Our 135 km long Okanagan Lake, supplies a large portion of the region’s drinking water, and has one of the slowest Klein Systems, clearing itself only every 80 years, is surrounded by mountainous wilderness for hundreds of kilometers in every direction, a unique agricultural oasis. This highly vulnerable and delicate eco-system has been historically protected by the original stewards, the Okanagan Indigenous Peoples. It is now crying for regeneration from the relentless unnatural blows of the present population explosion.

Whereas:

The Okanagan Valley is the northernmost viticulture area in the world, with the least amount of pests of any region in the world, making it the easiest to achieve organic transition.

The economic rewards and sustainability of growing organic are now proven positive thanks, in great part to

worldwide enthusiasm. Statistics are showing huge market share leaps in the consumption of organic foods and beverages. As well, organic farms are now demonstrating that organic practices are cost effective.

Organic growing and consumption is the foundation of proactive healthy living versus reactive practices and treatments. The plants remain naturally resistant to disease under a holistic program just as we humans become our healthiest with daily exercise and by consuming organic foods and beverages.

Organic wine is the single fastest growing segment in the wine industry worldwide. The fledgling yet already world famous Okanagan Valley will become a model for the world, demonstrating harmony with Mother Nature and opening the opportunity for everyone in the valley to flourish. Tourism and all businesses will boom, representing abundance which is the world's natural heritage. Health statistics and vitality levels will be vastly improved and well-noted.

THEREFORE IN HIGHEST INTENTION WE HEED THIS CALL TO ACTION

- ★ We agree below to sign this declaration and share the vision with our friends and family
- ★ To grow, buy and consume local organic
- ★ To ask where your food and beverages come from and how they’re grown
- ★ To consider transitioning our lawn to a garden and to xeriscape our property
- ★ To urge all commercial chemical farming owners to consider the future for all our children and their children’s sake



There is Lots of Living To Do Are you Ready?



By Karen Fenske

Planning for Retirement - Where to Start?

For those who remember me as COABC Administrator and strategic planner, hello again! After working with COABC, BC 4-H, and many other BC agriculture organizations and businesses, I'm putting my toolkit to work to help individuals, producers, and owners implement practical financial tools for now, retirement, and succession situations, as well as help attract and retain high quality employees. Sustaining BC farmers and agricultural organizations continues to be at the heart of my work.

You have limited funds and you're wondering whether it's better to put them in your **Registered Retirement Savings Plan (RRSP)** or in a **Tax-free Savings Plan (TFSA)**. Your decision depends on two factors:

1. Will you need the money before you retire?

A major factor in deciding between an RRSP or TFSA is how frequently you'll be removing funds from an RRSP or TFSA and either re-contributing to other investments or using the funds in the years leading up to your retirement.

If you are going to need the funds prior to retirement and intend to re-contribute them at a later date, a TFSA may

be the better option because you can make withdrawals at any time. There is no penalty for withdrawing funds, and the contribution room is restored. When you make RRSP withdrawals, you lose that contribution room, and you may face penalties for withdrawing the funds early.

2. Your marginal tax rate now, and what your marginal tax rate will be when you finally remove the funds.

Generally, if your marginal tax rate is lower at the time the funds are removed from your registered plan at retirement, the RRSP option will usually produce a better result—but that is only true if your marginal tax rate *actually* is lower.

Your marginal tax rate can be influenced by income-tested benefits including the Age Credit, Old Age Security (OAS), the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) and the GST Credit. Because they are *income-tested benefits*, they are reduced or *clawed-back* as your income increases, ultimately disappearing entirely at an *upper threshold* that is different for each of the benefits.

If the funds you remove from your RRSP after age 65 increase your taxable income and result in the loss of some or all of your income-tested benefits, you will have effectively – and perhaps substantially – reduced your income and increased the tax you pay. And you would

❁ WHAT IS THE MARGINAL TAX RATE?

The marginal tax rate is the percentage of tax applied to your income for each tax bracket in which you qualify. In essence, the marginal tax rate is the percentage taken from your next dollar of taxable income above a pre-defined income threshold.

Federal tax rates for 2016

- 15% on the first \$45,282 of taxable income, +
- 20.5% on the next \$45,281 of taxable income (on the portion of taxable income over \$45,282 up to \$90,563), +
- 26% on the next \$49,825 of taxable income (on the portion of taxable income over \$90,563 up to \$140,388), +
- 29% on the next \$59,612 of taxable income (on the portion of taxable income over \$140,388 up to \$200,000), +
- 33% of taxable income over \$200,000.

Here's a handy CRA tool to calculate your marginal tax rate:

🔗 www.cra-arc.gc.ca/tx/ndvdl/fq/txrts-eng.html

have cancelled out some or all of the value of your RRSP withdrawal.

There is no doubt that RRSPs and TFSAs play key roles in financial and retirement planning and there are strategies – like income-splitting – that you can use to reduce your taxable income and avoid claw-backs.

It's never too early – or too late – to start planning for retirement. Even small contributions now will help set you up for success later, so you can focus on living your life, and enjoying your retirement. (Yes, even farmers retire eventually!) 🌱

This column, written and published by Investors Group Financial Services Inc., presents general information only and is not a solicitation to buy or sell any investments.

Karen Fenske is licensed to sell Mutual Funds and Insurance in BC. She has a degree in business and mediation skills, and has provided strategic planning and business development for 25 years. She lives in Vernon with her husband. She enjoys spending time with her two young adult children, in her garden, hiking, skiing, travelling around the province, and watching murder mysteries.



