

British Columbia Organic Grower



Seeding Wisdom:
Collaboration & Relationships

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COABC
Certified Organic Associations of BC

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Forstbauer Farm

Natalie Forstbauer shares stories of a much-loved family farm—read more on *page 8*.

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Seeding Local Farm Community

Working together to create opportunities for farmers at the local level is Mary Alice Johnson's passion—read more on *page 16*.

BC Organic Grower

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On the Cover: Forstbauer Farm family members with harvest. Credit: Niklaus Forstbauer.

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Editor's Note

By Darcy Smith

Farewell 2020, the year that just would not quit. It has not been an easy cycle around the sun, and the organic community has met each challenge with a stockpile of resilience that didn't seem possible. Okay, maybe grumpy farmer month was more like grumpy farmer season, but many farmers report having a very successful—if also very difficult year. When we were looking at themes for 2021 (fingers crossed for smooth sailing from here, right?), one thing emerged: this was a year of lessons learned, where wisdom cultivated over decades of working together, on farms and as a community, was drawn up from deep in the soil to nourish farmers under a quick succession of one adverse condition after another.



So, wisdom it is for 2021. This year's BC Organic Grower will celebrate wisdom in all its forms, starting with this first issue of a brand-new year, *Seeding Wisdom: Collaboration & Relationships*. As we stay cozy in our homes, the earth is quietly at work readying us for a new cycle of abundance and growth. 2020, and all the years before it, have seeded this organic community with everything we need to embrace the change that is coming, both as winter transitions to spring, and as the global community transitions to an ecological future (again, fingers crossed).

What do the seeds of wisdom look like in BC's organic community? Learning to live without cows, and (in-person) conferences, as Anna Helmer is doing (page 6)? Growing up with dirt on your feet and on your face, as demonstrated by multiple generations playing in the mud at Forstbauer Farm (photo evidence on page 8, along with Natalie Forstbauer's heartfelt behind-the-scenes look at growing up on one of the pillars of BC's organic and biodynamic farm community)? Opting to collaborate instead of compete on Vancouver Island (Mary Alice Johnson muses on the relationships that make farming on Southern Vancouver Island possible, page 18)?

All of the above, and so much more.

On page 20, iCertify shows us how new technology can improve the certification process with a look at the database of approved products, which allows for collaboration across certification bodies and simplifies input approvals for farmers.

In *Footnotes from the Field*, we are invited to form a new relationship with the earth, one where humanity chooses biological diversity over “progress” (page 22).

On page 24, Andrew Adams muses on an old crop made new again, as hemp makes a century-overdue comeback, and shows promise for the future.

And in a year where many of us have missed out on precious time with loved ones, including the annual BC Organic conference, Jordan Marr consoles us with a slam-dunk of a stand-in. Check out page 12 for a look at what's possible when we connect intentionally from afar, and be sure to register for the 2021 BC Organic conference soon!

If you have a story to tell about organic food and farming, please get in touch. Reach out with your thoughts, letters, and story ideas to editor@certifiedorganic.bc.ca—and be sure to visit us online at:



bcorganicgrower.ca



Veggie washing machine. Credit: Forstbauer Farm.



Grazing cattle. Credit: Niklaus Forstbauer.



In Loving Memory of Linda Edwards

It is with great sadness that we say goodbye to a most influential member of the organic community in BC, Linda Lynne Edwards. Her contributions to organic tree fruit production, research, and agriculture in BC cannot be understated. Her organic scientific expertise, vision, and dedication to research has been instrumental in organic

tree fruits becoming one of the more successful sectors of agriculture in the country. Through her work on the boards of various associations, Linda's expertise has long informed and influenced provincial and federal organic standards and certification.

Linda forged a path in a largely male-dominated agricultural world, and mentored many women on that path. She inspired and gave a helping hand to many others in their various chosen careers. She also modeled that success can come with commitment, follow-through, and a good work ethic.

The loss of Linda is felt deeply by her family and friends, and goes deep into the heart of the organic community. She leaves behind a legacy of shared knowledge, mentorship, wisdom, and guidance that will no doubt continue to empower and inspire future farmers for generations to come.

"No one is actually dead until the ripples they cause in the world die away."

~ Terry Pratchett

BC Organic 2021

We are getting excited for this year's BC Organic Conference, happening virtually February 27-28, 2021.

The conference looks a bit different this year due to the pandemic. It will consist of a two-day main event plus an audio series (podcast) that will be released one month ahead of the conference weekend, so that attendees can engage with this comprehensive resource at their own pace. The series will feature more than 20 episodes intended to provide valuable updates, provoke discussion, and improve listeners' farming, marketing, and much more. The online gathering on the weekend of the conference will feature some Q&As with a selection of the speakers featured in the podcast.

Check out the conference insert on page 12, and get your ticket today!

certifiedorganic.bc.ca/infonews/conference2021/program.php

Annual Planning Update

By Heather Stretch

On November 10, the COABC board met for its annual planning session. This annual all-day meeting is an important day for the COABC. The board comprises members from all over our large province, and through most of the year governing the COABC happens off the sides of our desks (or tractors). We meet virtually once a month, and take a long break over the summer. COABC activities continue year-round, and through the summer Eva-Lena and the office staff are in touch with the executive and keep things humming along smoothly. But by November we need to reconvene and make sure the metaphorical GPS is still set to the right coordinates so our intrepid executive director can keep moving the ship in the right direction.

This year was a bit different. We planned to meet in person; however, just days before the meeting, COVID-19 numbers started to spike and our members from the Lower Mainland couldn't travel. So, after a few awkward minutes in the morning, we got everything smoothed out and had a great session with about two thirds of participants zooming in, and a few of us attending in person in Vernon.

The morning began with a presentation by Eva-Lena on all the work she, staff, and contractors have underway, from the day-to-day operations to all the special projects. It is truly remarkable what this small team can do.

We then had a presentation by Tristan Banwell, the chair of the Re-Branding Committee. He gave a report on the exciting work

they've been up to, and revealed the proposed modernized BC Certified Organic Program Symbol. More details to come as soon as we receive feedback from the government.

After that we talked about communication. It's a perennial challenge to make sure producers, certification body administrators, board members, certification committee members, and COABC board members, accreditors, and staff all have timely and efficient access to relevant information without being overloaded.

In the afternoon we got into some meaty discussion about big picture challenges and opportunities. Over the past several decades, certification and accreditation have gradually become more complex. The costs and labour involved are a challenge for all producers, large and small. We need to acknowledge this reality before moving forward with attempts to be more efficient. We also explored exciting ways that the COABC can become a stronger and more united voice for the organic sector in BC.

I can't summarize a whole day in a few short paragraphs, so I'm sorry I've had to leave out so much. It was a long day of sometimes challenging discussions, but it was also a wonderful, productive day spent with brilliant, committed people working hard to improve agriculture in our province.

iCertify x LiteFarm

Did you know that iCertify, our online organic certification tool, is a key feature of LiteFarm, the open-source farm management software from UBC's Centre for Sustainable Food Systems? Read all about it in The Star:

[🔗 thestar.com/news/cana](https://thestar.com/news/cana)

[da/2020/11/18/how-a-new-organic-farming-app-is-trying-to-weed-out-paperwork.html?rf](https://thestar.com/news/cana/2020/11/18/how-a-new-organic-farming-app-is-trying-to-weed-out-paperwork.html?rf)

The LiteFarm app includes functions to help farmers efficiently manage their fields and operations. The app's beta version lets farmers enter data on their phones in a format that is compatible with iCertify and automatically fills in the standardized forms required to maintain organic certification.

