

CONCRETE GARDEN

SUSTAINABLE // URBAN // AGRICULTURE

FALL / WINTER • 2016/2017

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Food Scene

Gardening for
this generation

P14



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WE HUMBLY ACKNOWLEDGE THIS MAGAZINE
IS PRODUCED ON THE UNCEDED TERRITORIES
OF THE COAST SALISH – THE LEKWUNGEN AND
WSÁNEĆ PEOPLES.

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

CONCRETE GARDEN SETS OUT TO IMAGINE THE POSSIBLE: a just and healthy food system, clean air and water, sustainable and inclusive cities. We're disappointed that governments continue to approve land-destroying projects in the name of the economy. Politicians and planners describe them as "green" and "sustainable"—see Site C and the recently approved Pacific NorthWest LNG—but there are serious changes our society needs to make as we confront the oncoming climate crisis.

Progressive members of the millennial generation will not forget those who failed to step up when the land, the water, and the people needed them. But decades of disappointments remind me that leadership comes from all of us. Together we have collective power and can hold governments accountable.

As we always try to show in *Concrete Garden*, people all around us are fighting for a different future. In "Losing Ground," Trina McDonald profiles activists creating alternate models to protect farmland where the provincial government is falling short, while Diandra Oliver's rural B.C. road trip highlights young leaders increasing food security and sustainable economic opportunities in their communities. In our cover story, beautifully illustrated by Samantha Wey, Robert Morris follows educators who are teaching the next generation that farming can be a noble and vital career path.

At *Concrete Garden*, we stand with Treaty 8, Lax Kw'alaams, and all land defenders, protecting territories that have sustained their people for millennia, because not only do we need to localize our food system, but we need to decolonize it as well. We stand with the farmers and the food activists who want something better for all of us. We stand with the educators and community leaders who are empowering our youth. And we stand with you. Let's make a change in our lives and communities.

— QUINN MACDONALD

PHOTO: ALIFIA KAPASI



CONCRETEGARDEN.CA

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Concrete Garden is online! Check out the website for more info on the team. Learn about local and international businesses and groups moving us forward and giving back in the weekly "Spotlight on Sustainability." Stay up to date on what's happening in the local food movement in between publications. And read all our back issues.



Winter Mixer

CLEAR YOUR AGRICULTURAL SOCIAL CALENDAR THIS January for the Young Agrarians' Winter Mixer. The fourth annual event provides an educational and networking opportunity for both greenhorn and seasoned farmers.

The Young Agrarians is a nationwide organization that forges connections between farmers through social gatherings and workshops. They host anything from potluck dinners to full-blown mixers that strengthen the farming community and help up-and-coming farmers find mentors.

"Farming is one of those career choices you make that you're only going to succeed in if you step into the arms of that community and start making connections," says Moss Dance, Young Agrarians Vancouver Island coordinator. "Even if we have the Internet, there's nothing like the farmer Internet."

What Dance loves best about mixers is eavesdropping on lunchtime conversations about brands of electric fencing, when best to rotate chickens, and that funky new strain of Japanese mushroom everyone seems to be trying.

"It's like a beehive of activity, and the exchange of knowledge is fast and furious," says Dance. "You see people making friends,

WHEN: JAN 28-29
LOCATION: TBA
RESERVE YOUR TICKET AT: YOUNGAGRARIANS.ORG

building community, and being supportive."

The first day generally consists of workshops on topics such as co-operatives and collectives, farm financial management, Indigenous food systems, and rotational grazing, with multiple streams for beginner, intermediate, and advanced farmers. Attendees also have the opportunity to speak one-on-one with workshop leaders at mealtimes and delve into things like farming theories and growing methodologies. The evening concludes with a live band and dancing.

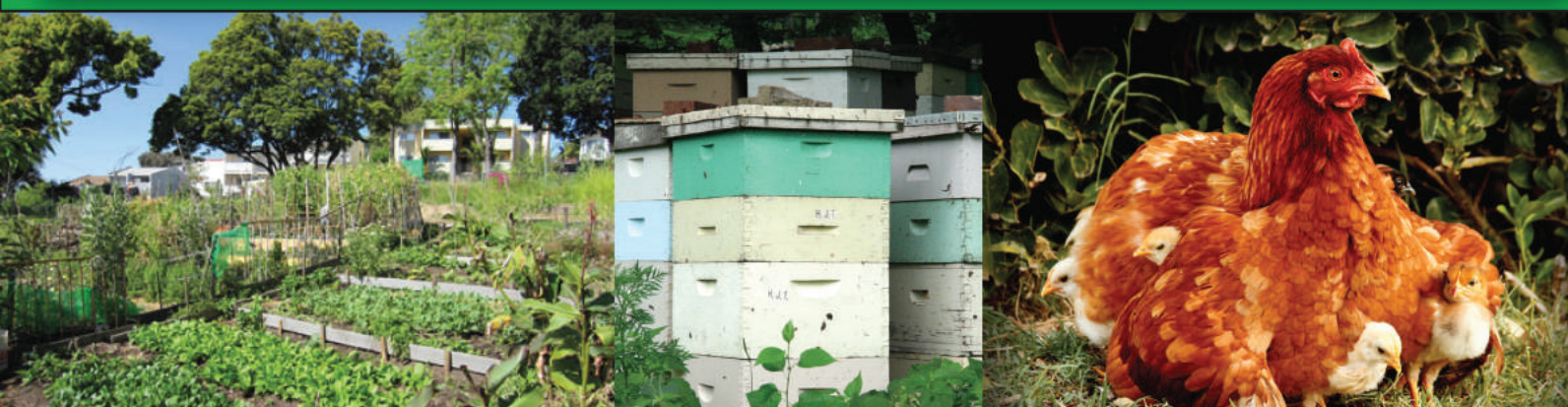
The second day of the mixer focuses on building the community network. Discussions revolve around the needs of farmers in the area and what the Young Agrarians can do to become more relevant to new farmers.

The mixer is mainly hosted for new and established farmers, but there is also a demographic that Dance refers to as "farm-curious" who attend the mixer to learn more about farming and see if the lifestyle is for them.

"I love seeing the farm-curious people come in and encounter things for the first time," says Dance. "I get excited about what farm-curious people are going to do with their knowledge."

A venue for the mixer is still in the works. Visit, youngagrarians.org/events to reserve your ticket.

— ARIANNA CHEVELDAVE



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SAM HARRIS AT AGRIUS, 732 YATES ST, VICTORIA

VICTORIANS LIKE TO BOAST ABOUT OUR CITY'S hyper-local, seasonal cuisine, but Agrius's Sam Harris has established a commanding lead above most efforts.

Agrius opened in 2015 to accompany the Fol Epi bakery on Yates Street—the second Fol Epi location. The original has operated at Docksider Green since 2009. Their products are aggressively organic (around 90 per cent) and locally sourced (they don't even have a Sysco distribution account).

Born and raised in Ottawa, Harris stumbled into his cooking career when he attended the chef-training program at Algonquin College and worked at Ottawa's influential Domus Café.

"Domus Café opened my eyes to organic and seasonal food," says Harris. "I got a taste of what it could be like and that has stuck with me for the last 13 years."

Moving to B.C. in 2006, Harris worked in several hotel chains, including the Four Seasons, before starting as the sous chef at Bishop's in Vancouver. He settled here in 2013, becoming the executive chef at Stage Wine Bar in Fernwood before leaving to open Agrius.

"It wasn't even a question of how organic or how seasonal are we going to go," he says. "It was very clear right away that we were going to go 100 per cent."

Although he only recently became the head chef, Harris has been with the restaurant since its conception as the chef de cuisine—a position just below the executive chef. His culinary vision is backed by Fol Epi owner Cliff Leir, who built his own bread oven in his driveway at the age of 18.

Harris and Leir's passion for local food is palpable, as is their exhaustion. Operating both a morning bakery café

and a fine dining location presents unique challenges. Night and morning shifts occasionally overlap, so sometimes the morning bakers arrive before the night cleaners have left. Producing nearly everything in-house—charcuterie, pastries, preserves, and fermented products—is a massive undertaking.

"It takes an army to process everything from scratch," says Leir, who employs 65 staff members between the two locations.

Regardless of the immense effort and long hours, Harris clearly wouldn't have it any other way. "With a lot of these farmers, we place the order Monday morning and they are picking it early Tuesday morning and delivering Tuesday afternoon."

Suppliers include Haliburton, Sun Trio, Umi Nami, and Madrona farms, to name a few, along with foragers who just show up with edible invasive species such as Japanese knotweed.

"We're trying to connect not just with what people are growing, but what nature is growing here as well," says Harris. "If anything is edible and natural and being grown here, we are going to try playing with it."

That mindset is working—Agrius was just shortlisted as one of the top 10 new restaurants in the country by Air Canada's *enRoute* magazine.

— ADRIAN PARADIS



SAM HARRIS

WHO: KIM CUMMINS
WHAT: SHELBOURNE COMMUNITY KITCHEN

THE CAPITAL REGIONAL DISTRICT CAN SEEM LIKE A LAND OF plenty, but according to a recent report from the University of Toronto, one in five families here struggle to access healthy food. Kim Cummins is here to help. The director of the Shelbourne Community Kitchen Society wants to improve food security through knowledge, skills, and independence—along with a bag of groceries. She describes the Shelbourne Community Kitchen as "a community food hub."

In January 2012, a group of businesses and churches met to discuss how to coordinate anti-poverty efforts in Saanich. "What came out of that was the desire to create a community kitchen," says Laura Cochrane, the chair of the Shelbourne Community Kitchen's board of directors. "All the food programs that were running informally in the area were a pantry-type of thing. We recognized there was no relationship-building around that."

In November 2013, the society hired Cummins and began running pilot community kitchens out of various commercial kitchens in the area. Shelbourne Community Kitchen became a non-profit in March 2014 and opened at its present location a year later. Anyone who visits can apply to become a member. Today, around 350 members access the kitchen's services.

While the society does not offer continuous meals as most soup kitchens do, it operates garden and pantry programs during the day with instructional classes in the evenings.

When you walk into the kitchen at 3541 Shelbourne St., you feel an immediate sense of welcome, probably because it's located in a repurposed house. The retrofitted kitchen is a mash-up of professional-grade and domestic materials. Labelled jars of ingredients on the top shelves overlook the stainless steel prep tables and an electric convention oven.

"The ability to choose what you eat, when you're relying on social services, is significantly diminished," says Cummins. "So what we want to do is incorporate in our system as much purchasing power and choice as we can."

