CONCRETE GARDEN

SUSTAINABLE // URBAN // AGRICULTURE

WINTER 2015

To Buy Or Not To Buy

Counting the cost of certified organic

TRUCKING AROUND

Food trucks struggle to fit into downtown Victoria

LOCKED OUT

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Catching up with J.B. MacKinnon

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Letter From the Editor

Finding the Good News

Photo: Michael Stevens

It's hard to avoid feeling helpless when reading the headlines from 2014. One international calamity followed another while our leaders seemed to lack the political will to make the necessary changes to avoid environmental catastrophe. The federal government approved the Northern Gateway pipeline, despite urgent calls for action from the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and the B.C. Liberals turned a deaf ear to Indigenous voices and other objections as they approved the unnecessary Site C dam, which will flood some of the province's best farmland.

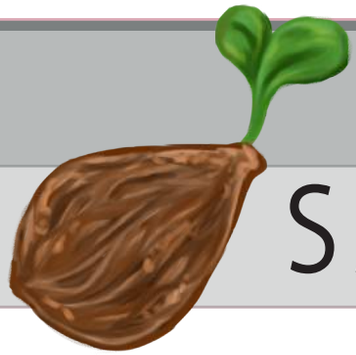
Most media will give you all the bad news you can handle, but at *Concrete Garden* we want to show you the people in your own community who are already creating the solutions to these problems. Author J.B. MacKinnon certainly knows how to create positive change, and our Sasha Gronsdahl sits down with the original 100-mile dieter to learn what he's focused on now. In our Sustainable Structures section, we see how Royal Roads University is years ahead of other post-secondary institutions on cutting emissions.

A new year is also a time to reflect more deeply about the decisions we make. In our cover story, "To Buy or Not to Buy," Britny Martlin navigates the complex process of organic certification and the financial strain it puts on both farmers and consumers. Our new issue also investigates the bureaucracy that holds back local food trucks and how locked grocery dumpsters symbolize our society's misguided attitude toward food waste.

Magazines are a lot of work, and we are lucky enough to have writers and editors who dedicate their time. Bad news persists in the publishing world as well, and just as we showcase environmental solutions, we provide a resource that proves the value of print media and gives new and emerging writers a shot in a tough market.

We hope this issue inspires you to look into the good things that are already happening in your community. And we hope you'll stick with *Concrete Garden* as we continue to grow.

— Quinn MacDonald



SEEDY SATURDAY

Banish the winter blues and get ready for growing season with a favourite local event

"What do I get excited for?" asks Pat McGuire, organizer of Seedy Saturday for the past 15 years. "Putting together a great presentation line-up, filling the hall with diverse exhibits, seeing the long line prior to opening, the unceasing traffic flow over six hours, [and] the ceaseless flow of conversation and happy people."

If you're looking to get inspired for the upcoming spring growing season, look no further than the 18th annual Seedy Saturday. Hosted by the James Bay Market Society, Seedy Saturday is a hybrid event—part gardening conference and trade show, part community get-together, with a smattering of educational workshops and children's activities thrown into the mix. The event is a gardener's dream, providing commerce and networking opportunities to green thumbs from all backgrounds and experience.

The first Seedy Saturday event was founded in Vancouver 23 years ago, by Seeds of Diversity Canada, a non-profit organization that preserves a seed library of nearly 2,400 often rare, non-hybrid seed varieties.

"The event's purpose," explains McGuire, "is to promote the saving of seeds, to keep as many seed varieties in the hands of the public. Whoever controls the seed, controls the food supply."

McGuire informs me that many small seed companies across North America have been bought out by large corporations like Monsanto, DuPont, and Syngenta. These commercial seed banks genetically modify seed for large-scale crop production.

"Seedy Saturday—or Sunday—events are the small farmers' and community's push-back to this concentration of seed production and its harmful impact on farmers' livelihoods–and citizen health overall," says McGuire.

First held in a school basement, Victoria's Seedy Saturday is 22 years old. As attendance tripled, the event graduated to a community centre and, finally, the Victoria Conference Centre on Douglas Street.

Seedy Saturday celebrates gardening that is sustainable, organic, and openly pollinated. Local, independent growers showcase B.C. plants, heritage and specialty seeds, and vegetables. Small nurseries offer succulents, seedlings, and even fruit trees, while businesses specializing in garden and food products also hold a place at the festival. If you're eager to sample on the spot, the Seedy Café boasts a menu ripe with fresh, local foods.

The local and regional seed vendors are either certified organic or non-certified small farmers. "There are no multinational seed companies represented, because this event, along with others on the Island and nationwide, serves to highlight the need to support local growers whose seeds are generally more resilient and adapted to the immediate region," says McGuire. Seed buyers at the festival have direct contact with the growers, who are able to assist in variety selection and specific growing needs.

This festival is open to all gardening enthusiasts, from novice to pro. The educational component consists of gardening workshops, information displays on different growing methods, and speakers who are keen to pass on their tips and tricks. After a successful debut at last year's festival, the used gardening book exchange allows guests to swap their best resources with other gardening hopefuls.

McGuire describes the Community Seed Exchange as the heart of the event–your chance to stock up on organic, local seeds for a variety of fruits and vegetables. "Gardeners are encouraged to save their own seeds and bring them for contribution or exchange," he says. "Here's where many a novice gardener has started their love affair with gardening."

— Rachel Lallouz

This year, Seedy Saturday takes place on Saturday, February 21, at the Victoria Conference Centre, 720 Douglas Street, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tickets are $7 cash at the door. Anyone under 16 is free.