Learn more about iCertify at:

[🔗 certifiedorganic.bc.ca/icertify](https://certifiedorganic.bc.ca/icertify)

BC Agriculture Council Updates

Niklaus Forstbauer is COABC's representative on the BC Agriculture Council (BCAC), ensuring the voice of organics is at the table. The BCAC has been very active over the last few months, giving COABC the opportunity to engage and provide input on several projects.

This year's virtual Agri-food Industry GALA will be held on January 28th, 2021. It will include awards and an online silent auction for BC Ag in the Classroom.

We Heart Local BC: Head over to BCAC's We Heart Local page and see some of our organic farms featured! Becky is currently looking for more Organic Farms to highlight. If you are interested please contact Eva-Lena and she will give you the relevant information.

[🔗 weheartlocalbc.ca](https://weheartlocalbc.ca)

Provincial Election: BCAC was busy advocating for the agriculture sector during the election, including submitting questions

Continued on page 28 ...



biodynamic farm story: Coping Without Cows

Cows happily munching on spuds. Credit: Helmers Organic Farm.

By Anna Helmer

Lament: No in-person farming conferences and meetings this winter. No chance encounters in the Trade Show, no delightful perusal and purchase at the silent auction, and no (insert acute pang of nostalgia here) food and drink. I regret all the ongoing unfinished conversations with people I see only annually but think about all year—friendships that are continually enriched with shared stories of farming. All this seems lost to me online.

Solace: The online versions will quite likely result in luxuriously languid hours spent sprawled in a chair with tea and cookies enjoying edification by interesting presenters.

That experience, I believe, can be replicated. And there will likely be benefits yet unrecognized—easier to attend? Less driving? Certain efficiencies achieved?

Admission: Farming conferences can be quite boring; by which I mean, nice and boring. Being bored is an aspirational state for me, and farming conferences often deliver. I find it very relaxing. I hope they don't get too efficient.

Get on with it: I am avoiding talking about what I intend to write about. The theme for this edition of the BC Organic Grower is: Seeding Wisdom: Collaboration & Relationships. Suitable seed beds are necessary for successful seeding and blah blah blah extend the metaphor yourself.

Uncomfortably for me, certain sage seeds are right now being deliberately picked out and set aside and the chickens have come home to roost in the form of cull potatoes.

For if there is one bit of wisdom a Biodynamic (or any) farmer would share, it would quite possibly be: keep cows. Cows process things like grass and cull potatoes into valuable usefulness. Grass and cull potatoes might otherwise be useless clutter. Cull potatoes, for example, claim valuable space, bins, and effort, and on a seed potato farm they need to be disposed of so thoroughly that they won't regrow. Cows excel at this task, daily devouring large volumes in slobbery bliss. Well, we don't have cows right now and we aren't getting cows anytime soon. Ergo, wisdom kicked to the curb, problem still exists and getting bigger.

Now I have to build a compost heap that will digest potatoes. The plan is to layer potatoes, old hay, and dirt all winter long. The potatoes will, I think, freeze and thaw a few times in there and turn to mush. I hope the hay will create some pathways through that muck before it totally rots too, which will allow air, worms, microbes, and fungi to spread through and decompose everything. This is not a scientific explanation of what will happen.

No one is coming to me for scientific wisdom, right? Just checking.

I have some other things to throw in there: eggshells that I have been accumulating all summer, and, of course, Biodynamic Preparations 502-507. In the spring, once the root-houses are cleared of potatoes, perhaps the nettles will be up and I'll cover the pile with all I can get. Finally, in a nod to the wise Biodynamic practice of a million farmers in India, I'll cap it with a layer of fresh cow dung.

This is the step I am most excited about. I just miss so much the smell of fresh, happy cow manure and I am poised to poach the poop of a few local herds. One of them grazes on an airy grassy knoll with a stupendous view of the local massif, Mount Currie. Surely cows with that perspective will produce some very energizing manure. Another is the herd of a valued mentor. She is the one who taught me that if you don't want to get behind in farming, you have to do a farming job every day. Even when you don't want to. Even when there is a thunder-snow rainstorm going on. Especially then.

I am going to spread this manure by hand. That's how it's done. 🌿

Anna Helmer is going into winter in the Pemberton Valley with no lack of plans.



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The Birth and Evolution of FORSTBAUER FARM



Forstbauer farm family. Credit: Forstbauer Farm.

By Natalie Forstbauer

Bare feet, dirty nails, cheeks caked with dry soil, clothes weathered by the elements, the smell of earth lingering on me...getting lost in long grass, playing hide and seek in fields, singing camp songs while pulling out weeds...sitting under a canopy of blueberry branches while filling my mandatory bucket and having the occasional forbidden blueberry fight in the berry fields...

Dishes piled high and floors waxed with freshly-soiled feet as brothers and sisters run in and out of the house to fill tummies and play in between the farm responsibilities of looking after animals, picking beans, sorting carrots, and picking and cleaning blueberries...

The long hot days of summers on the farm had a beat of their own. There was a seamless rhythm that flowed between inward contemplation and outward expression. Creativity and free play were encouraged while routines and expectations were simultaneously enforced.

This was my childhood.

I am the oldest of 12 children from Mary and Hans Forstbauer. Growing up on Forstbauer Family Natural Food Farm with soil built up between my toes was a journey of connection, advocacy, and flow. The farm was the fabric



Top: Forstbauer kids play in the mud in the 1970's. Above: an early advertising strategy. Credit: Forstbauer Farm



Forstbauer kids play in the mud in 2011. Credit: Niklaus Forstbauer.



Forstbauer children gathered for a group photo. Credit: Niklaus Forstbauer.



Top: Harvesting beets. Above: Sunny fields. Credit: Forstbauer Farm.



Top row: Biodynamics lesson with Gabe Cipes; creating biodynamic preparations; Hans Forstbauer collecting eggs; Forstbauer farm kids helping out with the field harvests; Above: Katrina Forstbauer harvesting beets in the greenhouse. Credit: Niklaus Forstbauer.

that knit the family together and the family in turn melded the farm.

My dad was the rock that laid the foundation for the farm. His gift was stewarding the land while sharing his wisdom, insights, and visions with my mom. My mom was his window to the world. She had the gift of listening, compiling,

and generously sharing these insights with communities where they were discussed, explored, and implemented.

My parents, along with their pioneering organic friends and colleagues, knew their regenerative farming practices needed standards and accountability. With due diligence they shaped the inaugural certified organic standards in BC.

The synergistic relationship between my parents was remarkable. While my mom was pioneering the advancement and the amplification of organic food and regenerative organic farming in the public eye, my dad nurtured the soil with grace. He knew healthy food and healthy humans begins with healthy soil.

He worked long days sandwiching his job as a carpenter with work on the farm before sunrise and after sunset. I'm pretty sure his morning began around 4:30 am every day to milk the goat and cows and ended after the sun went down tending to animals and other farm chores.