While the society still provides a food pantry, it offers food literacy classes on how to plan menus, follow budgets, and cook basic meals. Cummins and trained volunteers lead classes on international cuisines, gardening, composting, and canning. The kitchen started a "guy's night" cooking program to cover basic cooking and barbecuing when several male members noted that most programs were dominated by women. "That program was really developed in partnership with the people who come to services," says Cummins.

Before starting on as the director, Cummins completed a Bachelor of Fine Arts at Concordia University where she survived by learning to cook and using the Peoples Potato, a vegan soup kitchen funded by the Concordia Student Union.

After Concordia, Cummins moved to Victoria where she attended Camosun College's professional cook training program and started the Camosun FarmBox, a student-run non-profit that sells local ingredient boxes and organizes bi-weekly markets. "I noticed there were opportunities to start up some interesting programs at Camosun that I had taken part in in Montreal," she says.

Cummins worked briefly for Woodwynn Farms—a local organic farm that offers educational and therapeutic work



KIM CUMMINS
PHOTO BY: ALIFIA KAPASI

opportunities to the homeless—where she expanded her food knowledge to include agricultural production. "I loved the combination of working with the community, creating beautiful healthy food, and connecting people to each other," she says.

At the Shelbourne Community Kitchen, she uses the gamut of her skills to keep up with demand, but not without support. "Many of the participants who access our services quickly become volunteers," she says. These volunteers run the kitchen's two gardens and provide produce for the pantry and cooking. "Our kitchen program will actually come out here and grocery shop," she says—referring to participants learning to harvest ingredients from the garden. "We don't do the work for them."

Participants in the cooking programs are involved in every step—from menu planning, to harvesting, to cleanup, empowering them to make more choices in their lives.

"Everything we do here at the Shelbourne Community Kitchen is dedicated towards low-income families and individuals," says Cummins, "and working with those groups to increase their level of food security."

— ADRIAN PARADIS

PICKLED CHANTERELLES WITH ABBOTSFORD RICE - SERVES 4 TO 6

INGREDIENTS

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Pickled Chanterelles | Mushroom Stock |
| 500 g chanterelle mushrooms | 1 L mixed mushrooms (shitake, cremini, chanterelle trim) |
| 300 mL brown rice vinegar | 1 large onion, quartered |
| 200 mL water | 5 g salt |
| 15 g salt | 2 L water |
| 15 g sugar | Abbotsford Rice |
| 3 bay leaves | 500 mL Abbotsford Rice |
| 1 sprig rosemary | 50 g mascarpone |
| 10 black peppercorns | 50 g butter |
| 500 mL olive oil | 5 g salt |

For the recipe preparation visit concretetogarden.ca

PHOTOS: ALIFIA KAPASI



FAVOURITE TOOL: THE HUMBLE PLASTIC TOTE

Understanding that most people don't have a large garden, Cummins likes to grow in containers, using the lids as drain trays. "When you realize how much you can grow in a Rubbermaid roughneck tote, how much food you can actually produce out of one of those, it's incredible."

Parksville and Coombs



A TWO-HOUR DRIVE NORTH OF VICTORIA WILL take you to the town of Parksville and its rural surroundings. Always an agricultural stronghold, the area now offers an abundance of craft food establishments. Vacationers who come to enjoy Parksville's beaches and outdoor adventures can add some culinary conquests to their lists, while those on their way to explore the West Coast towns of Tofino and Ucluelet will find it worth the stop.

WHISKEY CREEK FARM AND BAKERY

OVER ITS 20 YEARS, WHISKEY CREEK FARM HAS ADOPTED many roles. Owner Lori Gillis runs a part-time poultry abattoir, a bakery, and prepares monthly farm-to-table dinners on the five-acre property. A pastry chef by training, Gillis ran a full-time waterfowl and poultry butchery called the "Cluck Stops Here" before returning to her roots. She makes delicious gluten-free and organic goods for the bakery, open only on Saturdays and decorated with scores of vintage rolling pins.

"It's a lifestyle choice," Gillis says of the never-ending work of running the farm and multiple businesses. She has help from her employees and WWOOFers, who've helped nurture the once-gravelly soil. The farm now hosts weddings and parties in the ornate gardens that are dotted with antiques and free-roaming heritage chickens.



BOMÉ CHEESE

OFF THE ALBERNI HIGHWAY, JUST BEFORE COOMBS' FAMOUS rooftop goats, BoMé is a family-run craft cheese business that embraces traditional German and Swiss methods. Horst Boehm and Bibi Menge immigrated to Canada in 1999 and spent 17 years developing the business and building the factory shop, all shining silver, aside from a handsome oak-sided cheese vat from Holland. "It was a desert here with cheese when we came to

Canada," says Bibi. "Now it's much better."

They use local, grass-fed cow's milk to churn out eight different types, including a mildly nutty hemp cheese and a soft feta called Spiced Shepherd. Sample their products or a meal from the deli while admiring the cheese making process, or take a patio seat overlooking the rolling hills of the Coombs-Hilliers region.



REALM FOOD CO.

LOCATED AT 180 CRAIG ST. IN PARKSVILLE, THIS hip counter-service eatery provides a home for food-conscious millennials. Succulents in glass jars hang from the ceiling, retro steel-blue booths with wooden tables seat guests, and one corner displays local paintings. When they opened Realm, owners Kyla Campbell and James Hannah focused on putting the local, organic, sustainable, and ethical first.

Realm sources from 20 B.C. partners and creates stunning plates with organic and local greens, meats, tortillas, and cheeses. Almost everything is served on wooden cutting boards, with bright accents of beet aioli, nasturtiums and pansies, and a peppering of hemp seeds. Grab a smoothie to go or sit down for a West Coast fusion bowl or a seared albacore tuna wrap.

— SARAH HUGHES

Rain, Rain Don't Go Away

How I learned to save water for another day

BY HEATHER NEALE FURNEAUX

IN THE PAST, PLANTING MY SUMMER GARDEN RESEMBLED A middle school homework assignment: the finished product would consist of a colourful title page with pretty font, wrapped in a fresh Duo-Tang folder. But the meat of the thing—the actual research and writing—was shuffled together at the eleventh hour with little pre-planning. Beautiful bubble letters usually saved me.

This year, however, I prepared for summer. No more rushing out to GardenWorks on the first hot day of the season to stand in bloated lines of eager planters also buying seeds to shove in the ground and water madly. This year, I sat down and decided what I'd plant, where I'd plant it, and even how I'd water. Research and list making were involved. My two daughters—three and one—helped by drawing flashy illustrations of what we'd grow. (Okay, the one-year-old missed the paper completely and scribbled on the table.)

I decided that 2016 would be the year to think more seriously not only about my planting strategy, but also about water conservation. Following 2015, one of B.C.'s worst drought years—the April to August period marked the province's driest season on record, as Robert Morris reported in our last issue—I'd collect what I could of the winter rain and use it to irrigate my veggies and flowers. This would also save our family some hard-earned cash to spend on toddler gymnastics, daycare, and diapers.

I left three large plastic garbage bins in the backyard just after New Year's and dubbed them my "rainwater harvesting system." Highly technical, I know. I would hydrate my garden with my very own trappings and cut down on use of our main water supply.

It was a start, a solid intention, with just one problem: I didn't think through the logistics terribly well or plan accordingly. (I was working and "momming" full-time, and my lack of

oversight came down to sheer exhaustion-induced laziness.) In theory, the water I collected cut down on my utility bill, but it meant a lot of work running back and forth with a watering can that took care of just five or six plants at a time.

The upside: I got my daily physical activity without driving to the gym. And my two daughters loved to fill and dump their cans to make mud pies while I got the watering done each evening. But there was room for improvement. So I did some research.

IT TURNS OUT RAINWATER HARVESTING CAN BE AS sophisticated or as basic as you'd like. The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, or the Capital Regional District (CRD) locally, offers online DIY guides to setting up a system on your own property.

You should consider three things: first, your roof material. If it's made of something porous like asbestos shingles, concrete tiles, or wood shingles—what we have—a portion of the rainwater will be absorbed long before it hits your collection container. Metal and slate roofs, on the other hand, allow for maximum collection. If you have asbestos shingles, make sure they're in good condition, and in all cases you have to be conscious of possible contaminants. The second is where to locate your storage container. Place it close enough to the roof to benefit from natural runoff. Lastly, make sure your hose reaches the areas you plan to water. Enough said.

For those of us who want a system, but don't have a handy bone in our body—my tool kit contains a hammer, a nail, and a box of Band-Aids, used mainly in that order—there are companies who will install everything for you. IRRIGO, a Vancouver-Island-based irrigation service company, can design a system, troubleshoot existing systems, and liaise with building inspectors. The team comes with rainwater harvesting

professional accreditation, which sounds a little intimidating when I consider my own experience. Regardless of my newbie status, I'm determined to do better this winter because I want to be a part of the greater conservation effort. Judging from my social media feeds, I'm not alone in this effort, with good reason.

CRD demand management coordinator Deborah Walker agrees. "It's not all about us," she says, outlining the important uses for the water collected in Greater Victoria's Sooke Reservoir. Beyond doubling our water consumption during our driest season for features like water parks and lush lawns and gardens, we also have to fight forest fires and ensure that returning salmon have enough water to swim upstream and spawn.

"Despite the common belief that we live in a rainforest, on southern Vancouver Island, climatologists actually consider us to be in a northern Mediterranean climate," says Walker. This means short wet winters and long dry summers that depend on the generosity of Mother Nature. And we'll have to come up with a more proactive plan as snowpacks decline and winter temperatures rise in coming years.

Luckily, the CRD had the foresight to raise the Sooke Reservoir water level back in 2002, anticipating climate change and increased demand. As a result, Greater Victoria residents are actually in good shape in terms of our collective water supply. But that hasn't made residents wasteful.

"We have a 99 per cent compliance rate in Victoria when it comes to following watering bylaws, and the public in Victoria overall has a really great conservation ethic," says Walker. "Fifty per cent of Victorians let their lawns go golden in the summer." At the same time, she emphasizes the importance of remaining diligent. Other areas in B.C. aren't in quite as good shape. Vancouver, for instance, will need serious upgrades to its reservoir system to deal with hotter and drier summers.

Talking to Walker makes my little backyard set-up feel like small potatoes, but then again, those potatoes still need water.

WHILE IRRIGO'S IRRIGATION SPECIALIST REUBEN Butterfield likes the idea of rainwater harvesting, he emphasizes that passive harvesting can often be a more economical and highly effective method. "Passive harvesting" means directing water back into the land, as opposed to "active harvesting," which refers to collecting rainwater in a storage unit for future use. Dry creek beds, rain gardens, or "pervious concrete" with greater permeability are a few examples of passive systems. The idea is to slow the flow of the rainwater, encouraging it to absorb back into the land rather than taxing overused sewer and storm water systems.