For more information visit: jamesbaymarket.com

Illustration: Samantha Crawford

Stephan Drolet at Camille's

45 Bastion Square 45 Bastion Square, Victoria

Photos: Hannah Golding

You wouldn't guess from his impressive list of cooking accolades that Stephan Drolet didn't always aspire to be a professional chef. While working in small restaurants in Toronto, Drolet hoped to make it big with his punk bank, the Jitrags. But in 1996 he moved to Whistler and his focus shifted from music to food. "To this day I draw a lot of similarities from composing a song to composing a plate," he says.

Drolet worked with the Milestones group for a number of years before shifting to the Bearfoot Bistro in Whistler. There, he grew as a cook under the mentorship of chef Melissa Craig.

After relocating to Victoria in 2007, Drolet was hired as head chef at Camille's Restaurant in Bastion Square. In 2012, he and his wife, Jamie Williams, bought the restaurant from David Mincie. Last year, Camille's won *Vancouver Magazine's* award for best Victoria restaurant.

Camille's is located in a Rattenbury building, erected in 1898, that has a history of restaurants. In the elegantly decorated—and supposedly haunted—dining room, Drolet explains the fiercely seasonal nature of his style of cooking. "What I like most about seasonal cooking is knowing that you're working closely with people in the area," he says. "It's really satisfying to know that you're helping promote a sustainable cycle."

The menu at Camille's includes local seafood and island-raised meat, and changes depending on what comes in and out of season. "Even though your cucumbers might end abruptly," Drolet says, "you know that they're coming from here, and I think that comes through in the flavour."

— Adrian Paradis

Recipe

Cooked Red Heirloom Squash Soup, with Blistered Brussel Sprouts, Cranberries and Brown Butter

Ingredients

- 120 mL vegetable oil
- 15 mL maple syrup
- 10 g fresh ginger
- 10 g cinnamon stick
- 6 g star anise, whole
- 2 g allspice berries
- 1 large leek, rinsed, cut only whites and pale greens
- 2 medium yellow onion
- 1 large carrot
- 1 medium serrano pepper
- 2 sprigs each: thyme, savoury, cilantro
- 60 mL soy sauce
- 30 mL Nama Shoyu (white soy sauce)
- 30 mL pumpkin seed oil
- 15 mL sherry vinegar
- 1 medium red kuri squash (or heirloom variety of your choosing)
- 3 L water

- Preheat oven to 220°C/425°F. Cut red kuri squash in half and scoop out seeds. (Reserve seeds to roast if desired.) Sprinkle with oil, salt, and pepper and place cut side down on a parchment-lined baking sheet.
- While that's baking, sweat butternut squash in an open pan with 1 yellow onion and 15 mL vegetable oil until onions are translucent, not browned. Add water and bring to a simmer, then cover. Turn heat to lowest setting and simmer until squash is softened. This should take approximately 30 to 45 minutes. Set aside with cover, allowing the flavour to mature. When ready for use, strain and reserve liquid and squash pulp.
- At the same time, start braising soup base. Tie dry spices together in a cheesecloth square, or "sachet." Put aside. In a large pot, heat remaining vegetable oil on medium and add maple syrup. Bring to a light amber colour and add vegetables. Roast until aromatic and add spice sachet. Add butternut squash pulp and stir often.
- Red kuri squash will be ready when you can easily pierce outside with a paring knife. Remove from oven and cool. When you are able, scoop the meat out of the squash and add to pot. Stir and cover with butternut squash stock. Add herbs and simmer for another 15 minutes. Purée with stick blender.
- Season with soy sauces, vinegar, and pumpkin seed oil. Add all of these ingredients gradually, and taste often. It's easier to correct under-seasoned soups than over-seasoned ones. When seasoned to your taste, set soup aside until you are ready to serve. I find a soup is even better after it has cooled overnight and the flavours have had a chance to meld and mature together—I think you'll agree.

For garnish instructions, visit concretegarden.ca

Uchida Eatery

633 Courtney Street / Downtown Victoria

Far removed from the grocery store California roll, Uchida Eatery offers a new take on authentic, locally sourced Japanese food with a menu that changes daily and with the seasons.

Uchida might offer the best Japanese food in Victoria, but getting a table can mean idling in long lunch lines. It's only open from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m, and finding the restaurant feels at first like entering the depths of the nearby Bug Zoo.

Inside, the restaurant's cozy room welcomes visitors with high ceilings, exposed-brick walls, wooden décor, an open kitchen and a view to one very busy cook. After sitting down, I ordered the daily brew of tea—a fantastic Hojicha variety—that comes from the Uchida's neighbour, JagaSilk Teabar. While the specials run out quickly, Uchida also offers a selection of don rice bowls, onigiri rice balls, and vegetable side dishes. Most ingredients are organic and local, and Umi Nami Farm in Metchosin supplies much of their Japanese produce.

My friends and I arrived early enough to catch the day's special: local sockeye steamed in a basket. Under the salmon sat a tinfoil-wrapped package filled with chopped onion, shishito peppers, bean sprouts, and a buttery, citrusy ponzu sauce. A cold salad of cooked Japanese mustard spinach and chard accompanied the dish, along with a side of slightly sweet egg tofu.

The fish was moist and flavourful. The egg tofu had a feathery texture. Its slight sweetness reminded me of custard pudding, while the lingering saltiness puzzled my westernized palate. The nutty Hojicha tea complemented everything in the meal, especially the final course of tofu pudding.