It's often thought the farm "was started in the mid 1970s," but my dad passionately shared with me recently that "planting your front lawn into a garden isn't anything new. I did that when you were a baby and before you were even born." In my dad's eyes, that front lawn garden was the birth of Forstbauer Family Natural Food Farm. It's when he and my mom began their farming journey. The year was 1970.

In 1971, they bought their first acreage in Mission, BC. It was a magical place at the bottom of a mountain surrounded by forest and rolling hills with a fresh stream running



through a little valley to the east of the house. An old barn sat up on a hill north of the house and their massive garden was to the west. We had lots of animals: ducks, geese, chickens, a dog, cats, cows, goats, and a pony.

It was exciting when neighbours and friends came for fresh food from the farm. Equally as exciting was when I would go with my mom to make little deliveries to friends when we went into town.

In 1976, my parents sold their little acreage in Mission. They moved to Matsqui Prairies onto 16.5 acres. It was a beautiful spot pressed up against the mountain, home to an old blueberry field that had long been forgotten. My favourite part was the northern border of the farm where a freshwater stream came down the mountain side. The west coast rainforest that bordered the field was an enchanting place where we'd sink knee deep in moss, salmon came to spawn, and large evergreen trees clung to the sky.

My dad was industrious and, similar to today's urban agriculture trend, vegetables were squeezed into every square space. Our first sales were to customers who came to our farm through word of mouth. Even our doctors shopped at our farm. As a young girl, I remember thinking we were doing something important.

My parents worked hard to find markets for their expanding bounty of produce and blueberries. The u-pick was an immediate success with cars lined up and down the rural road and a constant stream of pickers filling their buckets. We made weekly deliveries to Safeway, The Green Apple and other local produce stores.



Always the diligent guy, my dad (with the help of us kids) started making blueberry cuttings to supplement his income. Thousands of blueberry cuttings. It's how blueberry bushes get their start. We would plant the cuttings, they would grow roots, we would transplant them the next year and then again the year after that and then we would sell them. Many of the older blueberry farms in Matsqui and surrounding Fraser Valley got their start from the cuttings we made.

Continued on page 30...



COABC featured Mary and Natalie in a series of 2015 videos on organic farming in BC. Check them out!

Wisdom from an Organic Legend:

📺 [youtube.com/watch?v=Ve1HCAI9MFc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ve1HCAI9MFc)

Soil is Life:

📺 [youtube.com/watch?v=Ole](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ole)



Embracing Change

2021 BC ORGANIC CONFERENCE

Coming to You Wherever You Are

By Jordan Marr

Last February, as media coverage of a strange outbreak in Wuhan bullied other worthy topics out of the choicest, most prominent headline positions—your trending tweets, your 5:30 headlines—my wife asked me whether I thought this new virus was going to become a real problem closer to home. I rolled my eyes. “Nope,” was my flat, cynical reply.

Typical media disaster porn, I assumed. And now, 10 months later, I’m leading a promo article for your 2021 BC Organic Conference with this vital advice for the conference: make sure you bring a good set of headphones!

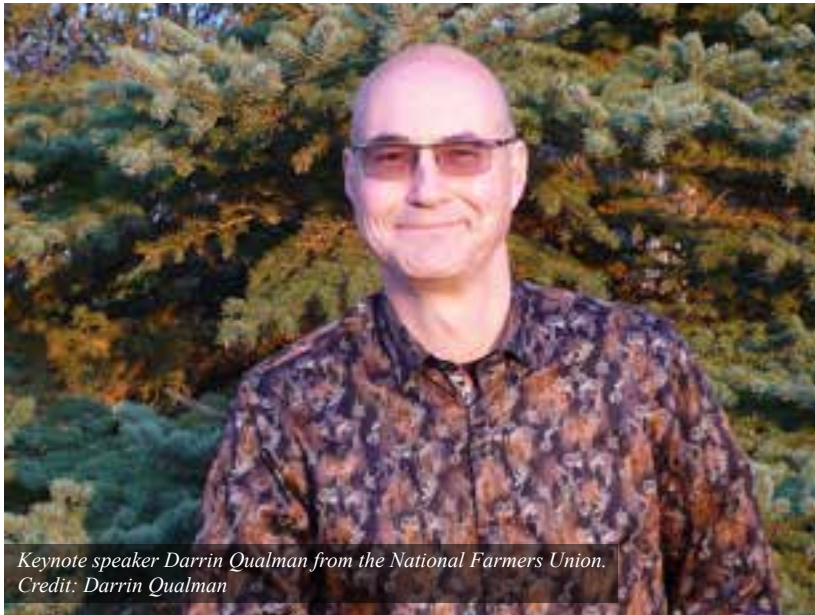
More about those headphones, and the genuinely cool conference to come, in a minute. But first, let’s excise and lament together, in one paragraph, and then move on. Our regular, in-person, pal’s-vehicle-recognising, old-friends-hugging, new-friends-breakfasting, hospitality-suite-ing, Paddy-Doherty-correcting, AGM-snoozing, banquet-buffet-line-brumbling, Backhand-of-God-imbibing confer-

ence is really fun. We will miss you this year, ol’ buddy, but we will see you again in happier and healthier times.

Meanwhile, on behalf of your conference planning committee, I’m here to tell you that we think we’ve come up with a pretty decent stand-in. We’ve chosen the theme Embracing Change, which is exactly what we’ve tried to do in producing this conference, and what most of us have been forced to do on our farms, in our businesses, and in our day-to-day lives.

And not just in the context of the pandemic. Climate change and its messengers—floods and fires of increased length and intensity, to name only two—are forcing us to confront, mitigate, and adapt. 2020 was a telegram that read Things will be different STOP

Boy, so much adieu. Bottom line: your 2021 conference will be different, but it will be interesting, educational, thought-provoking, and it will even try really hard to be a little social. Here’s what we’ve got planned for you.



Keynote speaker Darrin Qualman from the National Farmers Union.
Credit: Darrin Qualman



Old Meets New: the 2021 Conference Podcast

A very popular aspect of our annual conference is the series of workshops and seminars offered throughout the conference weekend. In their place, we're producing an ambitious audio series that we will release to ticket-holders one month ahead of the official conference weekend of February 27th & 28th. There will be 20-plus episodes, which you'll be able to download or stream at your own pace, and listen sitting down or on the move. With this series we aim to cover the same range of topics you've come to enjoy at our regular conferences.

At our online gathering on February 28th, we plan to invite a few of the podcast guests to answer questions. We'll base those invitations on feedback from all of our listeners. Speaking of podcast guests, see below for a summary of what's in store!

Saturday, February 27th: Regional Farm Tours (Pandemic Permitting)

We can't all be in-person together, but we're going to try and support some small, socially-distanced outdoor gatherings around the province on the Saturday of the conference weekend.

Ticket holders can elect to book a spot at a farm-tour/gathering nearest to them. We'll support each gathering with a food budget and one or two activities. On the conference Sunday we aim to compare notes on what was seen and heard. Be prepared for a group photo contest of some kind! More details to come.