Butterfield says the DIY rain barrel set-up is common in Victoria, but more robust systems often don't deliver the kind of return on investment people expect. "When I break it down for a client and they see that their initial set up will take 75 years to pay for itself, we don't end up doing much of this kind of work," he says with a laugh. Fair enough.

On the other hand, he says, new regulations in places like the Gulf Islands dictate that rainwater must be the sole source of irrigation for all new construction.

PHOTO: ALIFIA KAPASI
VICTORIA RAIN GARDEN

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I, for one, am excited to do more with my water-collecting initiative this winter now that I'm armed with more knowledge. For one thing, I plan to put in a rain garden—a landscaped depression that absorbs rainwater runoff, keeping it from the sewers. I have a few large empty holes in my backyard where my daughters' kiddie pool sat for too long. They'd make great spots for native flower gardens. Additionally, I'm going to attempt a gravity-fed hose system and make sure it reaches the veggies.

These may be baby steps, but that's about as fast as I can move these days with two little monkeys attached to my legs. And baby steps are still more effective than bubble letters, after all. ♦



PHOTO: SAMANTHA WEY

Xeriscape: Bone Dry & Bountiful

Xeriscape sounds like a scary word but it just means a garden that requires little or no water. For Victorians, this will mean a lower water bill and a contribution to water conservation.

Here are five tips to get you started:

1 Choose the right plants: lavender, rosemary, thyme, or geraniums. Succulents also do quite well and many cold-resistant varieties exist, like types of *Sempervivum* (houseleeks) and *Delosperma* (ice plants).

2 Try plants that are indigenous to Vancouver Island. Some of the best include kinnikinnick, a great flowering groundcover option, or woolly sunflower, which attracts bees and butterflies.

3 Why not replace the grass? You can use river rock, paving stones, ground covers like kinnikinnick, or native grasses like Alaska brome.

4 Plan your garden. Try to match plants that require the same type of soil and the same amount of sun and water. Once you've chosen, decide to plant either during the spring or the fall. This reduces the heat or cold stress of the summer and winter months.

5 Finally, when you do irrigate, water deeply and infrequently. This develops deeper and more resilient root systems. And never water during the heat of the day—water early in the morning.



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Cafe Casablanca

HERE TODAY GONE TOMORROW

Snapshot of B.C.'s ever changing rural foodscape

BY DIANDRA OLIVER

IT'S HOT OUTSIDE AND THE CAR DOESN'T HAVE AIR conditioning. I am adamant about stopping at the next small town. The kids are hungry, too, whining audibly about wanting ice cream. We're coasting down the windy Highway 3 south into Christina Lake, the popular B.C. vacation spot. Our eyes search for any signage that says, "Kool Treat." A cousin promised the store has the best ice cream in the sleepy lakeside town and we're dead set on double-scoop waffle cones. A long road trip is saved when you can have ice cream every day, right?

Turns out Kool Treat is hard to miss. The clean white exterior, red awnings, and picnic tables, complete with umbrellas, scream "Best Drive-in Around!"—but that might just be because it's the only one in sight. The hand-painted ice cream sign, air-conditioned interior, and teens with striped hats calling orders on a vintage sound system are more than just a throwback or hipster-restaurant design scheme: this is unpretentiously how it is. We order food, ice cream first. I'm cranky, so I settle on a full order of the Special Coleslaw. First, I ask the kid behind the mic what makes it "special," and he says, "It just is." So I do it, and then I enjoy every mustard-laden vinegary bite.

Normally I would have held out knowing that more fancy food could be on the horizon, but after a tour of rural B.C., I learned that many promising food businesses quickly become a thing of the past. Just like restaurants in the city, businesses in rural communities experience high turnover, failure, and decisions to close or move without much notice. By the next time you make it out on that lonely stretch of highway, the taco truck might be a restaurant, the brewery may have stopped doing growler fills, and the small grocery store you've come to love might just have closed for good. At Kool Treat, I didn't want to miss my chance to eat the Special Coleslaw, just in case the menu changed or I didn't make it back to Christina Lake in time to try their family recipe.

THEY PAVED PARADISE TO PUT UP A PARKING LOT
BRITISH COLUMBIA'S LEGENDARY AGRICULTURAL REGIONS are the obvious destination when embarking on a food-focused road trip. Whether you travel on Highway 97 through the Okanagan, Highway 3 through southern B.C., or Highway 1 through the Shuswap, countless fruit stands, farm stands, and farmers' markets dot the roadside.

While these stands are great spots to get boxes of fruit and those sweet, flavoured honey sticks, more of them are becoming reliable markets with a variety of products from area producers and growers. Whether you need espresso, hard ice cream, local cheeses and locally cured sausages, or grocery items like jams, kombucha, and crackers, rural B.C. farm stands are more likely to have it than ever before.

If you're heading west of Salmon Arm along Highway 1, keep your eyes peeled for the large, hand-painted signs that decorate the Golden Ears Fruit Stand on unceded Secwepemc territory. Butted up against a steep mountainside, the bright red building offers up Grass Roots Dairies cheeses, locally raised and cured meats, Shuswap produce, Hardbite Potato Chips, Dutchmen Dairy hard ice cream, Summerland Sweets jams and syrups, as well Golden Ears' famous pies.

The Golden Ears Fruit Stand is a long-time project of Don Cavers, who ran it as the retail arm of his Golden Ears Farm in Chase. Cavers brought his son Tristan on board to manage the farm and fruit stand about 12 years ago. The farm has always provided produce to the fruit stand, but as it grew, the two decided to divide responsibilities.

Don stuck with the fruit stand while Tristan and his partner Michelle Tsutsumi took over the farm. The split meant more time for both projects. "The fruit stand began to diversify to other producers and products from the area, including milks and meats, and the farm began to grow, too," says Tsutsumi.

Born and raised in Calgary, Tsutsumi lived in Edmonton and Tokyo before moving to the Vernon area to connect with nature and start organic farming. “I love how living by the clock isn’t necessary when you’re working with the land,” says Tsutsumi, who has stepped into a leadership role in the Young Agrarians, a network for new and young ecological and organic farmers in Canada.

On Golden Ears Farm, she and Tristan have joined forces with other farmers to grow the business in stewardship with the land. To be a food and community hub for more local people, they offer scheduled farm-gate visits, a market garden (which supplies the fruit stand and both the Chase and Kamloops farmers’ markets), and a community supported agriculture program that serves the Kamloops area.

They’ve also become known for their on-farm events like folk music concerts and annual corn roast, which has been running for more than 30 years. “We have a beautiful studio and we’ve had some amazing musicians stop here,” says Tsutsumi. “We’ve also been offering seminars and workshops, like a timber framing workshop, a natural home building one, and beekeeping seminars.”

This shift is bittersweet, though, as this will be the Golden Ears Fruit Stand’s last year. Plans to twin or widen much of Highway 1 in the Shuswap area will eliminate a number of existing fruit stands, including Golden Ears. It’s the end of an era in the community, but the change offers Don the chance to retire and Tristan and Tsutsumi a renewed interest in growing their on-farm operations.

While customers worry about the upcoming changes—and whether they’ll still get to eat those pies—Tsutsumi says the shifting landscape may be an opportunity for other farms. “Word on the street is that there might be a couple of fruit stands that emerge because of this highway expansion,” she says, “which is cool because folks in this area are keen to keep that spirit alive.”

MICHELLE TSUTSUMI AND TRISTAN CAVERS FROM GOLDEN EARS FARM
PHOTO: ABBIE WILSON



SMALL GROCERIES GALORE

IN SEARCH OF A MORE RELAXED WAY OF LIFE, KIMBERLEY AND Jay Mulla moved north from Vancouver to settle in Telkwa, a beautiful village in northern B.C. on the ancestral, unceded lands of the Wet’suwet’en First Nation. Set beside the Bulkley River rapids with snowy mountain peaks on all sides, Telkwa quickly became the home that the Mullas always wanted.

Because of Telkwa’s proximity to wild foods and farmland, residents have abundant opportunities to grow, forage, and buy locally grown food. “We have more space and grow as much of our own food as possible and we are also able to purchase most of our food locally,” says Kimberley.

But the Mullas quickly learned that subsistence living in northern B.C. can be difficult if you want local, fresh food all year round. Because the primary place to get food is a grocery store, and many rural B.C. grocery stores are major chains, local food selection is often poor. In less populated regions, cool, urban-inspired fare like fermented foods, organic dairy, or smoked meats are almost impossible to find.

Seeing this as an opportunity, Kimberley opened her artisanal sweets company, Kimberley’s Kitchen, in 2010. Hand cutting homemade marshmallows and assembling cellophane bags of her candies and chocolate, Kimberley grew her presence in the local food community. I met Kimberley through a friend and was inspired by her ability to see a problem in her community and her dedication to solve it.

While Kimberley and other residents can grow food or buy from the farm gate, the village lacked essential food-businesses like a restaurant and grocery store. Telkwa’s main street is Highway 16, with historic buildings and businesses mere feet from high-speed traffic. Neighbouring town Smithers, a 15-minute drive away, hosts many restaurants, big-box grocery stores, and the region’s farmers’ market. In Telkwa, though, your best bet for dinner or groceries, whether you’re a local or a tourist, is the gas station.

Tired of driving to Smithers for dinner, the Mullas opened Telkwa Takeout out of their home in 2015. Relying on friends and family, the Mullas built a home-based commercial kitchen, serving hearty home-cooked meals to order. Focusing on comfort food like pulled pork, garden bowls, and soups made with local vegetables, Telkwa Takeout was an immediate success and signalled an opportunity to grow their business.

I visited Telkwa this summer and couldn’t wait to step foot into Kimberley’s newest project, Telkwa General Store & Cafe. Combining the

success of Telkwa Takeout and the demand for a local grocer, the Mullas opened the store in the main floor of the historic Cointé River Inn. For Kimberley, featuring local producers and wholesome, handmade food was a priority.

“We have partnered with eight farms so far, and several local artisans to bring fresh, local food to Telkwa,” she says. “We bake all of our breads and baked goods, and we also carry a line of our own fresh and frozen meals, condiments, ice cream, and baking mixes.”

With fresh produce, take-out, store-made ice cream, and road snacks, Telkwa General Store & Cafe is a great example of small food business opportunities in rural B.C. So far, the store has surpassed the Mullas’ expectations. “We really enjoy that we now employ six people, buy from 10 local farms, and have the opportunity to truly connect with people,” says Kimberley. “We also love all of the new connections the store has created in our community, and I quite enjoy having a place that has become a social hub for Telkwa.”