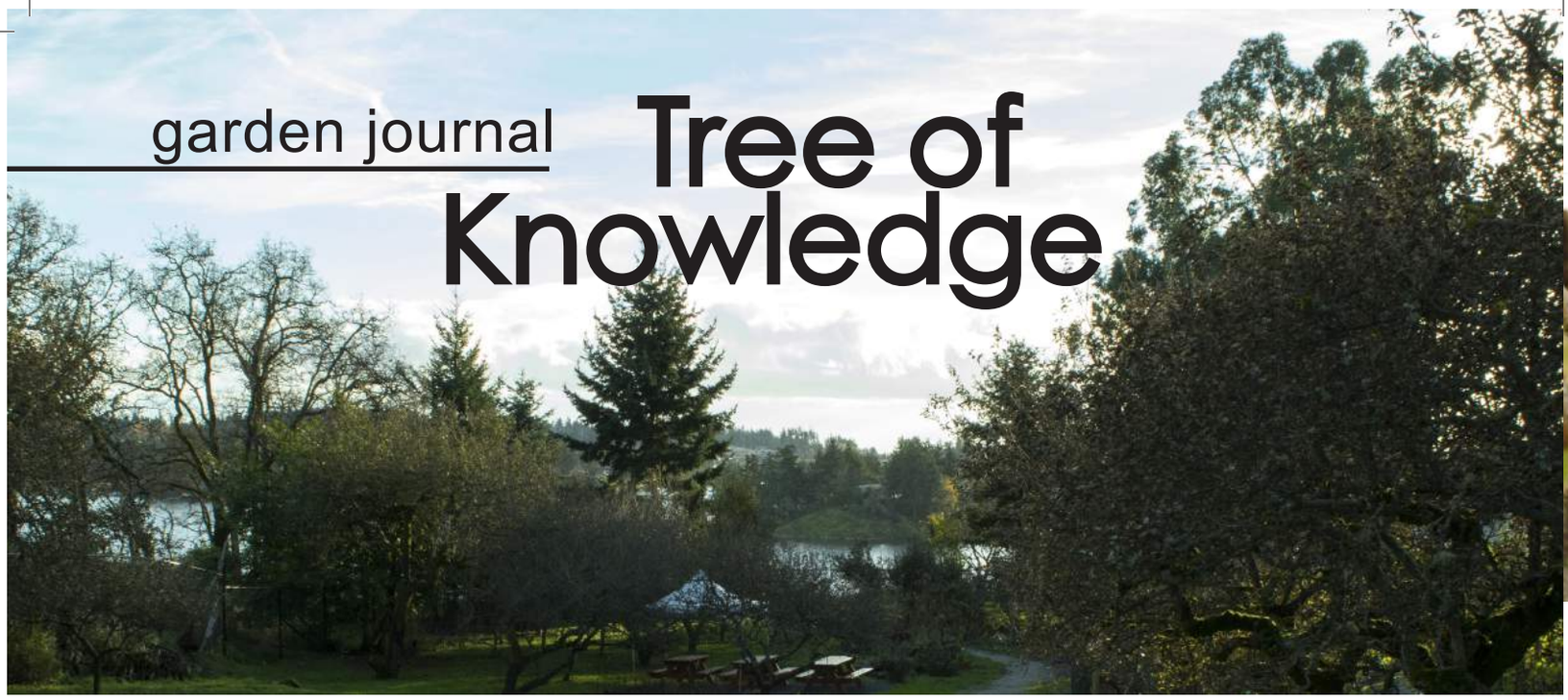
Including tea, sticky rice and miso, my filling meal came to $16.50. As the lunchtime rush peaked, I tried to get take-out for my partner, but both the daily special and the free-range barbecued chicken were gone. The servers suggested a side dish called cha-shu chicken or "chicken ham."

Friends, let me tell you, you haven't lived until you've tried chicken ham!

Back home, I couldn't resist my partner's meal—even though I had just eaten a filling lunch—and the chicken was even softer than my salmon. The next time I go to Uchida I know that, even if the coveted specials have run out, I can still explore its menu of equally delectable side dishes.

— Adrian Paradis

Photos: Hannah Golding



garden journal

Tree of Knowledge

The Welland Legacy Park Orchard shares the fruits of one man's conservation efforts

by Heather Neale Furneaux

I've decided to plant peach trees in my yard.

In the few years since I'd started gardening, I had slowly mastered the easy stuff—growing already started lettuce plants, tying snap peas to wooden stakes so they won't resemble my two-year-old daughter's tangled hair. Now I'm a bit cocky. This summer, I grew a handsome crop of English cucumbers. They made for scrumptious cuke-and-cream cheese sandwiches and impressed dinner guests when dressed up in tabbouleh, in a bulgur-based salad replete with tomatoes, green onions, and lemon juice.

So, this fall, I'm thinking it's time for a new adventure. And fruit might just be the ticket.

LifeCycles Project Society inspired me. The local non-profit organization promotes urban agriculture through various initiatives, including a seed library, school programs, educational resources, and its latest venture. The town of View Royal awarded LifeCycles the contract to develop two-thirds of an acre of donated land into a fruit tree orchard.

The late Rex Welland, a long-time conservation activist, had donated this prime real estate. The View Royal resident was known for his work eradicating invasive plant species at Knockan Hill Park, building trails, and promoting the importance of native pollinators to our ecosystem. He tended a fruit and vegetable garden behind his house near the Saanich border and he wanted it used as a community resource after he was gone. When he died in 2008, his family worked with The Land Conservancy to fulfill his wish. View Royal then contracted LifeCycles as the property's keeper.

Nestled behind the Galloping Goose trail, the garden houses more than 100 varieties of apples. The orchard also includes pears, plums, figs, grapes, kiwi, and quince. Then there are trees and fruits I couldn't identify if my life depended upon it: pawpaw, hazelnut, pluot, persimmon, and the curious medlar fruit referenced in many a Shakespearean play.

"View Royal was very progressive in contracting us to develop this project," says Matthew Kemshaw, the former urban agriculture coordinator at LifeCycles who helped coordinate the orchard project. The goal is to teach community members about planting, growing, pruning, and maintaining fruit trees—both in the orchard and throughout the city.