Sunday, February 28th: Our Online Conference

We'll end our conference with the conference itself! On Sunday, February 28th, we'll gather online on a giant organic zoom call hosted by one of our conference partners, the Institute for Community Engaged Research at UBC Okanagan. Here's what's planned:

Your 2021 Keynote Address: Darrin Qualman on Farming Amidst a Climate Crisis

I'm excited to announce that we've confirmed Darrin Qualman as our 2021 Keynote Speaker. Darrin is the Director of Climate Crisis Policy and Action for the National Farmers Union. He is the author of the 2019 report "Tackling the Farm Crisis and the Climate Crisis" and the 2019 book *Civilization Critical: Energy, Food, Nature, and the Future*. He farmed

for two decades and has academic degrees in history, biology, and political studies.

Climate change threatens farmers in BC and the rest of Canada. This presentation will look at possible impacts to BC farms, the emissions coming from those farms, and ways that farmers can change their practices to reduce emissions and make their operations resilient and climate-compatible. It will also look at the government policies needed to support farmers in making these transitions. Finally, it will look at the positive net income effects that low-input, organic, regenerative, and agroecological practices can have for farmers' livelihoods. Rational, supportive government policies could help farmers transition, and could help propagate the positive solutions already in action on many farms.

A BC Organic Visioning Discussion Hosted by your COABC Executive

In recent years this session has provided a great chance to discuss the past, present, and future of the organic sector in BC, to learn more about how COABC works, to get to know the people working on your behalf, and to add your voice to the conversation. Members of the COABC Board will



*The view from your conference planner's office window.
Credit: Jordan Mar*

lead the discussion, and all participants are encouraged to participate.

Podcast Guests Q&A

Ahead of the online gathering, we'll ask you which podcast guests you'd most like to hear more from, and invite them to answer questions for all of you.

...Plus our annual award recipients, a photography contest, and more!

Other Conference Features

The Silent Auction

Our COABC fundraiser auction will be different this year, but we're having one! This year's version will be online, and span a period of days before the conference weekend. We're currently seeking donations for our auction! Ideal items are gift cards or coupon codes, or items that can be shipped affordably! Please email Jordan at bcorganicconference@gmail.com if you have something to donate or can connect us to a potential donor. Thank you!

Trade Show

Pandemic, Shmandemic. In lieu of our regular tradeshow, we've created a virtual version for those companies and organizations that wish to promote their work to our attendees. Our conference podcast host will record an edited interview with a representative

of your company that will be included in one of our podcast episodes. Learn more, and book your spot, at the link below:

📍 [bcorganictradeshow2021.eventbrite.ca](https://www.eventbrite.ca/bcorganictradeshow2021)

Seminar & Workshop Highlights... So Far

At time of writing we are busy producing the seminars and workshops for the conference podcast, and adding new topics each week. But here are some highlights:

Considering A Small Farm Future: An Interview with Chris Smaje

An interview with author and farmer Chris Smaje, whose recently published book, *A Small Farm Future*, makes the case for a society built around local economies, self-provisioning, agricultural diversity, and a shared earth.

On-Farm Livestock Necropsy Advice

Rancher Tristan Banwell speaks with veterinary pathologist Glenna McGregor of the BC Ministry of Agriculture's Animal Health Centre about on farm necropsy, and about the role the Animal Health Centre plays in the prevention, control, and management of animal pests and diseases in BC.

Research Roundup

Two or three episodes of the podcast will feature conversations with researchers about their work on various aspects of the food and farming sector. You'll hear about recent science on wireworm control, the use of berry-pomace-as-antibiotic in poultry feed, diverse cover crop systems in vineyards, consumer behaviour during the pandemic, emerging insights about parasitic wasps, and so much more!

A Conversation with Charles Massey

Rancher Tristan Banwell in conversation with Charles Massey, author of *Call of the Reed Warbler* and renowned regenerative farmer. Tristan will ask Charles to situate the organic movement's role in avoiding ecological collapse, and to share success stories from around the world.

Updates to the Organic Tree Fruit Management Manual

Orchardist Molly Thurston interviews orchardist Linda Edwards and entomologist Tamara Richardson about their collaboration to update the previous version of Linda's *Organic Tree Fruit Management* manual. Tragically, Linda died the day after providing this interview. This manual represents just one part of her immense contribution to the organic industry here in BC and beyond. We plan to produce an

More Details to Come!



Check the conference webpage for additions to the schedule and other updates! We hope you'll join us for the conference, and remember: don't forget your headphones!

certifiedorganic.bc.ca/infonews/conference2021



*Orach seeds.
Credit: Jordan Mar*

additional episode to highlight those contributions. Our condolences go to Linda's family and friends.

Organic Standards Updates

A few of the episodes in this series will be focused on updates to organic standards, and some Q&A around the standards and their interpretation.

Wholesale Buyer Perspectives

Conversations with various wholesale buyers in the BC supply chain about trends in consumer behaviour and advice for initiating and expanding relationships with wholesale buyers.

Restaurant Buyer Perspectives

Advice from chefs on landing and keeping restaurant accounts.

Online Sales Platform Review

The pandemic has forced many producers to shift some or all of their sales online. In this episode we'll talk about some of your options for online sales platforms, and what to consider before committing.

Soil Test Advice & Interpretation

Taking regular soil samples is a great way to keep tabs on the health of your

most precious resource! In this episode we'll talk about soil sampling, and how to interpret your lab results.

Orchard Soil Health & Industry Trends: A Conversation with David Granatstein

Orchardist Molly Thurston interviews David Granatstein, recently retired Professor Emeritus at Washington State University. David served as a sustainable agriculture specialist for over two decades, with a focus on orchard management.

The Regenerative Organic Certified Standard

A conversation with Elizabeth Whitlow, executive director of the Regenerative Organic Association, which oversees the Regenerative Organic Certified program. This new standard requires organic certification as a prerequisite, then adds additional requirements related to soil and land management, animal welfare, and social justice. Is this 'beyond organic' development the way the industry is headed? Elizabeth shares her perspective.

Seeds Seeds Seeds

Our podcast will feature conversations with Keeley Nixon, executive

director of the BC Eco Seed Co-op; Dan Brisebois, author and co-owner of La Ferme Tournesol Seeds in Quebec, and BC seed grower Sal Dominelli of Sweet Rock Farm.

Climate Change Mitigation in the Context of BC's Unique Food System

Policy advisor for FarmFolk CityFolk Abra Brynne interviews Darrin Qualman, Director of Climate Crisis Policy and Action for the National Farmers Union and author of *Civilization Critical: Energy, Food, Nature, and the Future*.

We would like to express our gratitude to UBC Okanagan's Institute for Community Engaged Research for their technical support and for hosting the online gathering for the conference. You can learn more about their work at:

icer.ok.ubc.ca



SEEDING *Local Farm Community*



By Mary Alice Johnson

When I first ventured into growing fresh produce commercially on lower Vancouver Island in 1991, I was fortunate to connect with a number of folks who were also farming on small acreages in the area. Like myself, they had grown up in rural areas but had followed careers other than farming as young adults. We held in common a longing to be outdoors growing food, and that gave us the audacity to think we could make a living growing food here at this time.

Another common thought was that it didn't make sense to put poison on the food we were growing but rather to embrace organic practices to grow healthy, beautiful food for our communities. This same group of growers had recently formed the first organization in BC to set organic standards for its members to follow—Islands Organic Producers Association (IOPA).