“We employ six people, buy from 10 local farms, and have the opportunity to truly connect with people”

THE TABLE ON THE FARM EXPERIENCE

WITH NO ROAD SIGNS OR ARROWS FOR TURNOFFS, FINDING LEFT Fields Farm isn’t easy. Heading east from Kamloops, the farm is just off the Trans-Canada, right before you drive into blink-and-you’ll-miss-it Sorrento. Drive too far and you’ll be in Salmon Arm, eating cheese and wondering how you got there so fast.

Established in 1999 on unceded Secwepemc territory, Left Fields Farm is home to Brian MacIsaac and Rebecca Kneen of Crannóg Ales. As brewers and organic farmers, MacIsaac and Kneen led the hops revival in B.C. They now mentor other brewers and farmers who knock on their door to learn skills and business practices through on-farm apprenticeships.

This year, chef David Colombe and his family moved to Left Fields to help grow a co-operative business on the farm while learning to live a more ecological and socially just life. “I used to vacation in places like where I live now. It’s great to be able to choose to go live in a place that you love,” says Colombe. “While I’ve definitely adapted to breathing fresh air and not fighting traffic, certainly the unavailability of food stuff has been a challenge. It would be really nice to get a plate of Thai food or a burrito, but it’s just not possible here.”

Combining his deep interest in local, organic ingredients with his kitchen skills, Colombe developed Left Fields Handmade Fruit Soda, crafting low-sugar fruit sodas and syrups out of berries and stone fruits from Left Fields and neighbouring farms.

Colombe quickly sells out of his product at local farmers’ markets without the pressure to bottle and expand his operations. “It’s cool because the soda adds to the handcrafted aesthetic people are interested in,” he says, noting that market



CHEF DAVID COLOMBE
PHOTO: JENNIFER SCHELL

buyers are eager to use the syrups at home.

By living and working as an apprentice of Left Fields Farms, Colombe and his family can grow their skills and contribute to a variety of projects on the farm itself. These include scheduled tours of the organic farm and brewery, on-site workshops and events (like their annual 100’ Feast), or operating the market garden and bakery with other apprentices.

“Our brand here on the farm is something people should keep track of because we’re going to do some pretty cool stuff up here,” says Colombe. “The workshops we’re going to host, the food we’re going to grow, and the cool stuff we do is all us. We are out here having a lot of fun promoting local food and encouraging our visitors to live a more sustainable life.”

WE’RE NOT IN KANSAS ANYMORE

ACROSS B.C., LOCALS ARE REVITALIZING THE RURAL FOOD scene by taking over existing businesses, starting their own enterprises, or putting their heads together to grow sustainable food communities. The next time you head out on any of B.C.’s highways, the threat of an oily A&W breakfast sandwich with a side of weak coffee and that cold hash brown puck does not have to be your first choice.

As the desire to support local businesses and food tourism seeps into the rural B.C. foodscape, slim pickings like the drive-thrus of yore are slowly becoming a thing of the past. Along the road, you can get artisanal, handmade ice cream, all-day breakfasts with locally grown ingredients, and handmade grass-fed beef patties on brioche buns, with nary any chipotle mayo in sight. ♦

Fresh Treads

Green schools and day camps cultivate B.C.'s next generation farmers

BY ROBERT MORRIS



A SCORE OF NINE-TO-12-YEAR-OLD KIDS UNTANGLE THEIR BIKES from the Crystal Pool rack as camp leader Carson Sage reminds them to stay in a line. August sunlight beams through the chestnut trees, and junior camp leaders check helmet straps and dole out sunscreen. A nervous energy animates the chattering voices. They're about to set off on the inaugural Bike2Farm ride. First stop is Lisa Helps' house—not to meet the Mayor of Victoria, but to see her chickens.

Bike2Farm is a joint enterprise between Capital Regional District's (CRD) People Power Program and the Capital Regional Food and Agriculture Initiatives Roundtable (CRFAIR). CRFAIR's events and outreach coordinator Jelena Putnik describes Bike2Farm as "an opportunity to get kids connected to food grown in their region in a sustainable and healthy way, to connect the dots between the farm and their table so that hopefully they will bring this back to their families and their own lives."

While programs for children like Growing Chefs and Growing Young Farmers exist in communities like Victoria, few continue past elementary school. The organizers of Bike2Farm want to change young people's relationship with food as they grow into adults. Some of the energy arises from the movement for more sustainable, local, organic food. But much of the boost comes from teachers and community members with a desire to improve kids' health and to pass on a passion for farming and a connection to the land.

Timing is everything. According to the 2011 census, nearly 62 per cent of farm operators in B.C. were over 55 years old. And only six per cent of farm operators were less than 40, a 14 per cent decline since 1991.

So who will grow the food? Census data points to larger and more mechanized farms. Between 2006 and 2011, the average Canadian farm grew by seven per cent. The number of farms reporting \$1 million or more in receipts increased by 31 per cent while the number reporting less than \$1 million fell by 12 per cent.

Programs like Bike2Farm encourage participants to question that trend and get involved with how their food is produced. New and improved agricultural courses at some B.C. high

schools demonstrate that becoming a farmer can be as legitimate a career goal as a teacher or engineer.

At the mayor's house, the group gathers at the wire mesh of the chicken coop. Marianne Unger, a friend of the mayor, opens a worn egg carton. Inside, a rainbow of colours: teal, copper, beige, and olive. Unger lets the kids handle them and explains—different chickens, different eggs.

"Five minutes," shouts Sage, and the kids take turns kneeling at the mesh to cluck their goodbyes. Their next stop is just a few blocks away. At the corner of North Park and Chambers, a chain link fence surrounds the lush raised beds of the Compost Education Centre (CEC), where edible perennials and organic vegetables have grown thickly over the summer. CEC workers view the centre as a demonstration site, a place where they can show the whole lifecycle of food.

A few kids wrinkle their noses as CEC education coordinator Kayla Siefried pulls back the lid of one of the compost bins. Siefried describes how every time food goes in the garbage it contributes to global warming. In the landfill, she explains, food decomposes anaerobically, releasing methane gas—worse than a car's exhaust.

After she lets them use hand trowels to explore a compost bin, Siefried asks if anyone wants to try a ripe strawberry grown with compost—after washing their hands of course. Everyone plucks a berry or two and takes a bite. An adventurous few try one of the reddening tomatoes and smile at the surprisingly sweet taste.

Lunchtime nears and Sage leads his group to a nearby park to eat and rest before they ride to visit City Harvest Co-operative's urban farm on Haultain Street.

Set against the wooded Bowker Creek, the small farm has greenhouses and small plots of crops. City Harvest's executive director Heather Parker waves the group into the drive, where the kids dump their bikes. She leads them through the property and explains how a multi-site farm works—City Harvest works at several locations across Victoria and Saanich—then splits them into groups. Some sort firm from soft tomatoes for the Oaklands Sunset Market. Others sit in the cool shade of the porch and pick pungent basil leaves. A bed of kale needs to be pulled up, along with patches of weeds.

After 45 minutes of work, Parker and Sage round up the flock to leave. Many want to stay and ignore the adults' calls, but eventually Sage wrangles them and leads a slow ride back to Crystal Pool.

Dirty hands and sweat—everyone wants to wash, rest, and eat. Tonight, however, when the preteens sit down for dinner they might question where their food came from and who grew it. Perhaps they will ask their parents about composting. When breakfast arrives in the form of scrambled eggs, they might wonder about the chicken that laid them. As they later learn about food systems like industrial poultry farming, they'll remember the alternatives.

FOSTERING CHANGE

BIKE2FARM WORKS BECAUSE DIFFERENT ORGANIZATIONS, including municipal governments, coordinated to make it happen. This sort of collaborative approach is what Farm to School BC does best. With partners across the province such as the Capital Regional Food and Agriculture Initiatives Roundtable, Farm to School BC promotes and supports farm to school activities, policies, and programs.

"First, we want to increase access to healthy local food for kids," says Farm to School BC provincial manager Vanessa Perrodou. "Second, provide experiential learning opportunities. And third, create connections between the school and the community that will support the school's efforts in building programs."

To achieve these goals, Farm to School BC established three regional hubs, including the CRD. The hubs are managed by an "animator"—Aaren Topley for the CRD—who matches schools with local organizations to develop programs that suit the region. Parker says the position was "created in response to what farmers have been saying for a few years: 'We don't have the time to create agreements, to generate interest, and manage logistics. We're farmers.' So the animator took on that challenge."

The results have amazed Perrodou, who has a long list of barriers that most teachers and students face when trying to create a school garden. These include a lack of teacher ability or expertise and resistance from districts and facilities workers that don't want to pay for the care or removal of abandoned gardens.

To get the districts and facilities management onside, Farm to School BC created a policy document that outlines how to create and support successful school gardens. Co-written with farmers, teachers, and school administrators, the policy document is bearing fruit, with results like the new collaboration between City Harvest and Reynolds Secondary School.

A NEW ERA FOR SCHOOL GARDENS

ON ANOTHER SUNNY DAY IN AUGUST, PARKER ARRIVES AT Reynolds. A couple of co-op members, shovels slung over their shoulders, wait by the huge piles of mulch and soil as Parker unlocks the school doors. Down the hallway and around a couple corners, another set of doors leads to the courtyard garden.

The scent of lavender and rosemary bushes simmers in the heat. Parker stands in the shade of an apple tree while the co-op members use wheelbarrows to carry in the yards of soil for the 16 raised beds.

"When we got here," says Parker, "I don't think that they had really done anything in the garden properly for a couple years, so it was weedy and overgrown. But the foundation was there, things like a great irrigation system."

This year will be the first that City Harvest takes care of the Reynolds garden. To prepare, Parker and her team weeded, built extra garden boxes, and pruned some of the larger shrubs. They will plant a rotation of direct seeded salad greens (a low-impact planting method) and some slower growing winter crops like kale and chard.

"It's a dream come true," says Heather Coey, the Reynolds teacher who started the garden. "Because I couldn't do this forever."

The garden began in 2008 when a group of students in Coey's leadership program decided they wanted to transform the concrete courtyard. After the group—then called the Green Spaces Project—raised the necessary funds, Coey hired LADR Landscape Architects to design a sustainable garden.

Coey's detailed plans secured enough funding to convince the school board to jackhammer the courtyard and remove some of the trees. She then worked with Geoff Johnson, a local permaculture expert, to dig out the gravel, create raised beds, and bring in new soil. As the years passed, students contributed their different talents.