Over the past year, LifeCycles' staff and volunteers built a covered teaching area, a composting toilet, a shed, an irrigation system, and signage. They identified pathways to and through the orchard to enable fruit collection with the help of arborist Michael Cowan from Edibella Organic Landscapes. LifeCycles also established a volunteer drop-in program called Work Bees, which encourages community members to visit every second Sunday.

"The orchard is a cool place to come together and be together in community," says Kemshaw, who has since moved to Vancouver. "Facebook is able to connect people in one way, but the orchard experience is so much richer."

And I agree. I thrive when spending time in the garden with my husband, my daughter, and my mother-in-law, who is a serious green thumb and wealth of encouraging information. Before planting trees of my own, I headed out to Welland Legacy Park Orchard to connect with the local know-how there.

Photos: Mike Parolini

The leafy branches of two spindly apple trees frame a view of Portage Inlet from across the Patricia Bay Highway. Sunshine glistens over the ocean's surface navigated by a lone paddle boarder. It's a balmy summer Sunday at Welland Legacy Park Orchard. More than a dozen volunteers buzz around the site, harvesting grapes, collecting fallen fruit for the compost, and learning about the habits and habitats of local pollinators.

A warm sense of community seems rooted among the trees. Every person I speak with exudes a passion for sustaining green space, stretching food supply, and ensuring prolonged food security. I wonder if I'm at Disneyland and all employees must wear permanent grins. But then, no one is being paid. So that can't be right.

Two corgis yip beneath an apple tree, as two twenty-somethings shovel dirt and discuss university programs. A young mother reaches into the grape vines while her six- or seven-year-old daughter moves the basket closer to her feet.

In the centre of the orchard, a man sits at a sun-speckled picnic table. He holds what looks like a shoebox full of dust bunnies. He's talking to a small audience, who seem intent on what he's saying. As I get closer, I learn the dust bunnies are mason-bee cocoons.

The man is local bee enthusiast Brian Yeo. He explains the hatching process and teaches the others about how to develop habitats for these important pollinators and keep them safe from mites. These solitary bees intuitively know to deposit female and male eggs separately to aid in breeding. "Isn't it absolutely incredible how nature is so complete!" marvels a middle-aged woman in a sunhat.

Yeo moves the box towards me for a better look at the bees. He has constructed a number of bee condos—like a row of small wooden mailboxes—around the orchard to help pollination. Some species of fruit tree cannot self-pollinate, so it's important to attract pollen-carriers to keep the orchard flourishing. Bees were another issue close to Rex Welland's heart. He believed in the superior effects of native pollinators, according to View Royal city councillor John Rogers, who volunteered at Knockan Hill Park and knew Welland well. "I am sure Rex would be very happy and relieved that his legacy will continue to flourish and serve the community for years to come," says Rogers.

My trip to the Welland Legacy Park Orchard opened my eyes to more than I expected. Not only did I see an array of fruit-tree species, but I also got to better understand the entire growing cycle, from planting to pollination to plucking those juicy wonders for a snack. What struck me most, however, was how this haven had developed a community of service-oriented, big-picture thinkers. It's a reminder of what a small group of people can create when they turn off their iPhones and work together for a greater good.

I walked away inspired to plant my peach trees, and to come back and show the good folks at LifeCycles the fruits of my labour. With any luck, by this time next year I'll be finishing off my tabbouleh with a fresh peach cobbler.

WHY IS VICTORIA STAYING HUNGRY WHILE OTHER CITIES ENJOY A MOVEABLE FEAST?

By Adrian Paradis

Despite the downpour of rain, Paulina Tokarski's Hungry Rooster food truck, outside Pearkes Recreation Centre, is slammed. Customers crowd around the makeshift tent, lured by the smells of sizzling sausage and pierogi. Some come back for seconds of the truck's traditional Polish fare. They have to get in while they can—they may not be able to find the truck tomorrow.

Victoria's food culture operates on the cutting edge of culinary trends, from Crust Bakery's cronuts to the gourmet burger at the Pink Bicycle. Yet, while many North American cities are reveling in a golden age of food trucks, Victoria's mobile restaurants are struggling to stay afloat.

For a food truck to operate in the city of Victoria, the parking spot must be on private property zoned for commercial use. This restriction limits where the trucks can park downtown. According to Tokarski, the hardest part of running a food truck is not acquiring customers, but finding a spot to park the vehicle. Like many owners, she believes that Victoria has all the elements to be a fantastic food truck city. "It's not because there aren't people who want it," she says. "We have an amazing following who want the trucks. It's just that we're not allowed to move around a lot."

Other cities have discovered that a balance between restaurants and food trucks can benefit everyone. Vancouver's city council has worked for years with food truck vendors to create a vibrant culinary street scene. By increasing the number of available permits, as well as possible parking spots, Vancouver now boasts over 100 licensed street food vendors. (Victoria has around 25) *Travel and Escape* recently rated Vancouver the third best food truck city in North America,

behind Portland, Oregon and Austin, Texas.

Vancouver has a history of street food. While conventional snacks like roasted chestnuts and popcorn have been around for decades, it wasn't until Expo '86 when the city expanded roadside offerings. In 2010, the city ran a trial program of 17 possible licenses to expand the limits of food truck permits. After the successful yearlong trial, all 17 licensing options were added to the regular street vending program.

In the summer of 2013, a municipal survey asked residents about the future of food trucks in Vancouver. Overwhelmingly, Vancouverites wished to see more trucks, especially in the Chinatown and Gastown areas. Not a single vote was cast to see fewer food trucks in any area of Vancouver.

Despite the street-food trend across the Georgia Strait, Ken Kelly, general manager of the Downtown Victoria Business Association (DVBA), opposes food trucks in Victoria's downtown core. "These vehicles are absolutely fantastic for special events," he says. "But special events that are normally out of the downtown area—offsite, where there is no immediate, readily available or convenient food sources." There are approximately 265 cafes, bars, and restaurants and a total of 1,450 businesses in downtown Victoria.