Top: Rebecca Jehn of Rebecca's Seeds and Teresa Heinekey of Saanich Organics Seeds visit ALM Farm/Full Circle Seeds to use seed cleaning equipment purchased by our farm with a grant from The Bauta Family Initiative on Canadian Seed Security Foundation in 2015. Credit Full Circle Seeds. Above: Flower harvest at ALM Farm. Credit: Keeley Nixon.



ALM fields. Credit: Sam Nixon.

Similkameen Okanagan Organic Producers Association



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Clockwise from top: COG Vancouver Island tour at ALM Farm. Credit: Keeley Nixon. Keeley Nixon and Jordan Field arranging flowers at ALM Farm. Credit: Anders Erickson. Mary Alice Johnson with a good rhubarb harvest. Credit: Keeley Nixon.

I got to know these farmers and their farms when the Sooke Harbour House restaurant asked me to pick up their fresh produce for the restaurant. I saw this as an opportunity to travel around the area to different farms and see what other farmers were doing. I worried that these farmers would see me as a competitor but instead they welcomed me onto their farms and shared information about what varieties to plant, where to find seed, when to plant, harvesting techniques, and pest control. More than half of these farmers were women, my peers and relatively new to farming. I had found a strong community right in front of me.

Tina Fraser, one of these farmers, welcomed three of us to form a team to market to restaurants. Before long, the



Build A Vacuum Seed Cleaner

For instructions to assemble the vacuum seed cleaner we call Sucky, including costs and suppliers of the parts, visit our blog on the ALM Farms website:

almfarms.org/blog



Watch Outstanding in Her Fields

Part 1:

[youtube.com/watch?v=ibOBBSO9M5k](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ibOBBSO9M5k)

Part 2:

[youtube.com/watch?v=wcNQhsZUfsM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wcNQhsZUfsM)

Island Chefs' Collaborative formed, made up of chefs who wanted to buy from local farmers. These same farmers again came together to help start the Moss Street Market, our chapter of Canadian Organic Growers, and Linking Land and Future Farmers, a land linking program that ran from 1995-2016. Those early years were captured when a UVic Gender Studies student who was apprenticing on my farm produced a film about women organic farmers titled Outstanding in her Fields in 1995, a copy of which can still be found on YouTube.

While each of us ran our farms, we were also getting into seed saving. We started out by saving seeds on our own. We then came together to form Full Circle Seeds, and operated as a collective of seed producers for several years. I eventually purchased the company as a sole proprietorship and the other three women went on to establish their own seed companies.

Part of our struggle was the coordination of the growing and marketing of over 150 varieties of vegetables, herbs, and flowers in a time before email, Google Drive, and video conferencing. Fast forward 25 years and we now have a group of 20 BC seed growers who came together to form the BC Eco-Seed Co-op in 2014 to increase the quantity of BC grown seed for other farmers, offering hundreds of varieties of seeds available to purchase online.

No longer do budding seed growers have to set up their own seed companies with logos and branding, websites

and distribution systems, seed cleaning equipment, germination trials, packaging, and storage. In addition to many local seed growing companies that started in the '80s and '90s, we are fortunate to have such a cooperative available in BC. Not only does it mean we have more locally grown seeds, but the quality of the seeds has improved through the collaboration of these seed growers.

I have dozens of stories and memories from these past three decades of farming in Sooke and some of my favourites are those with fellow farmers. The ways we collaborate, connect, and share ideas and frustrations make the challenges of this work more rewarding. I can't wait to see what is ahead for us with the new projects, collaborations, and coming together to learn, teach, market, and grow together.



Mary Alice Johnson is the owner of ALM Organic Farm and Full Circle Seeds. Mary bought a 100-year old farm back in Sooke in 1986 and began farming it in 1990. She helped create Moss Street Market, taught organic farming at Camosun College, and worked with farmers in the Philippines, China, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia, and Barbados. Mary Alice set up the Vancouver Island Chapter of Canadian Organic Growers and was president of the national organization. Over 200 young people have worked on her farm as apprentices or volunteers over the years, many going on to grow food for themselves and their communities.

Organic Certification

Streamlined and Simplified with iCertify



Farmer Jay Williams beaming with excitement at Tendergreens Farm. Credit: Tendergreens Farm.

By Corinne Impey

The start of 2021 marks year two of using iCertify, COABC's online organic certification system. Last year, over 150 members used iCertify to apply for, or renew, their organic certification.

This year will see more members and more certification bodies using the system for the first time, while many operators will be returning and benefiting from a simplified renewal process. Behind the scenes, the team has been busy updating the questions to reflect the new organic standards, and developing some new features. The most anticipated update? A database of approved products. Here's everything you need to know.

iCertify Launches Database of Approved Products

New this year, iCertify will include a database of products that have been pre-approved for use in organic production.



Verification officer Megan Halstead. Credit: Megan Halstead.

This new feature includes a simplified way to request approval for products and the ability to search a database of products already approved by your certification body.

With this new feature you:

- Don't have to wait for product approval if it has already been verified by your certification body.
- Can see expiration dates and supporting documents for approved items.
- Can search for suppliers of a particular type of product.
- Can easily share your approved inputs list with verification officers during your inspection.

“As both a farmer and a Certification Committee member, I'm very excited for the upcoming database of approved products,” says Jay Williamson of Tendergreens Farm in the Comox Valley, and Certification Committee Chair.

“The ability to search for items in a database of pre-approved products will make it faster and easier for growers to select and source soil amendments and other inputs without having to figure out if products are acceptable for organic use or wait for Certification Committee approval,” says Jay. “It will also greatly reduce the number of product approvals needing to be reviewed by the Certification Committee, and will eliminate a lot of the repetition in the product approval process.”

Product Search

From fertilizers to cleaners to pest management products and more, if there is an existing record for the product you



Jay with fresh potatoes. Credit: Tendergreens Farm.

want to use, it will appear in the database's search results. Simply add it to your “My Products” list to see if it has been approved for use by your certification body. Your personalized list will include not only an expiry date, but the ability to renew the approval with the click of a button.

Continued on page 27...

An advertisement for OMRI Listed products. On the left, a man and a woman are looking at a tablet together. On the right, there is a graphic with the OMRI Listed logo and text. The text reads: "OMRI LISTED For Organic Use • OMRI.org", "One seal and a world of product information at OMRI.org", "Look for the OMRI Listed® seal, then access our easy-to-use online search tool to ensure correct use under your organic certification standards.", "Search the online OMRI Canada Products List® today! OMRI.org/omri-search", and "OMRI Listed — Naturally Trusted". A circular inset shows a close-up of a product label with the OMRI seal.



The New Relationship Living in Harmony with Nature

By Marjorie Harris

“Biodiversity is biosecurity.” - Paul Stamets

“Living in harmony with Nature by 2050” is the world’s new collective relationship goal. This is an invitation to a new concept of relationship between all of humanity and all of Nature’s ecological biodiversity, both terrestrial and aquatic. This global vision, along with target timeframes, was established at the 2010 United Nations Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) held in Aichi Prefecture, Japan.

The new relationship is asking humanity to live consciously aware, choosing harmony with the biological diversity that powers the planet’s life-support system, including the air we breathe, the water we drink, the food we eat, the beauty we share. To live each day in the awareness of our common heritage, to feel the rhythmic pulse of Nature’s heartbeat synchronizing in our own chests. The pandemic has reminded us all that humanity is but one strand in the scared living web of life on this planet. We are not exempt from our common destiny.