"One year I re-did all the windows in my house, and a student took them and made them into cold frames," Coey says. You can still find the cold frames there, eight years later, lined up against the northern wall—though the paint has begun to peel and nothing grows inside.

"During the summer months I would have to come in and drag some students with me about every two weeks," says Coey. "Without consistent maintenance, the garden would get overgrown and then we'd have a big work party and it would slide out again and this cycle didn't work."

Emma Andrist, a current Reynolds student and past participant in Coey's leadership program, agrees. "It's hard to do in just your free time," she says, as she and two other students spread the soil.

"Kids have a ton of responsibilities—jobs, homework, and sports."

"What we need is credits," Andrist says. "If there were courses, more kids could get involved. I'm going into Grade 12



and I work on the salad bar and I'm worried about who is going to take it over when we graduate."

Andrist recalls sitting on a youth roundtable and listening while students from other schools described their gardens, knowing that Reynolds could do so much more. The partnership with City Harvest excites her, and she thinks it may help get more students involved.

“If there were courses, more kids could get involved”

Lasting for five years with annual reviews, City Harvest will decide what to grow and where, and the school receives a portion for their salad bar program. Students will work alongside and learn from City Harvest growers.

This partnership and sustainability plan was critical for the school district and facilities management, who had concerns about any garden expansion. "Now, we'll have a community partner to care for the garden year-round," says Coey, "especially during the summer, and the space won't depend on a particular parent, teacher, or student."

For the future, Coey wants more opportunities for students to receive credits for their work. Similar to home economics classes, students could maintain a garden plot and use the produce for cooking lessons. She has also considered cross-curricular activities with sciences, English, and even math for measuring

plant growth rates and predictive models.

Today, though, after a hard day's work, Parker, Andrist, and the other volunteers lounge in some of the Adirondacks beneath the mature maple. They look forward to when returning students discover the revitalized garden and perhaps take a moment to enjoy it.

BACK TO SCHOOL, BACK TO THE LAND

NESTLED IN THE FRASER VALLEY BENEATH THE SNOWY Cascades, Sardis Secondary School serves the agricultural community of Chilliwack. Sardis has run an agricultural program for its teenagers for 30 years, but the course had stagnated and wasn't popular with students by the time teacher Joe Massie took over in 2007.

Massie, who co-runs the program with Tania Toth, never thought he would teach farming. Although he grew up on his family's farms in Greendale and Ryder Lake and spent eight years working at a local greenhouse, Massie was trained to instruct physics. Faced with the challenge, he saw a chance to reinvigorate the course and forge new community partnerships.

First, Massie and Toth revitalized the overgrown greenhouse and introduced a host of new technologies, including hydroponics—a method of growing plants in nutrient-rich water instead of soil. But the most exciting change came in 2014 when the school opened the Sardis Secondary School Farm, a five-acre plot near the school.

At the western edge of the city, split-level homes look over the wide variety of vegetables growing in the field. Further west, the larger industrial farms loom before the land gives way to wooded hills and the mountains.

With help from Massie and Toth, the students manage a community supported agriculture (CSA) program. It fed 20 families over a 14-week period in the summer of 2015. This year, the program will feed 35. "If it's grown in the valley, we're probably trying to grow it," says Massie. "Your basics like corn and potatoes, to more interesting vegetables like kohlrabi."

The planning for the farm begins in the fall when the students decide what to grow, how many seeds they need, and other logistics. Planting begins in May and the summer school students take over when the school year ends. For summer 2016, 40 students enrolled to weed, harvest, and tell CSA customers what they'd find in their boxes.

Unlike Coey's students, those at Sardis have many opportunities to receive school credits for their agricultural work from Grade 10 onwards. In Grade 12, students can take the University of the Fraser Valley's (UFV) first-year agriculture course. Massie and Toth teach it, and for lessons they cannot cover, such as grafting and tissue cultures, the class takes a field trip to the UFV campus.

"We've worked with UFV professor Tom Bauman for a long while," Massie says. "We now have some of their crops in the field, and our goal is for students to ladder into the UFV agriculture program." He also hopes to have UFV students in the Sardis field to help and mentor for the 2016/17 school year.

The program has been popular with students as well. "My favourite part about working on the farm," says Grade 10 student Brittany Jackson, "is how, after a hard job, we all take a break and learn from each other about what went wrong and how we could do better."

“My favourite part about working on the farm is how we all learn from each other about what went wrong and how we could do better”

The programs continue to grow; this fall Sardis offered four courses for upwards of 120 students. "I love learning and doing things hands-on," says Jackson. "It's just so much easier and fun. When I get a chance to use skills I've learned in the class outside, it really helps the learning process."

Massie's firm tone softens as he discusses the many community partners that have supported the farm. "One of the most powerful parts of the program is the opportunity students have to work alongside industry professionals," he says. "When we need tractor work done or expertise on a certain crop, we have many farmers we can call on for help. Students get to see that people want to give back to their community, and that inspires them."

What Massie doesn't mention is how he inspires the students too. "Mr. Massie is an amazing teacher. He knows what he's doing and he really connects with us. You can tell he really loves what he does," says Jackson.

CULTIVATING THE FUTURE

THE NOW-ABOUNDING PROGRAMS and courses that engage kids and teens with farming represent an intertwining shift in both our food and education systems. People like Joe Massie and Tania Toth, or Heather Parker and Heather Coey are giving a new generation real opportunities to experience agriculture.

"This year in particular I was really happy with our grad class," said Massie. "Students who took our Grade 12 course, many of them, when they walked across the stage at commencement, said they wanted to pursue agricultural careers or education at UFV or other institutions. That was really encouraging to see."

With the Sardis Farm success, Delta School District opened a mini-school called Farm Roots for

30 students this September. This program will intensify what Sardis offers by having their students spend every other day doing agricultural work—either out on the eight-acre farm or in the classroom. Some of the credits they receive will count towards Kwantlen Polytechnic University's agricultural program.

While these programs may mark a new relationship between B.C.'s education and agricultural systems, these future farmers will still face many barriers when they graduate, not the least of which is the extraordinary cost of farmland in southern B.C.

Back in Victoria, City Harvest is negotiating with Victoria High School to create a full-sized market garden modelled on Vancouver's Fresh Roots Urban Farm Society. These market gardens occupy entire school fields and provide opportunities for the kids and the organization managing them.

Of course, this couldn't have happened without the organizational help of people like Putnik at CRFAIR and Perrodou at Farm to School BC, which plans to expand the regional hub model to other communities. "There's just an amazing amount of energy at the grassroots level," says Perrodou. "Schools have so many things they want to do and they just need help to do them."

The future looks bright—and so does the present. All of these projects embody community and government collaboration and have created better spaces for children and teenagers.

"I believe just having the courtyard garden as a space that the kids walk through creates a different culture," says Coey. "If you connect people through their food, they are more likely to get involved or support movements involved with sustainability and the environment—even just riding their bike." ♦



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LOSING GROUND

B.C.'s Agricultural Land Reserve—and the farmland it protects—is under threat.

Do we have time to save it?

BY TRINA McDONALD

AS YOU DRIVE BLENKINSOP ROAD, PAST FIELDS STREWN WITH contorted Garry oak trees, along the southwesterly side of Pkols—also known as Mount Doug—you quickly forget you are just 15 minutes from downtown Victoria. The fertile land would have been subdivided and developed into another suburban neighbourhood long ago if it were not for the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR). Still, this idyllic rural setting is under threat. “The Blenkinsop Valley,” says Nathalie Chambers of Madrona Farm, “is taking its last breaths.”

Where municipalities lack the policies and political will to ensure a low-impact approach to development, the provincial ALR acts as an important safeguard, protecting a significant amount of farmland from urbanization. For all the benefits, however, the ALR does not enable farmers to access the land or preserve its soil quality. Chambers recently published a book, *Saving Farmland*, and was instrumental in raising the alarm, and the funds, to preserve Madrona, which she runs with her husband, David. The Blenkinsop Valley's ALR status does not

mean the land will be farmed in ecologically sensitive ways, and Chambers has noticed losses in biodiversity and degraded soil.

Chambers is among the farmers, politicians, and everyday land protectors concerned about recent changes to the ALR. These have split the province into two zones with different decision-making criteria and established six regional panels instead of the single provincial commission. The new set of criteria in zone two opens the door for non-agricultural related activities, including oil and gas development. Critics want policies and partnerships that will help farmers access the land and support both ecologically and economically sound farming practices, strengthening the ALR and thereby increasing food security in B.C.

Making this goal more difficult, however, is the skyrocketing price of real estate on Vancouver Island and the Lower Mainland. According to Chambers, “the largest threat to farmland and the largest obstacle to food security is the price of farmland, second only to industrialization.”

A SIMPLE GOAL

SUCH THREATS ARE NOT NEW. IN 1973, AFTER THE B.C. government recognized that almost 6,000 hectares of farmland was being lost annually to development, it instituted the *Agricultural Land Commission Act*. The government then appointed an independent tribunal of commissioners who set out the land use zone known as the ALR. By the mid-70s, close to five per cent of the province's land base had been designated as ALR. Land was designated primarily based on the suitability of the soil and climate for agriculture, as well as the land's current non-urban and non-industrial state. The Agricultural Land Commission's (ALC) job was to decide how the land could be used and what parcels of land should be included or excluded, free from political interference. The ALC's goal was simple: protect farmland and encourage successful farms.

Enacted in 2014, the *Agricultural Land Commission Amendment Act*, or Bill 24, divides the province into two zones, overseen by six newly legislated, independent tribunals. In zone one, which includes Vancouver Island, the Lower Mainland, the Fraser Valley, and the Okanagan—areas where farmland is most limited and urban growth is a threat—protecting land and encouraging agriculture remain the ALR's sole objectives. In zone two, which makes up the other 90 per cent of the province, the commission must now consider factors that are not strictly agricultural, such as how a community or region will benefit economically, when making decisions—a change that has raised concerns about this government's commitment to building on the legacy of the ALR.

“In zone two, the preservation of agricultural land is no longer the only, or the most prevalent, factor,” says Deborah Curran, Hakai Professor in Environmental Law and Sustainability and acting Executive Director of the Environmental Law Centre (ELC) at the University of Victoria. A municipal and environmental lawyer, Curran focuses her research on smart growth approaches to regional sustainability, which includes preserving working landscapes and food systems. She cautions that the changes could allow for more non-farm uses of ALR land.