Kelly agrees that food trucks bring certain energy, but he insists that vibrancy already exists in the downtown core. "Fads come and go," he cautions. "We have got to be mindful that what we're trying to create is business sustainability, not flash-in-a-pan opportunities that appear then suddenly disappear."

Fortunately for the food trucks, Victoria's new mayor, Lisa Helps, feels differently. "It's ridiculous that we don't have food trucks in public spaces," she said before the recent election. She supported food trucks as a city

Photo: Mike Parolini

Use the Victoria Street Food app to find the food truck nearest you, at http://streetfoodapp.com/victoria

councilor and helped Karrie Hill start the Dead Beetz food truck through her Community Micro Lending organization.

"We like to think of ourselves as innovators and a leading-edge community," says Helps, "but we're so far behind Portland and Vancouver in this regard."

In the past, cities without food truck regulations, such as San Francisco and Washington, D.C., faced conflict when pods of food trucks gathered too close to existing restaurants and upset their owners.

"A lot of things are hard for the City to do," says Helps. "It's hard to rebuild Crystal Pool, or create a plan for the Inner Harbour. It's not hard to get food trucks in Victoria. We have the parking space, we have the willing food truck vendors, and we have the local food scene. Everything points in the direction of just doing it".

> "WE LIKE TO THINK OF OURSELVES AS INNOVATORS AND A LEADING-EDGE COMMUNITY, BUT WE'RE SO FAR BEHIND PORTLAND AND VANCOUVER IN THIS REGARD"
>
> — Mayor Lisa Helps

With around 600 active food service licenses, Victoria is clearly a city that welcomes good food. Yet the congested restaurant scene also makes any young aspiring chef think twice before investing in a brick and mortar establishment. Opening up a food truck, however, allows new chefs to start a business with lower investment—and lower risk.

After working as a chef for over 20 years, Hill did just that. In 2013, she opened up Dead Beetz, a giant purple vehicle graffitied with walking zombie beets—or what she calls "zombeetz." Dead Beetz gave Hill the opportunity to cook locally sourced food how she wanted. "Young and talented chefs have the chance to put their food out there at a lower startup cost and with a little less risk than going into a brick establishment," she says.

Beyond the freedom in employment, Hill says that food trucks bring a sense of community that can't be found anywhere else. "Food trucks take an urban space that would be dead and make it into an event or meeting place," she says.

A myth persists that a truck can park anywhere and make money hand over fist, but Hill challenges this misperception. "[Business owners] think it is taking money away from them," she says. "But really you are in an arrangement. You pay a rental fee and it actually brings people around."

Hill stresses that trucks are often in partnership with the landowners whose property they park on. Truck vendors either pay a rental fee for the space or share profits with the landowners.

Back on the street, Hill's sentiments reflect the public mood. Victoria local Jesse Heaslip stopped by Dead Beetz. He says he often visits food trucks at events but wishes there were more downtown. "People don't always want to sit down to lunch," he said, "and trucks would work hand in hand with the stores in attracting more people and allowing them to stay downtown longer."

There is still hope for that endangered species—the Victorian food truck, and the city's new mayor sounds confident. "Food trucks have this intangible feeling to them," says Lisa Helps. "They are something that a restaurant is not. It's not better or worse than a restaurant, but they have some kind of indescribable feel good thing that they bring with them."

Perhaps the people of Victoria will be able to revel in the age of food trucks as so many other cities enjoy. Until then, you can bet that residents will keep lining up to get pierogis from Tokarski's Hungry Rooster.

"They are a hit in the States, they are a hit in Vancouver," she says. "I think Victoria needs to open up a little bit and let us in."

Photos: Mike Parolini

NO Diving Allowed

Victoria's dumpster gleaning policies tarnish its green image

By Rachel Lallouz

I had high hopes for my first dumpster diving mission in Victoria, a city that heralds itself as eco-friendly and politically liberal. But as I rounded the corner of the Quadra Street Thrifty's parking lot, I realized I might need to downgrade my expectations.

Looming metal compressors backed directly into the rear exits of the store. Green plastic milk crates were stacked high around them, empty of anything edible, save for the stains and smears of old vegetables and fruit. In the far corner of the alleyway, two dumpsters were bolted shut with rusting locks. There were no cracks in this glean-proof system. I left uneasily, as video cameras mounted above the shipping doors eyed my retreat.

Dumpster diving has a bleak future in Victoria. As reported by *Monday Magazine*, the Fernwood Urban Gleaners Group noted the predicament in February 2012, when one of the city's last major commercial dumpsters at the Hillside Thrifty's was locked.

"There should be rules and regulations for how these companies deal with their 'waste,'" says Chris Starr, who at 24 is an experienced urban forager. "This is the fact: it isn't waste. The word 'waste' masks what the food actually is: nutritious and wholesome."

My next stop was the Fairway Market. In its lane, the familiar scent of spoiled goods wafted through the air, but there was no trace of any food. I saw no dumpsters, only more food

compactors. All refuse was kept inside of the building.

I was disappointed but not yet defeated. My last destination held the most hope: The Root Cellar, a business that I had heard supported dumpster diving. Once again, I rounded the back of the store, only to come face-to-face with a pair of high chain-link gates, locked dumpsters sitting securely behind them. A tray of withered greens sat on the ground—chicken feed.

According to a 2014 report from the University of Western Ontario's Ivey Business School, a single year of Canadian food waste totals $27 billion. Though grocery store food waste can be composted, it often ends up as landfill. Wasted food that is landfilled or composted totals 40 per cent of the food annually produced in Canada—and that's not counting losses accumulated during food processing or production. Food waste is linked to water and energy waste, both of which are key in food transportation and preparation. Greenhouse gas emissions created as part of food production must also be factored into the effects food wastage has on our environment.