Rachel Carson wrote in reflection on our spiritual bond with Nature: “And so, there is in us a deeply seated re-

sponse to the natural universe, which is part of our humanity.” Humanity’s enlightened partnership with Nature’s intricately interwoven globally interlinked terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems is to be achieved peacefully, harmoniously, and sustainably.

Heháka Sápa, commonly known as Nicholas Black Elk, a wičháša wakháŋ, or medicine man of the Oglala Lakota, speaks to life’s oneness: “The first peace, which is the most important, is that which comes within the souls of people when they realize their relationship, their oneness, with the universe and all its powers, and when they realize that at the center of the universe dwells Wakan-Tanka, and that this centre is really everywhere, it is within each of us.”

The AICHI pledge taken by more than 200 countries in 2010 defined 20 ecological biodiversity target objectives to be reached by 2020. AICHI Biodiversity Target 11 is that “at least 17 percent of terrestrial and inland water, and 10 percent of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative, and well connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, and integrated into the wider landscapes and seascapes.”

Well, it's 2020, and this September the UN Convention on Biodiversity released a first-decade progress summary. The report concluded that not one of the 200 signatory countries completed any of the 20 listed ecological-biodiversity targets. Progress was stalled across all levels, from governmental biodiversity framework planning and policy development, to on-the-ground implementation. As the planet's ecosystems plunge headlong into the sixth mass extinction of species, and as biodiversity is being lost at an unprecedented rate, this outcome seems dismal.

According to the World Wildlife Fund, "we've caused a 60 percent decline in wildlife populations since 1970, through habitat loss and degradation, overfishing, and overhunting. Guess what's also happened since 1970? We've added more than 4 billion people to the human population. In 1970, there were 3.7 billion people on the planet. Today there are 7.8 billion."

The words of Rachel Carson once again resonate: "The human race is challenged more than ever before to demonstrate our mastery, not over nature but of ourselves."

In a recent interview, Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, executive secretary of the UN Convention on Biodiversity, said, "Globally, lessons have been learned. COVID-19 has made us even more aware, giving us a stark reminder of our unsustainable relationship to nature. I hope we will not repeat mistakes of the past...or we will all perish"

Our global consciousness is young. It was only on August 23, 1966 that we saw our home planet for the first time. "Viewed from the distance of the moon, the astonishing thing about the Earth, catching the breath, is that it is alive... Aloft, floating free beneath the moist, gleaming membrane of bright blue sky, is the Earth, the only exuberant thing in this part of the cosmos," describes Dr. Lewis Thomas in his book, *The Lives of a Cell: Notes of a Biology Watcher*.

Dr. Thomas goes on to say, "But it is illusion to think that there is anything fragile about the life of the Earth; surely this is the toughest membrane imaginable in the universe, opaque to probability, impermeable to death. We are the delicate part, transient and vulnerable as cilia. Nor is it a new thing for man to invent an existence he imagines to be above the rest of life; this has been his most consistent intellectual exertion down through the millennia. As illusion, it has never worked out to his satisfaction in the past, any more than it does today. Man is embedded in nature."

As we continue on this collective journey exploring our new relationship with all living things, China will be hosting the fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 15) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). As an invitational message to us all, Li Ganjie, Minister of Ecology and Environment of the People's Republic of China, says:

"We only have one earth, on which we all live and upon which we all depend. Biodiversity is the foundation for human survival and development. Protecting global biodiversity is in the interest of every one of us. It is an important part of the vision of building a community of shared future for mankind and also the mission of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

"The Action Agenda is both a challenge and a tool for all those who are committed to safeguarding life on Earth. With this initiative, we are calling on Parties to redouble their efforts to halt biodiversity loss.

"The Action Agenda online platform will allow us and our partners to measure progress on biodiversity goals, assess the impact and identify gaps. This is urgently needed as we work to lay the foundation for a highly ambitious, and yet achievable, global biodiversity framework for the next decade."

Living (on) planet Earth is our common biological heritage; may we know together, as Nicholas Black Elk suggests, "The first peace, which is the most important, is that which comes within the souls of people when they realize their relationship, their oneness, with the universe and all its powers." 🌿

Marjorie Harris, IOIA VO and concerned organophyte.



The image shows a vertical advertisement for Pro Organics. On the left is a black and white photograph of a person holding a basket of produce. On the right, the Pro Organics logo features a stylized fruit with leaves above the text "Pro Organics" and "produce & fresh food" below it. Further down, it reads "Canada's premier distributor of certified organic fresh food" and "www.ProOrganics.com" at the bottom.



The image shows a vertical advertisement for Fieldstone Organics. The logo features a stylized wheat stalk above the text "Fieldstone Organics". Below the logo, it reads "For all your whole grain needs... and more." and "fieldstoneorganics.ca". At the bottom, there are social media icons for email, Twitter, and Facebook, with the text "info@fieldstoneorganics.ca", "@FieldstoneOrg", and "Fieldstone Organics Ltd" respectively.

Hope for Hemp



Hemp seedlings. Credit: Hope Farm Organics.

By Andrew Adams

As the sun began to exert its warmth upon the land in the late August midmorning hours, I went for a walk through my fields. Every morning I go for this walk. The sweet smell of cannabis plants engulfs me upon arrival. It's not too overbearing, nor is it "smelly" as some would tell you. Notes of mint, lemon, hops, and even lavender waft in the air with gentle caresses on the flowers, which resemble the black spruce that dot the landscape in our wet and cold climate ecosystem. The senses being stimulated by aromatic compounds and sunlight create a happy nearly euphoric state. My inner 16-year-old can't believe I have a field brimming with cannabis plants.

While data is still being analyzed on our hemp plots, I hope to give readers a bit of our observational data, the challenges, the triumphs, and just a bit of hope for a crop this farmer believes can become a crop that will not only alleviate the pains of growing crops such as hay but also could spur a new green industry for the region.

After the legalization of recreational cannabis, I visited a licensed producer in the Vancouver area to tour their facility as a part of the Agriculture Land Commission. I



Andrew with hemp harvest. Credit: Hope Farm.



ORGANIC, NATURALLY. For forty five years, **Horizon Grocery + Wellness** has supplied retailers with premium organic and natural products in the dry grocery, fresh, frozen and wellness categories. More than 10,000 products provide healthy choices for consumers who number among the 66% of Canadians who regularly buy organic foods¹ and the growing diversity of those who seek out natural options.

The market leader in Western Canada for decades, **Horizon Organic + Wellness** is the flagship company of a national network of Canadian businesses, which distribute organic and natural foods, nutritional supplements, natural body care and eco-friendly household products. The Horizon Group comprises the following well-established companies, which supply 18,000 organic and natural products to more than 4,000 outlets across Canada:

- Horizon Grocery + Wellness, Burnaby, BC
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- PSC Natural Foods, Victoria, BC
- Directa Distribution, Pointe-Claire, QC
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¹COTA, "The Canadian Organic Market: Trends and Opportunities 2017," November 2017

soon decided to grow my legal four plants after seeing this greenhouse full of giant plants. I had used Cannabis recreationally as a 20-something in university and enjoyed its effects but when I immigrated to British Columbia the potency was far from enjoyable to me and I had walked away from this botanical miracle plant.