Non-farm uses include breweries, meaderies, and distilleries, agri-tourism, aggregate extraction, water and gas pipelines, and the recently added special events such as weddings and festivals. While these activities can provide revenue for farmers, they can also heighten expectations for non-agricultural land use in the ALR—an issue that the ALC considers when assessing proposals. Curran says that getting rid of the new two-zone system would strengthen the ALR. Agricultural land would again be valued strictly for its agricultural capacity, and the ALC would return to its primary function of protecting farmland.

Current ALC chair Frank Leonard says while the ALC now considers other factors, agricultural land still comes first. “If it's good farmland, it's good farmland, and the decisions reflect that,” says Leonard.

However, Curran is not the only one worried about the long-term impacts of valuing farmland for activities other than farming. Richard Bullock, former chair of the ALC, says he was fired and replaced by Leonard in 2015 due to his high level of involvement in decision-making and his firm stance against what he sees as increased political interference resulting from Bill 24.

“I believe very strongly that what they have done has nothing to do with saving farmlands,” says Bullock, “but making it easier for folks who own farmlands, not necessarily farmers, to do a whole host of things.” In a real estate market where he says buyers already use B.C. farmland for speculation, he believes the changes may signal a weakening ALR that will eventually leave farmland unprotected.

“[I am] looking for somebody in government to stand up and say, ‘The ALC is here to stay and keep your hands off it. You buy farmland, you sell farmland,’” says Bullock.

“[I am] looking for somebody in government to stand up and say, ‘The ALC is here to stay and keep your hands off it. You buy farmland, you sell farmland’

Where farmland is sparse and urban growth rampant, ALR decisions to exclude sections become controversial. According to Curran, the contexts of urban expansion and a hot international real estate market, which is driving sales in B.C., are putting the economic value of land above its value for food production. In this regard, “the ALR, at the minimum, protects the land from gentrification,” she says.

LOSING FARMLAND

IN SIDNEY, B.C., SOME RESIDENTS ARGUE THAT THE ALR IS NOT providing even minimal protection. Local citizen and agriculture advocate Springfield Harrison filed a request for reconsideration on the January 2016 ALC decision to exclude approximately 10 acres of ALR land belonging to the airport authority. Numerous other residents and community organizations supported Harrison, including the B.C. chapter of the Sierra Club. The soil on the disputed land has a class-two designation—some of the best land for growing food in B.C.

In the original decision, the ALC claimed the land was unsuitable for most farming due to its proximity to airfield and industrial activity. Harrison's application argued that farmland is commonly located close to industry, while the land in question had been used for growing and harvesting hay until 2015, proving its viability as farmland. In August 2016, the ALC turned down his request for reconsideration, stating that the submission didn't include any new evidence.

Meanwhile, the development firm Omicron has been working on a plan to turn a section of the excluded land into a 9,100-square-metre commercial site called the Sidney Gateway. The firm claims the Town of Sidney will benefit from over \$700,000 in new property taxes. North Saanich residents behind the “Gateway? No Way!” group claim that Gateway will hurt local agriculture and be a disaster for Sidney retailers—leading to a predicted 25 per cent drop in revenue. They want to know what the ALC is in business for, if it won't protect fertile farmland from a strip mall development.

The ALC acknowledged public concerns about the proposed retail site in the decision, but concluded that matters regarding





NATHALIE CHAMBERS AT
MADRONA FARM STAND

how the land is developed fall outside their scope of influence. Sidney council approved the re-zoning in a 5-2 vote on Sept. 12, 2016. Omicron plans to start construction this spring, pending a development permit from the Victoria Airport Authority.

A SMART WAY TO GROW

IF THE FATE OF FARMLAND OUTSIDE, OR EXCLUDED FROM, the ALR is largely in the hands of municipalities and regional districts, then food security requires both a strong ALR and active community planning. Deborah Curran argues that the ALR remains “exceedingly valuable” as the foundation of a secure food system. “It prevents the wholesale or continual conversion of agricultural land to urban uses,” she says. “It also puts the brakes on local governments who would like to just develop over their landscape.”

She calls protecting farmland “the flip side of good urban growth” and argues that municipalities are better served by taking a low-impact or “smart growth” approach to development. This strategy means they “densify” the use of existing infrastructure, such as sewers and waterlines, before going to undeveloped sites.

A smart growth approach in the City of Langford could have multiple benefits. The municipality, known for the controversial Bear Mountain development and its gung-ho approach to growth, recently eyed ALR land to continue its expansion. In October 2015, Langford applied for a bulk exclusion of 43 parcels totalling 40 hectares (about 99 acres), offering to exchange the land for cash contributions to an agricultural fund.

The decision took eight months, far exceeding the ALC’s new policy of 90 days, after which they return the application fee. In the end, the ALC turned them down. The commission approved only 10.6 hectares of small parcels that were already being used for residential purposes or exempt from the ALR for other reasons.

“Our panel spent a lot of time on that,” says Frank Leonard of the decision-making process. “I think we spent more time on it than the City of Langford.”

Langford may have been better off maximizing the value of existing infrastructure, as Curran’s research suggests, before attempting to move to ALR land and put pressure on the ALC.

“This isn’t even a ‘Save agriculture’ or ‘Save the environment’ argument,” says Curran. “It’s a common sense argument.” But until local government’s heed her advice, the ALR remains the best tool we have.

INCENTIVES TO FARM

THE ALR IS ALSO MEANT AS A WAY TO ENCOURAGE FARMING. NDP MLA Lana Popham, the opposition spokesperson for agriculture and food, takes issue with the changes to the legislation, calling the two-zone system “a big problem.” She says allowing landowners in part of the province to do business like servicing trucks for the oil and gas industry has nothing to do with agriculture.

Minister of Agriculture Norm Letnick defends the changes. “The two zones were part of the bill that government introduced to continue to support the Agricultural Land Commission,” he says, claiming that the changes emphasize the ALC’s independence and provide farmers with the opportunity to make additional income off their land.

“My ultimate priority is to continue to see an improvement in B.C.’s food security,” says Letnick. “Everything I do is with that lens in mind.”

While Popham agrees that B.C. farmers need ways to become more financially stable, she says the ALR does not have the capacity it should because the policies to support farming aren’t in place. “Instead of looking at it as how can we help these farmers make money doing something other than farming, let’s help them make more money farming,” she says. Popham recommends the government create a “procurement

policy,” which would use health-care funding to purchase local food. “If we would put a policy in place that said up to 30 per cent, to start, [of hospital meals] has to be grown and processed in B.C.,” says Popham, “that 51 million dollars would stabilize the domestic economy for agriculture.” She hopes this policy would also encourage the processing companies that Canada has lost to the United States—such as those that turn apples into apple sauce—to return to the province, thanks to a guaranteed market for B.C.-made products.

British Columbia needs more solutions that increase economic viability for farmers while strengthening local food security. Today, thriving farms like Madrona are an exception, not the rule. “This valley used to be the most productive agricultural land on southern Vancouver Island,” says Chambers. “It’s a biological diversity hot spot within the rain shadow of the Olympic and Coast Mountain ranges and we used to bring food to the United States. Now we have three days of food on the Island.”

Of-cited estimates, mostly from 2011, place the amount of Vancouver Island’s food produced locally at around five per cent. Meanwhile, around 70 per cent of all vegetables and 45 per cent of fruits consumed by British Columbians come from the U.S., with much of that from drought-stricken California. Although the land base protected by the ALR has remained virtually the same for four decades, the ALR on its own has not increased food production.

“Instead of looking at how we can help these farmers make money doing something other than farming, let’s help them make more money farming”

IMPROVING THE SYSTEM

ACCORDING TO DEBORAH CURRAN, APPROXIMATELY 50 PER cent of protected farmland in the most expensive parts of the province (zone one) is not being farmed. This is due to what she calls “a failure in the land market,” resulting from an inability to provide farmland at fair prices. An April 2016 Vancity report on the threat to regional food security of rising land prices noted the viability of a farm business becomes questionable when land prices reach \$80,000 per acre. The current land prices around Metro Vancouver are between \$150,000 and \$300,000 per acre on parcels less than five acres. “So, the question becomes ‘How do you create the conditions under which that land would be farmed?’” says Curran.

To encourage owners to lease land to farmers at affordable prices, Curran recommends adding nuances to the land taxation system. To obtain farm tax status in B.C., farm-gate sales on new and developing farms must be at least \$2,500 on land between two and 10 acres and \$10,000 on land under two acres—the larger amount of money on the lesser piece of land is to deter people who don’t actually farm their small plot from applying. According to Curran, the actual savings on land taxes are often not big enough to encourage more people to put their land into this level of production. “If there was more of an incentive,” she says, “there would be more leasing to farmers.”

Beyond tax breaks, Curran argues the price of farmland can be lowered by removing it from the real estate market altogether using farmland trusts modelled on conservation trusts. As non-profit organizations, these trusts obtain the title to farmland through purchase or donation, protect the land in perpetuity, and then lease it to farmers. The farmland trust model inspired the Chambers to spearhead the movement to save Madrona Farm.

“The model here at Madrona Farm is borrowed from the National Trust in England,” says Chambers, “where they have protected—are you ready for this?—233,000 hectares of farmland.” That’s about 233,000 rugby fields. Through a multi-year fundraising campaign, and the support of 3,500 community member donors, the Chambers raised \$2.7 million to buy Madrona and donate it back to The Land Conservancy of B.C. (TLC). Of the amount raised, \$250,000 was an extra endowment for the TLC to care for Madrona Farm in perpetuity. The TLC holds the power to dictate what practices can happen on the land and to oversee its protection.

The Chambers pay market value on a long-term lease, which gives them the right to farm the land for at least 24 years. That timeline encourages them to invest in and reap the rewards of farming. Unfortunately, the TLC went into creditor protection—one step away from bankruptcy—in the fall of 2013, as a result of mounting debt, and was forced to transfer and sell off the majority of its properties. Though its status as titleholder of Madrona Farm remains uncertain, Chambers says the lease partially protects them because it is a legally binding agreement that would prevent the TLC from selling the farm.

FOODLANDS TRUST

FORTUNATELY, A LONG-TERM SOLUTION TO FARMLAND protection is being developed locally by Vancouver Island’s Capital Region Food and Agriculture Initiatives Roundtable (CRFAIR) and Vancouver’s Farm Folk City Folk (FFCF). “We are in the process of developing a new Foodlands Trust,” says FFCF

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farm program manager Heather Pritchard. FFCF has partnered with the Centre for Sustainable Food Systems at UBC Farm and currently has two years of funding from the Real-Estate Foundation of B.C. and Vancity to establish the trust.