"Dumpster diving itself reflects poor food management," says Starr, "and the unequal access to food in our society, which in turn speaks to the quarter of the population that has to do this. From my experience, it's mostly people in their twenties who dumpster dive, and it isn't hard to figure out why."

For some post-secondary students, dumpster diving is a necessary means of balancing out exorbitant tuition fees and living costs. Organizations like the Fernwood Urban Gleaners, who keep a low profile, have relied on dumpster diving to feed families and older members in the community. For those who rely on it, the prospect of this free food supply being entirely cut off is a daunting one. Alex C. (full name withheld), a diver of over four years and recent UVic graduate, tells me that diving was a way to survive university. He emphasizes the benefits of diving.

"As a regular diver, I ate a lot more with the seasons than I would have any other way," says Alex. "And there's the communal aspect of diving, too. If you're going to be dumpster diving, you have to be respectful. There's definitely etiquette that comes with it."

Starr recalls a diving mission where he worked in unison with another group of divers who showed up at the same time. "We had conversations about sharing food, about being considerate. We split the loot."

Dumpster divers, frowned upon by mainstream society, have begun to develop underground social networks. According to its website, Food Not Bombs, an organization of independent food recovery collectives with a Victoria chapter, aims to "recover food that would otherwise be thrown out, mak[ing] fresh, hot vegan and vegetarian meals, served

A single year of Canadian food waste costs $27 billion

Photo: Meredith Olsen-Maier

in public places to anyone without restriction." The grassroots movement functions throughout North America, Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. In Victoria, the collective receives food donations from local organic farms.

Other divers, or "freegans", work independently to salvage edible goods and to reduce their ecological footprints. For Starr, diving is a form of resistance against capitalist food production—the systemic overproduction and waste of food.

Since commercial food retailers conform to, and reinforce, society's current means of food consumption, retailers may perceive diving as threat to the current system of food production that they rely on.

"Diving is seen as an immoral act," says Starr, "one which is being repressed and condemned and stigmatized. But for divers, to not eat the wasted food is unethical."

representatives for Thrifty Foods, Save-On Foods, and Fairway Market declined to comment on the dumpster diving policies of their stores. Store managers of The Root Cellar, and Planet Organic were also unwilling to disclose their opinions on diving. It seems that to confront the issue of dumpster diving would mean acknowledging the food waste generated by their stores.

Meghan Thompson, a former employee of a Surrey Thrifty's, remembers the resistant attitude of her store manager towards dumpster divers.

"We had actual issues trying to keep people out of our dumpsters," Thompson explains. "I remember the store manager complaining about it at length." On one occasion, her supervisor got into an argument with a diver. "A young woman had refused to stop diving when he told her to do so. He could not figure out why she wouldn't stop diving."

Shawn Parkhouse, previous store manager of the Thrifty's on Hillside, is concerned about potential health risks that he associates with diving.

"Everything in [a] dumpster is there for a reason, and it would be impossible to call any of it safe," says Parkhouse. "There's no way to know what it went through, maybe the cooling system stopped working, or what it's mixed in with: did someone throw bleach water on top of it in the dumpster?"

While Canadian food retailers dismiss the importance of dumpster diving, French supermarket Intermarché does not. Earlier this year, France's third-largest supermarket chain launched the "Inglorious Fruits and Vegetables" campaign, featuring glossy, colourful photographs

of produce cast-offs. The purpose is simple: to combat food waste by selling misshapen produce in stores at a reduced price to customers. Intermarché now enjoys a consumer increase of 24 per cent.

Victoria doesn't need a grocery store as radical as Intermarché to slow down food waste. The average commercial retailer could alter pre-existing policies to reduce the amount of good food that is binned. Grocery stores could also reduce the abundance of fresh food presented to shoppers. The only catch might be a few empty shelves. Stores could also relax the constraints on donating food to charitable organizations. In October 1996, the United States implemented the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act, which minimizes the liability of food retailers when donating to non-profits. Most Canadian provinces passed "Good Samaritan" laws in the 1990s that absolved donors of liability, but there is no federal legislation.

We can't forget that consumers hold power, too. If we can bring ourselves to take a bite from a bruised apple, or peel away the skin from an oblong orange—if we can recognize that, as customers of commercial food retailers, we are supporters, then we can make choices to buy responsibly.

While stores like Planet Organic and The Root Cellar capitalize off of a "green" image, their unwillingness to support or address dumpster diving seems incompatible with their attempts to act as eco-friendly, alternative food resources. "Victoria is being held up as a progressive city," says Starr. "But we need to call for a new way of dealing with waste."

I turned away from The Root Cellar's high metal gates and locked dumpsters, and passed the tray of dried-up greens. I rounded the side of the store, up the sidewalk, and past the rows of shopping carts. Bending to wrestle a basket from a pile on the ground, I straightened and took a step forward. The automatic glass door slid open, welcoming me to bright-lit aisles of tagged and perfectly arranged produce—waiting to go to waste.

DUMPSTER DIVING TIPS

Follow this advice to harvest a free meal

- Wear rubber gloves, rain boots, and loose clothes
- Bring individual freezer bags and plastic bags to separate and store retrieved food. Don't forget your flashlight!
- Research the closing hours of specific stores, and head out to dive after they have officially closed
- Dive with a friend. A dumpster diving helper can assist you in and out of dumpsters, aim the flashlight, and hold your treasure bags open while you rummage
- If your dumpster is a diving hotspot, remember to leave a portion of food for other divers
- If you're planning on diving routinely, keep track of successful and unsuccessful diving missions: how much food was gathered? What type? What was the time and day of the week?