After deciding I wanted to try to grow Cannabis I sought out a variety that was akin to a wild Cannabis plant in Siberia with very low THC, high CBD and a trait known as auto-flowering, or non-photoperiod dominant. Non-photoperiod dominant is simply a plant that does not initiate flowering based on number of daylight hours; rather, the plant runs by its own internal clock. For our long summer days and short season this trait is a must for outdoor growing. The plants grew well, and were shorter than the giants some Cannabis enthusiasts grow in their yards or houses.

While watching my legal four grow it was obvious to me that what the hemp-loving crowd had been screaming for decades was true. These plants have so many uses and require little attention and, most importantly, handle frost well. In our cold climate region known as the SBSvk, which is the coldest and wettest of the biogeoclimatic regions in the Prince George region, frost tolerance is important. As a youth I had thought the Cannabis species was more of a tropical plant so its frost tolerance came as a surprise.

During this experiment I immersed myself in the literature of the species and its controversial history of being made illegal in large part due to racism against Mexicans and African Americans. The more I read the more I wanted to grow hemp almost as a sign of legal protest to the wrongs our society has done in the past.

I attained my license last winter, bought seed, contacted University of Northern British Columbia professor Dr. Lisa Wood, and began the experiment.

Our Class 7 farm has several small microclimates and various soils, most of which can be considered poor. I've never let that classification deter me from turning our "poor farmland" into a vegetable farm—nor would I let it deter me from growing hemp.

We chose the earliest of plots to be placed on a south-facing slope that has the best soils as well as the best micro climate. We also planted a late crop in low-lying super clay-dominant plots, which got a summer worth of rain on them. Low-lying clay plus never-ending rain equals ponds. I expected the low plots to fail miserably. The early plots were planted in the last week of May, mostly due to not being able to cultivate the field due to the soil saturation. The low plots were planted a month later.

To my surprise, the low plots caught up to the early plots and by observation (I haven't gone over exact numbers as

of writing this) I would say they did better as they had larger colas (flowering heads) and just looked more vibrant. These were the results I had hoped for but didn't expect.

My desire to grow hemp, or Cannabis with low THC (lower than .3%), is that of food and fiber production. With climate change causing drastic "weather events," I hoped that we could plant a crop very late but still harvest a protein-rich food source with excellent fatty acids as well. According to the research prior to planting there appears to be a correlation between higher latitudes and omega fatty acid content. The higher the latitude, the higher the omega-3s and -6s. Lab results will tell us if this is true.

One thing we learned from the early plots is that hemp does not like competition. With the cooler early season temperatures, the hemp grew slow to start while the weeds took over quickly. Planting late, we were able to cultivate out the weeds and as the temperatures were more favorable the hemp grew with astounding speed and outcompeted the weeds. Controlling weed competition, as with most crops, is imperative for a desirable yield.

As we move into year two of trials, we will now plant later for all plots to control weeds, as well as initiate flame weeding to give the hemp an upper hand. We may also be purchasing a small (very small) combine to harvest the crop as I had scythed the experiment that ran this past summer.

The data that we pour over this winter will ultimately tell us which direction we should be moving and we will carry out four more years of trials before we adopt this crop fully on to our little farm. Stay tuned! 🌿

Andrew Adams is the co-founder and farmer at Hope Farm Organics in Prince George. Andrew has a Bachelor's of Science in Agriculture from Kansas State University and his partner Janie has a Bachelor of education. After seeing the state of food security and agriculture in the north the two felt obligated to make real change in the form of organic food production and thus created Hope Farm in 2011.



... iCertify, continued from page 21

During inspection, you can simply log in to your iCertify account and show your inspector your list of approved products and compliance documents, all in one place.

“Over time, as we approve more products and the database grows, it will become an incredibly useful tool not just for existing members, but also for new farmers working towards organic certification,” says Jay.

Requesting New Approvals

You can also use this feature to request new input approvals. Simply follow the steps to upload relevant supporting documents (such as product ingredients list, third party verification, labels, etc.) and request a review directly from within the iCertify system.

Be sure to check with your certification body regarding any fees for these requests, then submit and wait for a decision. You can check on the status of your request at any time, by logging in and reviewing your “My Products” tab.

If the product is approved, it will automatically be added to your “My Products” list complete with any specific instructions or restriction information. Denied products will also be listed with an explanation for denial.

While COABC certification bodies will work together to share product records and compliance documentation, each certification body will approve products for its own members.

“Input review questions are one of the most common questions I get asked as a verification officer,” says Megan Halstead. “What a wonderful resource this will be for operators! I feel certain that it will save time and frustration for operators, and hopefully also help make sense of the standards. Since the approved lists will be easy to generate, I think the verification process will be easier during inspections, too.”

This database of approved inputs is managed under the COABC umbrella of certification bodies. It is for and accessible by COABC members only.

Please contact your local certification body directly to confirm if they are using iCertify or the database of approved products this year. 🌱

Funding for this project has been provided by the Governments of Canada and British Columbia through the Canadian Agricultural Partnership, a federal-provincial-territorial initiative. The program is delivered by the Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC.

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...Newspatch, continued from page 6

to the three main parties on agriculture-related issues. Their answers can still be found on the BCAC website. A letter has been sent to congratulate Premier Horgan and begin to re-engage with the government on behalf of BC farmers.

Cultivating Prosperity in BC: In March 2020, the BC Agriculture Council and its member organizations, in collaboration with the Investment Agriculture Foundation, embarked on a project entitled Cultivating Prosperity in British Columbia to lay the foundation for the development of a new vision for the sector. The full report can be found on BCAC's website

Policy Survey and Interview: The COABC Executive and Executive Director completed a survey outlining what we believe should be the top policy priorities for BCAC going forward. The survey was followed up with an interview to dig deeper into our responses. This input will help form a strategic plan for BCAC.

Our involvement with the Ag Council continues to provide COABC with many opportunities to make important connections, influence policy, promote our farmers and demonstrate that organic agriculture is not only healthy and sustainable, but also profitable and attainable.

COABC Announces Enhancement of Online Tools and Brand Refresh

In early 2021, the voice of British Columbia's organic sector will have a stronger digital presence and a refreshed look. The Certified Organic Associations of British Columbia (COABC) received \$60,565 in funding from the Governments of Canada and British Columbia to be put towards the enhancement of online tools as well as the modernization and

review of the BC Certified Organic Program (BCCOP) logo.

"COABC is doing great work to support the organic sector in British Columbia," said the Honourable Marie-Claude Bibeau, federal Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food. "These initiatives will help COABC adapt to meet the needs of growers and consumers to ensure the continued growth and resiliency of the BC organic sector."

The COABC's new, collaborative online space will engage BC's organic sector on all levels, from producer to consumer, and will provide better support through improved tools, information, and resources. As well, the project will also include a licensing review and revitalization of the BCCOP logo, which signifies the product is certified organic and produced in BC.

With an improved communications platform and a stronger digital presence, the COABC will amplify its voice, more effectively support BC's organic sector, and increase awareness of organics in BC and beyond.

The support was provided through the Canadian Agricultural Partnership, a federal-provincial-territorial \$3-billion investment in support to strengthen the agriculture and agri-food sector.