The Foodlands Trust will share an objective with many farmland trusts around the world. “[Its] primary purpose would be to acquire land, put it in trust, and then provide long-term leases to community groups who want to manage it,” explains Pritchard, a food activist, farmer, and co-founder of the Glorious Organics Co-op in the Fraser Valley. As part of its goal to protect food lands, the Trust recognizes and respects Indigenous food systems.

“Years ago, when we started this process, we got feedback from the Indigenous people we were working with that we were excluding them,” says Pritchard. Through this dialogue, which started at a gathering held by the BC Food Systems Network and continues with Dawn Morrison of the Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty, the trust came to understand the term farmland “did not include land that was part of an Indigenous food system that had to do with hunting and gathering and foraging.”

The trust intends to include First Nations stakeholders in decisions about land use, where it is possible and makes sense to do so. They no longer view the land in terms of just production. “We are looking at the whole ecology of the land,” says Pritchard. “We are opening up to a much broader perspective of where our food comes from.”

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The Foodlands Trust will eventually be a stand-alone organization, but for now it is a spinoff under FFCF's umbrella. The project signed the papers to transfer Lohbrunner Farm, 13.4 acres in Langford, from the TLC to the FFCF on Aug. 18, 2016 and is awaiting court approval. The transfer process gives the organization the opportunity to learn the legal mechanisms of taking land into trust, and to develop protocols and procedures for managing it. “What our funders wanted us to do was have a pilot,” says Pritchard, “something we could all work on so that we would be able to know what all the protocols and procedures of it are.”

GOING FORWARD

IN TERMS OF THE ALR, PRITCHARD SAYS THEY SEE THE TRUST as complementary. She believes in the ALR, but, like many critics, she says land is too expensive and the ALC doesn't have the ability or the mandate to protect the soil, decide on farming practices, or stop people from building “a mega house.”

“They are just super-busy with either considering applications to have land excluded or applications to have variances on the land,” says Pritchard. She thinks the Foodlands Trust can fill the gaps left by the ALR's limitations, and hopes the ALC will help by spreading the word. “We want them to understand what we are doing and support us in that way,” she says.

In the past, the ALC has not taken part in discussions about creating additional covenants and trusts because “they believe they are already protecting the land for farming,” says Pritchard. However, current chair Frank Leonard says, “I'm willing to revisit it.” He has arranged for individuals advocating for the ALC's support to meet with the commission's CEO.

Whether or not the ALC becomes a partner and creates new measures to encourage farming and protect the ecological health of the soil, the ALR remains a relevant and necessary tool that protects farmland from urban encroachment and development. That said, allowing non-farm uses in zone two of the ALR, even those that don't diminish productivity, causes land prices to rise even further and signals the B.C. government's weakening commitment to the *Agricultural Land Commission Act*. With the 2017 provincial election approaching, farmers and food gatherers will be watching closely to see if the issue is part of the campaign, and while everyone has a stake in protecting food land and increasing productivity, the ALR's fate will be felt most acutely by these hardworking providers.

Four days a week for most of the year, the Madrona farm stand busts with food and bustles with customers eager to get in on the bounty. Birds sing and scoop berries from the hedgerows that surround the farm and protect buzzing bees. Such fruits are not the product of one season's efforts but of years of cultivating soil—and relationships. While politics may run in four-year cycles, the well-being of people and the land does not. As Nathalie and David Chambers labour in their fields, cultivating soil and planting seeds, they hold not only the tools of their trade, but also the long-term vision and commitment to the land that healthy food systems thrive on. ♦

Green OPPS

Take a chance and get a greenhouse —all you need to know to grow baby grow

By SARAH HUGHES WITH NAOMI STEWART

LIVING ON THE WEST COAST HAS ITS CHARMS, ESPECIALLY its long growing season. But even Victoria eventually gets a winter, so for anyone in search of year-round, climate-controlled gardening, a greenhouse is the way to go.

Greenhouses have a lot of pros. The solar collection process, which heats the space like a stuffy car with the windows up, maintains the warmth that many plants need. Plus greenhouses can prevent insects and hungry animals from tearing apart your lovingly tended plants.

Greenhouse drawbacks include space—a large design can fill a backyard—and immobility. Many greenhouses are permanent structures, but there are ways around this if immobility hinders your garden space.

Let us take you on a spin of some tried-and-true methods of greenhouse growing and what you need to build your own.

CHOOSE THE RIGHT TYPE

THE A-FRAME

EASY TO BUILD, MINIMALISTIC IN MATERIALS, AND RELATIVELY spacious, the classic A-frame greenhouse can be used for a variety of vegetables. Circulation can suffer in the corners, and space can get tight. These greenhouses are typically constructed with glass windows and wood, but you can substitute polycarbonate panes for a lighter material. Remember to place the greenhouse facing south.



POST AND RAFTER

THE SOUNDEST GREENHOUSE AROUND. THE POST AND RAFTER design is permanent, so you'll have to make up your mind about it. Be sure to foot the posts securely, as the roof is heavy and will need support. Typically this greenhouse is made with glass, which increases the cost, but some kits and designs come with polycarbonate sheets. If you have the budget (high-end kits can cost over \$4,000) and want to commit to a greenhouse, the post and rafter design may be the one for you.

HOOP HOUSE

FOR THOSE LOOKING FOR A GREENHOUSE THAT'S CHEAP AND efficient. No, it's not made of hula-hoops. Instead PVC or aluminum pipes shape the structure, which is covered by plastic sheets, creating a bubble above a section of ground. Hoop houses are great because you can choose to have them in one spot or as moveable structures, depending on how large they are. It might lack the sturdiness of an A-frame or post and rafter greenhouse, but there aren't many cons with hoop houses.

GOTHIC ARCH

GIVE YOUR YARD A MEDIEVAL FLAIR WITH THIS VARIATION ON the Quonset design, a semi-circular structure with a pointed roof. The design allows rain and snow to slide off easily, and it's simple enough to construct. Like a hoop house, you can use aluminum piping with plastic sheeting, secured or unsecured to the ground.

COLD FRAMES AND LEAN-TOS

IF YOU WANT A QUICK, IMPERMANENT SOLUTION, TRY RIGGING up some old window or glass doorframes into a lean-to or cold frame. Lean-tos sit against solid structures, such as a house or barn, and are sealed from the elements with rudimentary siding. Cold frames are the simplest, usually used for growing herbs or smaller vegetables, but are weather sensitive; they can overheat through lack of ventilation and will not protect plants from freezing.

TURN UP THE HEAT

RESEARCH WHAT TEMPERATURES YOUR PLANTS REQUIRE BEFORE installing a greenhouse, so you can build the right type and also pick up the appropriate heaters or fans.

You want to keep a close eye on the temperature in your greenhouse, as it's one of the trickiest aspects to get a feel for and usually involves a lot of trial and error.

If you're growing in the summer months, keep your greenhouse at about 23-30°C during the day and 15-23°C at night, depending on the plants you are growing. Make sure to plan for cloudy or rainy days.

Winter greenhouse growing requires more temperature management. Leafy greens can be kept at a minimum 8°C at night, and between 18-21°C during the day. If you're growing tomatoes, don't let the temperature drop below 10°C at night.

Remember to keep your greenhouse well ventilated as plants use carbon dioxide to grow. Set up fans or vents, or install windows and doors to create cross-ventilation as a cheaper method.

SOIL, LIGHT, HUMIDITY

OTHER ASPECTS TO KEEP IN MIND (AND DO YOUR HOMEWORK on) are soil health, light availability, and humidity levels. Soil benefits from a mix of organic fertilizers, such as compost and mulch. Compost can add nutrients and microbial populations to enrich the soil, and mulches will conserve moisture and decompose.

If you are planting into beds, this will be something to watch, as nutrient levels can change with different crops and types of organic fertilizers. Be careful as to not add too much nitrogen rich fertilizer, as leafy greens can accumulate unhealthy levels of nitrates. An easy fix to this would be swapping out crops (with different rates of nitrogen ingestion) and leaving beds go fallow.

Humidity is good to a degree. Too much humidity can mean mouldy leaves, rotting stems, fungal diseases, and other greenhouse annoyances that can suck the joy out of growing in your new plant sauna. Make sure to install proper ventilation and monitor the temperature to manage the level of humidity in your greenhouse.

Lighting is something people may forget about when planning a greenhouse. If you have full sun on the structure it is easy enough to shade it out with netting, fabric, paint, or other materials, but it isn't possible to bring more sunlight in once it's situated in the shade. So, bear sunlight and light availability in mind when placing that new gabled greenhouse!

LET THE GROWING BEGIN

GREENHOUSES WORK FOR VEGETABLES AND FRUITS FROM planting through harvest. Many gardeners use them for growing crops that could need extra heat in the summer or to continue growing through the winter. Heather Parker, from City Harvest Co-operative, uses her greenhouses year-round; she starts seedlings in the early spring, matures plants over the summer, and keeps temperature-sensitive crops, such as salad greens, in the controlled climate during the winter.

Parker has five greenhouses: three plastic hoop houses, a glass and metal frame post and rafter, and a DIY window hybrid. The old glass and metal greenhouse, which once belonged to Carolyn



Herriot, author of *A Year on the Garden Path* and *The Zero-Mile Diet*, harbours about 30 healthy tomato plants. One hoop house contains eggplants and peppers, while others house herbs.

Parker's tips for successful greenhouse growing include monitoring the temperature, checking soil health, and watering every day. This last warning might seem obvious, but some people forget that it doesn't rain in a greenhouse!

"I'd say gathering and monitoring as much [info] as you can is key," says Parker. "Every backyard is different, and you can expect to spend a year learning about what you're doing."

If you'd like to get a feel for growing in greenhouses before committing to buying or constructing one, City Harvest welcomes regular volunteers to come learn the ropes, both inside and outside the greenhouses.

Many gardeners plant into raised beds or pots in their greenhouses, which works well if you plan on staying put. If you have the space, installing a mobile hoop house will allow for more varied growing and crop rotation. Ten Acres Farm in North Saanich, which supplies Victoria's Ten Acres Bistro and Kitchen, has one 20 by 80 foot portable hoop house where their farmers plant directly into the ground. This allows them to use the greenhouses in an efficient way and rotate crops that need the extra heat and protection.

They start the salad greens out in the open at the end of the summer while the tomatoes are finishing up and then roll the hoop house over top to offer more protection into the fall and winter. This allows them to continue producing salad greens for Ten Acres Bistro year-round.

Ten Acres farm manager Adam Bongarzone advises gardeners to start small. "Ten by 40 feet is probably a good size to start with. It's probably easier to move, too, if you don't have a tractor." ♦

Build Your Own

City Harvest and Ten Acres use greenhouses on a larger scale than any independent gardener. You can choose from countless designs and kits to fit in a standard backyard. If you want to grow all year, do your research before buying or building a greenhouse.