To Buy or Not to Buy

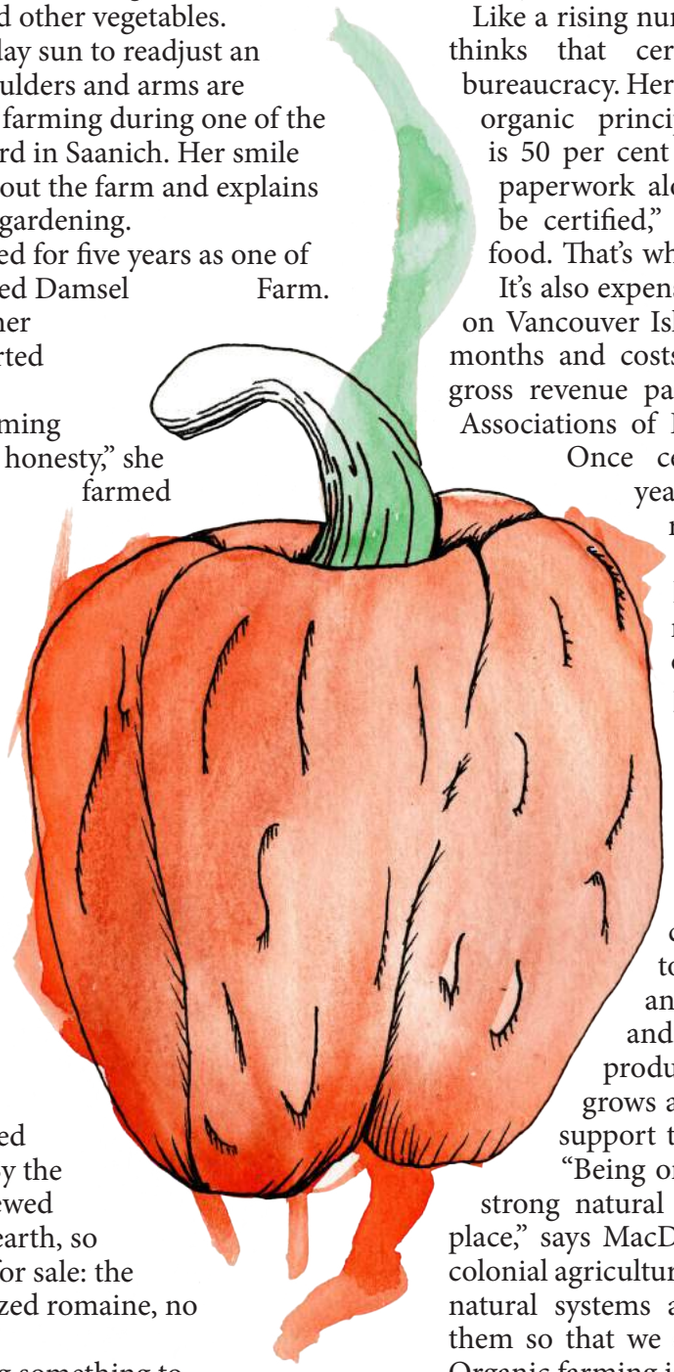
The controversial question of certified organic

By Britny Martlin

Illustrations: Samantha Wey

Shellie MacDonald wears her curly blonde hair in a loose bun. Her brown leather boots crunch the dirt as she walks through the rows of lettuce, kale, and other vegetables. She kneels in the noonday sun to readjust an irrigation tube. Her shoulders and arms are tanned from months of farming during one of the driest summers on record in Saanich. Her smile widens as she speaks about the farm and explains her passion for organic gardening.

MacDonald has worked for five years as one of two tenant farmers at Red Damsel Farm. Growing food reduces her grocery bill, but she started farming for more than economic reasons. "Farming draws me because of its honesty," she says. "My grandparents farmed and gardened. My granny ran an egg-grading station out of her front porch. My poppa maintained an orchard and a butcher shop. It was good for them."



Her love of farming embraces eight acres of Red Damsel Farm and lets her laugh at misfortune. She points to a low row of lettuce. One morning, she had posted a picture on Facebook with the comment: "knee-high red romaine ready to go!" By the next day, a deer had chewed the crop back down to earth, so she updated her post: "for sale: the whole field of regular sized romaine, no tips included."

"It's not about growing something to perfection," she says. "It's about the miracle in the moment."

But there is a paradox to MacDonald's miracle. The farm stand at the entrance to the property promises "Local Produce — Organically Grown." Red Damsel Farm, however, is not officially certified as organic, except for a small corner in which MacDonald raises flowers for wedding planners.

Why not?

Like a rising number of growers, MacDonald thinks that certification isn't worth the bureaucracy. Her entire farm is operated under organic principles. "Organic certification is 50 per cent more labour because of the paperwork alone and you have to pay to be certified," she says. "I'm just growing food. That's what organic farming is about."

It's also expensive. The certification process on Vancouver Island takes a minimum of 12 months and costs $355, plus a fee based on gross revenue paid to the Certified Organic Associations of British Columbia (COABC). Once certified, farmers must pay yearly fees to both Canadian and regional certification bodies.

MacDonald explains how healthy soil and plants require biodiversity. She uses crop rotation, which keeps pests from destroying an entire area without using pesticide and lets the soil be aerated in multiple ways, depending on root structures. She also grows specific plants to attract certain bugs: flowering plants to attract pollinators or chard and radishes to lure earwigs and pill bugs away from market produce. Many of the plants she grows aren't for eating; instead, they support the farm's organic ecosystem.

"Being organic is about working with strong natural systems that are already in place," says MacDonald. "Instead of imposing colonial agricultural ideas, work with the strong natural systems and see if you can support them so that we do less to the environment."