Read the full release:

bcorganicgrower.ca/2020/09/coabc-announces-enhancement-of-online-tools-and-brand-refresh

Passing on the Farm

Young Agrarians (YA) has launched the Young Agrarians BC Transition Toolkit for Non-Family Farm Transfer, a resource kit for anyone curious about exploring alternative ways to transition land and farms from one gen-

eration to the next. The toolkit emerges in response to stories YA has heard from farmers seeking alternative solutions keep their farm going into the future.

The Transition Toolkit is a framework for understanding non-family transition. It contains concepts, considerations and tools to apply to your own alternative farm transition through a six-stage process, from setting your vision, to identifying models and assessing feasibility, to identifying what resources you need—plus real-world examples of farmers who are making the transition happen in a very complex regulatory environment. The BC Transition Toolkit for Non-Family Farm Transfer was funded by the Real Estate Foundation of BC.

Learn more and download the Toolkit here:

youngagrarians.org/bc-transition-toolkit

IOPA Incubator Farm Policy

Islands Organic Producers Association (IOPA) is piloting a new transitional organic Incubator Farm Structure. This incubator model uses land sharing to provide new farmers interested in organic agriculture with mentorship and a pathway to certification to address the challenges new farmers face in accessing land and starting a business, and to provide experienced farmers with the opportunity to mentor new farmers and develop a succession plan for the next generation of local farmers. Land sharing provides an opportunity for farmers to work together and learn from one another, reducing the financial hardships that may be a barrier preventing new farmers from entering the organic sector.

IOPA's new Incubator Farm Structure allows operators looking to mentor new farmers to be cer-

tified through IOPA as a primary farm, with one or more incubating farmers located solely on the primary farm's land to access certification under the primary farm's mentorship.

Under the Incubator Farm Structure, the primary farm operator acts as overall manager for all farm businesses on their property. This includes, but is not limited to, ensuring all inputs are permitted and all records of seed searches, planting dates, amendment applications, compost temperature logs, harvest dates, and sales records are accurate and up-to-date as per the record keeping requirements in CAN/CGSB-32.310-2015 Section 4.4. Incubating farms must maintain their own input/output records, create their own account on the COABC application portal, and manage the cost of their annual inspection. All operators must be available during the verification officer inspections of the whole farm.

Participating in the Incubator Farm Structure allows incubating farms to continue their certified organic operation status and file history if they move off of the primary farm's land. Any farm operations beginning to transition off of the primary farm by purchasing or leasing land off-site will become their own farm operation. This means they will drop the certification number of the primary farm and become completely certified under their own number.

IOPA's full incubator policy includes more details about the responsibilities and benefits to both primary farms and incubating farms, as well as information about certification fees. For more information, please reach out to:

admin@iopa.ca



Introducing Heart & Soil

One of BC organic's own, Natalie Forstbauer, has launched Heart & Soil, a magazine for the millions of farmers and gardeners who are in pursuit of regenerative global health. Today, farmers and gardeners are looking for regenerative ways to farm. They are investing in strategies, tools, resources and education to build healthy soil and profitable sustainable farms.

Heart & Soil Magazine is the quarterly guide to planetary health through regenerative farming and gardening.

heartandsoilmagazine.com



YOUNG AGRARIANS FARMER PODCAST CLUB

Young Agrarians has a Farmer Podcast Club. Enjoy weekly farmer-friendly podcast recommendations delivered to your inbox!

SIGN UP for YA's Farmer Podcast Club here:

eepurl.com/dtEnmr

Here is our pick from the YA Farmer Podcast Club Archives:

Rock and Roll Farming: A Conversation with George Monbiot

George Monbiot talks about a wide range of subjects, ranging from his early love for nature, some of the programs he made in his early career exposing injustices around the world, reading about his own death, and his views on land reform and re-wilding in the UK.

youngagrarians.org/farmer-podcast-club-a-conversation-with-george-monbiot

... Forstbauer Farm, continued from page 11

During these years, Forstbauer Farm played a big role in marketing channels, including selling directly to organic warehouses, stores, and restaurants. We were one of the pioneering farms to sell to Wild West (the first organic warehouse in BC) and to Capers (now Whole Foods).

In 1989, my parents made a big move from Matsqui to Chilliwack, BC, expanding their farm to 110 acres. This was huge for all of us. By this time, I was 18 years old and graduating from high school.

In the first year, we had a massive bumper crop of pickling cucumbers with nowhere to sell them. On a tip from one of my mom's friends, she took them to the Chilliwack Market—and sold out of the cucumbers. We'd have a stand full of fresh vegetables, but the swiss chard and kale craze hadn't yet started, so we would always come home with everything minus the cucumbers and one or two bunches! The farm has been participating in and helping start up farmers' markets ever since.

Today, Forstbauer Farm continues the legacy of growing healthy food in healthy soil. Travis, Niklaus, their wives, Katrina and Lindsey, their families, and my sister Rosanna continue in our parents' footsteps championing organic and biodynamic farming. Between them, they participate on many boards, host biodynamic workshops, donate food to many causes, and sell fresh healthy food at farmers' markets. Similar to many farms, on any given day, you may find a returning family member or visitor helping out.

Being part of the farm has been a blessing to me and my children. Though the world is a different place today where connectivity is at an all-time high and connection at an all-time low, the farm remains a place where the history of connection is deeply rooted. I remember bringing my kids to the farm to see their cousins and to pick carrots, weed beets, and just have fun getting dirty. They would play tag, hide and seek, chase, and they would do talent shows for each other. After a big rainstorm they would play and jump in massive mud puddles deep from tractor tires.

My mom left this earth saying, "My biggest message is to teach children to love the land, to love the food they eat, and they will become great people in the circle of life." Every farm has a story. Forstbauer Farm's story is one of innovation, of advocacy, and of family. The farm is not a utopia. Similar to life, along with all the joy, mistakes have been made, hardships have been endured, and hurt has been sustained. Through it all, I am thankful for the lessons I've learned on how to live with gratitude and how to find my way through the weeds.

The farm continues to be a place where ideas are born and shared, a place of connection and love, and a place where the rhythm of the land flows. It is a testament that the ener-

gy we sow, nurtures the seeds we grow. Though my mom has passed, and my brothers and sisters have gone separate ways, the essence and legacy of Forstbauer Farm continues in those who built it.

My dad speaks highly and thinks fondly of all his children. Eight of us are farming organically or biodynamically, four are teachers, three run their own businesses, one is a naturopathic doctor, and one an engineer. It adds up to more than 12 because some wear two hats! It gives him joy to see how we live our lives and contribute to making this world a better place.

As his wisdom deepens, his insights expand, and his vision sharpens, my dad is slowly letting go of some farming responsibilities and is entering a new chapter in his life. His passion is now channeled into his missions to have GMOs labelled, glyphosate banned, and to bring awareness to the power of nature. His strong conviction is that putting poison in food and changing the structure of nature is destructive and must stop. Simple yet profound shifts are the future for humanity: real food, daily movement, healthy relationships, mindfulness, connection to nature, and love.



Natalie Forstbauer is a farmer, author, TEDx Speaker and Editor-in-Chief of Heart & Soil Magazine, edited by Amanda Forstbauer-Bourrie.

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