An easy and fun way of building a greenhouse is to look for free materials on Craigslist and UsedVictoria, or keep an eye on the curb for discarded windows and doors. You can build a custom greenhouse for under \$100, and tailor it to your desires.

This basic list from the Home Depot can get you started:

- Four eight-foot 2x4 lumber for support (\$12)
- Two 30 kg concrete mix bags for foundation (\$10)
- One pack of 25 concrete screws (\$13)
- One eight-foot PVC roof panel (\$15)
- One 1 lb pack of regular nails (\$3)
- Two 4x8' pieces of plywood for walls (\$17 each)
- Scraps of plywood for formwork (scrounged)
- Three large windows or glass doors (scrounged)

There are many free greenhouse plans online.
Take a chance and get growing!

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JENIFER SHEPPARD'S BALCONY GARDEN

IT'S A SMALL BALCONY BUT IT'S AMAZING HOW many plants can fit with the help of hanging baskets and rail planters. The vertical garden only takes a few supplies: an old pallet, landscaping mesh, a staple gun, and soil. I'm surprised how well it's doing! Make sure your pallet was heat-treated rather than fumigated, and you'll need to water almost daily as the soil is relatively shallow.

Current contents: pineapple sage, calibrachoa, basil, mojito mint, oregano, chives, watercress, cherry tomatoes, and thyme. In the bottom, shaded row are rhodochiton and fuchsias. I added a shelf to the right for sweet peas because I couldn't live without them.



PLANET SYSTEMS AUTOMATED GREENHOUSE
UVIC ENGINEERING CAPTSONE DESIGN PROJECT

SUBMITTED BY ZACHARY MAZO, EMILY CHUTTER, BEN WOLFE, CHARNDEEP GILL, BILLY EICKEL, AND ABRAR HAQUE

EXTREME URBANIZATION HAS ALMOST ELIMINATED THE SPACE FOR HOME gardening. We developed this product to provide the urban dweller with an ability to grow produce with minimal time required. We believe that if people were more actively involved in the process of growing their own food, gaining an appreciation of the time and effort it takes, then food waste would be reduced.

Features of this system include LED lighting for when plants don't receive enough sunlight and a gravity-fed watering system based on soil moisture sensing. For temperature management in the warm summer months, the autonomous greenhouse uses a thermal expanding window opener and active cooling fan. For the winter months, we developed a detailed concept design for a liquid soil heating system. In an effort to get users more involved in growing, we included the framework for an app that monitors temperature, humidity, light, and soil moisture in our project. Best of all, the entire system runs on a solar panel that charges a battery.



PHOTO: ALIFIA KAPASI

SONGHEES WELLNESS CENTRE

WHERE: 1100 ADMIRALS ROAD
WHO: CHANG HOLOVSKY ARCHITECTS INC.



WHEN YOU SEE THE SONGHEES WELLNESS CENTRE, YOU see a dream that took 30 years to realize. The dream was to amalgamate administration, create services for youth and elders, and improve health, but also to create better opportunities.

"In the words of my uncle Chief Robert Sam," says Chief Ron Sam, "we're laying the foundation for the future social, cultural, and economic well-being of our people."

And the foundation dazzles, clad in corrugated metal panels, stained cedar, and stone. Situated on a gentle hillside, the centre's western facade of convex glass overlooks the reserve and the expansive Esquimalt Harbour. The 55,0000-square-foot building fuses modern architecture with Songhees culture

Visitors approach from the rear, off Admirals Road, and are greeted by five house posts. The first is carved in a contemporary style and depicts a Giving Box.

"They say that when someone teaches or shares something with you, then it is your responsibility to pass it on," says Nathan Rice, a public relations representative. "So you always want your Giving Box open because they're sharing with you because they want to, not because they have to."

Inside the vaulted two-story lobby, two additional house posts stand in front of the gabled glass wall of the boardroom.

"What we've done is make the boardroom the big house," says Mark Salter, the tourism and marketing manager. "So it has the house posts in front, the gabled ceiling where the smoke would go up, and an overhang at the back to cover the woodpile."

Off the lobby are the gift gallery, elder's centre, and a primary health clinic. Funded by the First Nations Health Authority, the clinic delivers pre- and post-natal care, vaccinations, and oral health. It also houses a social worker and youth program coordinator, as well as a facilitated fitness and recreation program.

On the floor below, the centre hosts summer camps and a daycare, pre-school, and homework club called Kwum Kwum Lelum during the school year. For these students, the first floor also has a youth room and a computer lab, which they share with others in the community.

The Wellness Centre not only contributes to the social fabric of the Songhees people, but also to the environment through its LEED silver certified building practices.

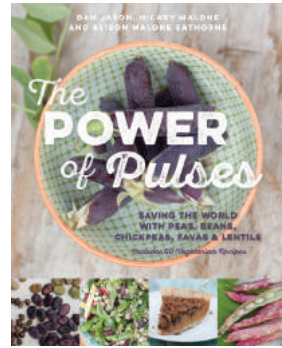
Outside, the sloping property was used to create swales—gardens that absorb and filter rainwater away from sewers. The southwest-facing windows, which provide sweeping views of the Olympic Mountains and the harbour, keep the building warm in the winter when the sun sits low on the horizon. In the summer, an overhanging roof shades the windows from the high sun and helps to keep the building cool.

To further reduce energy costs, the building uses a geothermal heat pump to control the temperature. During the winter, a series of large pipes circulates a liquid deep beneath the earth to absorb heat. The returning water warms the building through a radiant system built into the floor. In the summer, heat from the building gets pumped back into the earth, which acts as a heat sink.

The geothermal system is supplemented by an aerothermal one, which functions on a similar principle, but instead uses the atmosphere to heat and cool. Finally, an array of rooftop solar panels translates the sun's energy into hot water for the building.

The Songhees Wellness Center is a dream realized and a chance for more. It will let the make their own healthcare decisions, help their children succeed in school, and celebrate their culture. "We are doing this so our members have opportunities," says director of operations Christina Clarke.

— ROBERT MORRIS



BOOK REVIEW
THE POWER OF PULSES: SAVING THE WORLD WITH PEAS, BEANS, CHICKPEAS, FAVAS & LENTILS
 BY: DAN JASON, HILARY MALONE AND ALISON MALONE EATHORNE

I LOVE CHICKPEAS. I EAT THEM ALL the time, but I've never thought that much about it. The authors of *The Power of Pulses* (Douglas & McIntyre,

2016) along with the United Nations—which declared 2016 the International Year of the Pulses—want me and everyone else to think more about them. Why? Chickpeas and other pulses could hold a key to healing our planet.

These drought-resistant, soil-enriching, easy-to-grow super-foods have been a staple around the world for millennia. They've yet to catch on in Canada, however, even though our prairie farmers grow and export a large amount of the world's supply. Replacing meat consumption and saving seeds are ways way each of us can reduce the impact of our food system on climate change.

In the book's first half, Dan Jason, the owner of Salt Spring Seeds, takes readers through the global history of pulses and explains how to plant, harvest, prepare, and store each type. Hilary Malone and Alison Malone Eathorne, sisters and food experts, fill the second half with 50 recipes, with vegan and gluten-free options, that will make you look at beans and lentils in a whole new light.

Our Year of the Pulses may be drawing to an end, but this book proves why these powerful foods should become a staple of our future—that is, if we want a future.

— QUINN MACDONALD



MAGAZINE REVIEW
RENDER FEMINIST FOOD & CULTURE QUARTERLY
 WWW.RENDERFOODMAG.COM

RENDER FEMINIST FOOD & Culture Quarterly is a print magazine and blog on a mission to smash the patriarchy in the food industry. Gabi de León, the creative and editorial director,

founded *Render* as a platform for feminist voices in the vast boys' club of food writing. Its focus on a gendered analysis and spotlighting women in food is welcome within the industry and in the ways we write about it.

Render is available in multiple formats, including the quarterly print magazine, the digital copy of the mag, and online through a blog. Each issue applies a feminist lens to an important theme—like history, roots, or flesh—with short profiles, Q&As, longer features, and interviews with women in the food movement. Recent profiles include Momofuku's beverage director Jordan Salcito and famed Seattle chef and restaurant owner Renee Erickson.

On the blog, you can read featured articles from the print version, thoughtful essays about important sites of feminist thinking (like the role of self-care in food work), and recipes, tips, and tricks. The project is volunteer-run from the heart of *Render* crew, which means no advertising or commercial editorial, and funding coming directly from subscriptions, donations, and crowdfunding.

— DIANDRA OLIVER



**GROWTH.
 WE ENCOURAGE IT.**

NEW BOOKS FROM
Douglas & McIntyre

Victory Gardens for Bees
A DIY Guide to Saving the Bees

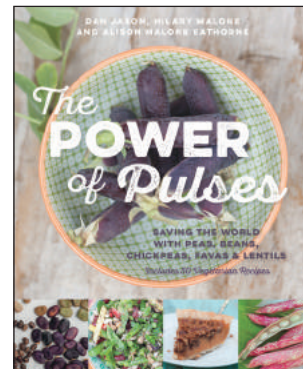
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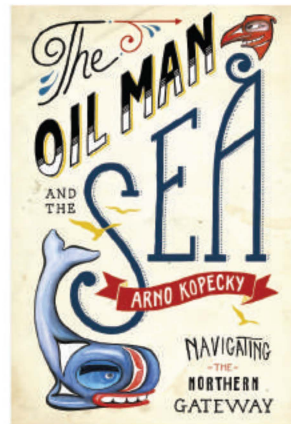
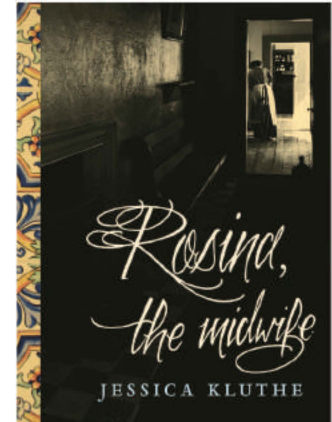


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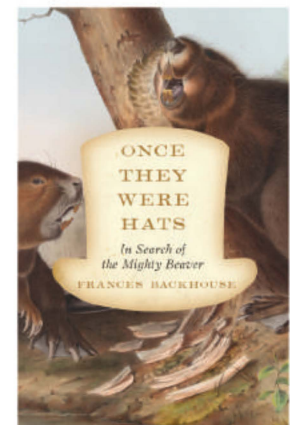
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