**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



**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



reaction process whereby carbon transforms into highly interlinked aromatic chains forming a very porous and absorbent product. Pyrolytic heating causes 75% loss of the original biomass while retaining 50% of the plant carbon. The highest temperature reached during pyrolysis influences the molecular structure and the final pore size and pore distribution, factors that govern its absorptive behavior in the environment.

The resulting biochar is highly stable and resistant against microbial decay for thousands of years. Biochar increases overall surface area in the soil that can provide niches for increased microbial populations, which aid in reducing plant diseases, such as damping off, by mechanisms that are still unclear. Studies have demonstrated that biochar treated soils mitigate greenhouse gas emissions by reducing nitrous oxide release by up to 90% and by sequestering carbon compound residence time for thousands of years. Biochar also holds nitrogen, phosphorus, and many other minerals for slow release, while increasing the cation exchange capacity (CEC) and water retention ability of the soil.


ACTIVATING THE BIOCHAR

As Zbigniew notes, the fresh biochar must first be “activated” by absorbing nutrients. Scattering a light layer of biochar on the barn floor will let the biochar absorb the nutrients from the straw-manure litter while keeping the barn floor sweet and protecting livestock feet from diseases. Biochar can also be charged by soaking it for two to four weeks in any liquid nutrient (urine, plant tea, etc.). If the biochar is not properly activated before being applied to the soil it will absorb the available soil nutrients to fill its absorptive capacity, depleting the soil. Once properly activated by adsorbing the ammonia (NH₃) from barn urine and manure, biochar becomes an excellent slow release fertilizer full of bioavailable nitrogen compounds lodged in the carbon pores waiting for release by microbial action. There is evidence that biochar is beneficial to arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi that develop symbiotic relationship with plant roots for greater nutrient uptake.

HOW TO MAKE YOUR OWN BIOCHAR

1. How to stack wood: Zbigniew emphasizes that biochar burning must be a top down process. The wood stacking method is opposite from what is learned in Boy Scouts, where small kindling is placed on the bottom, Zbigniew explains. When making biochar you place the large wood pieces on the bottom in a pit or trench and pile the small wood on the top, causing the pile to burn downward. Using this stacking method causes the volatile gases that form as the biomass heats up to be consumed by the high temperatures at the top of the pile instead of being

released into the air, as is the case in a normally constructed fire.

- 2. Dig a trench or pit:** and bury all of the roots, slash, and large logs. Compact the pile, and put lighter material on top. The intensity of the fire is so incredible that there is no smoke, it creates a very clean burn, and a large amount of biochar is produced. Cover the red hot coals with dirt or if you have a burning pit, cover it to finish the process in a reduced oxygen environment. This prevents the formation of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH) in the kiln. Regular burning creates lots of PAH's, which contaminate the soil and air.
- 3. Drenching is optional:** Zbigniew drenches his biochar at the very end. The caution here is that the liquid from the biochar is very alkaline and the area the liquid goes cannot be used for gardening. Zbigniew has a permanent ditch for catching the liquid.
- 4. Activating the biochar:** After the material is cold, crush into a fine gravel size for use on the bottom of the barn to catch urine and other nutrient goodies. Poultry barns and large livestock barns can all use biochar on the floor. Biochar is like a magnet absorbing minerals. As it absorbs minerals and urine from the animal waste it becomes activated.
- 5. Neutralizing the biochar:** Remove from the barns when saturated and put into the compost with other crop and farm waste. The composting process helps neutralize it before spreading into the garden soil. The microbes of the garden soils will release the minerals from the biochar as they are needed. Because of this microbial release action the biochar will release mineral nutrients for a very long time.
- 6. Cautionary note:** Zbigniew emphasizes that because biochar is so alkaline and so very long acting, it is very important to test your soils pH first. Although composting does move the biochar pH toward neutral you need to check your soil pH to manage it properly for long term changes. 

 marjorieharris@telus.net

References:

- Clough, T.J., Condon, L.M., Kamman, C., Müller, C. (2013). A Review of Biochar and Soil Nitrogen Dynamics. *Agronomy*, 3, 275-293; doi:10.3390/agronomy3020275.
- Lehmann, J. (2012). Integrated biochar systems for soil fertility management. Cornell University, Mar 26.



Certified Organic Associations of BC

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

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		
Western Canada Organic Directory	\$6.00	\$6.00	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

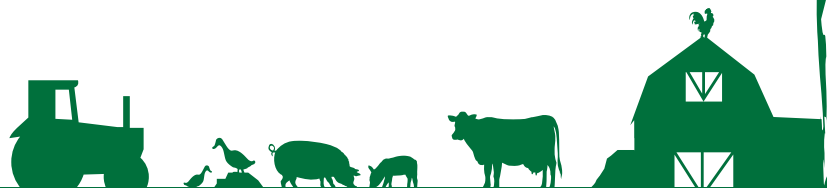
An invoice will be sent with your order. Postage and applicable taxes will be added to your invoice.
 Please do not send payment before receiving invoice.



More than a farmer

I nurture healthy soil, that grows
healthy food, that grows healthy people,
that grow healthy communities!


Certified Organic Associations of BC



www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca



BRITISH
COLUMBIA

Supported by BC's Buy Local program