Organic farming is part of the larger process of moving our food production away from large-scale industrial agriculture and "monocropping" in favour of a more holistic method that considers both human and environmental health. While the organic label separates some products from their potentially harmful counterparts, the struggle to become and remain certified organic distracts

Ali Ryan, head chef of Spinnakers

Photo: Dean Azim

from larger agricultural issues and continues to leave consumers in the dark about what nutrition they're getting and where their money goes.

While farmers such as MacDonald have farmed organically for centuries, the movement to legitimize organic farming practices is fairly new.

In the 1980s, farmers founded the first organic societies across Canada. Different regions' organic standards developed separately until there was a move to institutionalize organic farming. Certification institutions sprung up across the country, and in 1993 the Certified Organic Associations of British Columbia (COABC) emerged to link multiple certification bodies and ensure consistent standards across all farms.

COABC defines organic farming as "an agricultural production system that promotes and enhances biological diversity [that] is based on minimal use of off-farm inputs and on management practices that restore, maintain, and enhance ecological harmony." Today, all certification organizations and affiliated bodies follow the 2006 Canadian Organic Standards, which regulate organic production.

COABC has developed smaller certification bodies in order to target specific areas of B.C. On Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands, the task of certifying organic farms falls to the Islands Organic Producers Association (IOPA). Beyond organic production, IOPA promotes local food security by only certifying farms that sell their products locally. If farmers want to export to the United States or resellers, they have to use a different certifying body.

Haliburton Community Organic Farm is an eight-acre IOPA-certified farm, home to seven different farming businesses, owned by the District of Saanich and run by a board of volunteers. This structure allows budding organic farmers to steward the land for eight years before purchasing their own land (or quitting the business) and making way for new farmers to continue the cycle.

Although just off the highway, the only break in the calm at Haliburton comes from the occasional farm-stand customer or returning farmer. Each section of the farm seems to be in a constant state of flux. Whether veggies are being picked, manure put down, or seeds just being planted, someone is always in the fields, happy to chat to visitors. While responsible for different businesses, these farmers are part of the same organic community and express a shared love for the land with the careful way they pick squash off the vine and easily move through the fields.

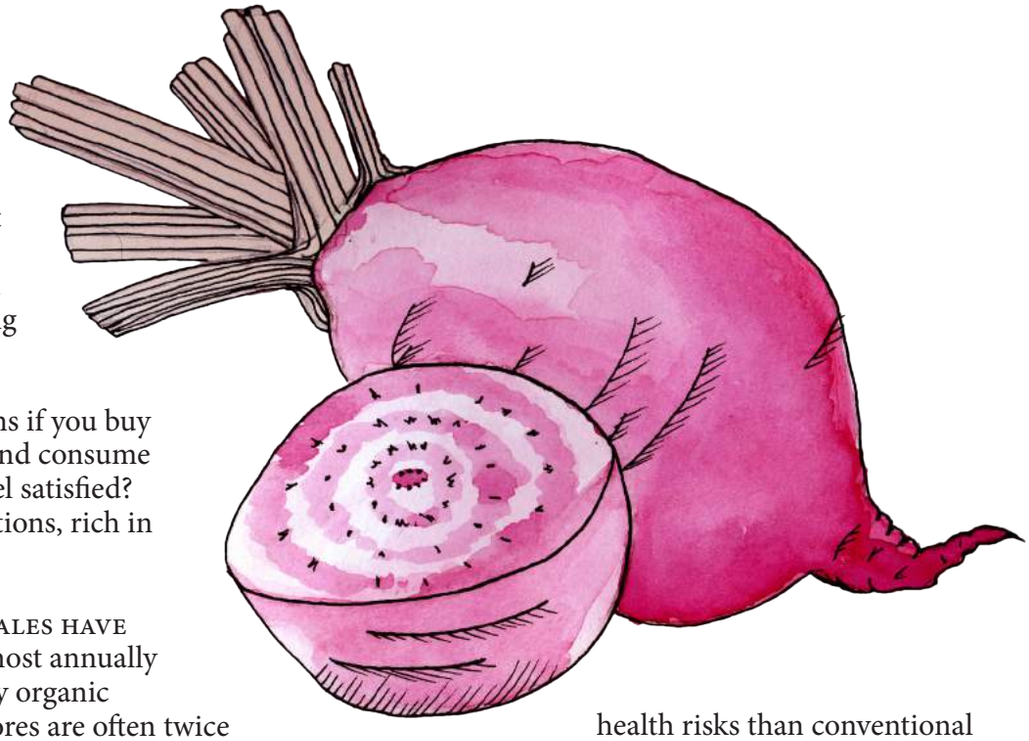
"I feel a deep connection to the land," says Dave Chun, a Haliburton Farm apprentice. Chun is 31 and in his second year at Haliburton and his first as an apprentice. He hopes to have his own organic farm one day. "It doesn't make any sense to do it non-organically. There's no point caring for the land if it's not going to be organic, you're not really caring for it by throwing chemicals into it."

Elmarie Roberts, a farmer representative on Haliburton's board of directors, says that with so much happening on the farm, the board tries to maintain a unified long-term vision. "We grow food, we steward the land, we teach farming and growing, we support farmers, and we build a community. That's what we focus on here," she says.

Roberts started as an aromatherapist, growing organic lavender. She wanted the oils that she sold to be pure since she says the oils go straight into the bloodstream. This prompted her to think more

about the food people consume.

While we need to watch what we eat, Roberts tries not to discourage people because organic food is expensive. "In a perfect world, we are moving towards smaller quantities, more nutritionally dense food," she says. "What happens if you buy empty food, you have to eat and consume large quantities before you feel satisfied? With organic, it's smaller portions, rich in nutritional density."



Since the 1990s, organic sales have seen double-digit growth almost annually in the U.S., even though many organic products found in grocery stores are often twice the price of conventional items. A 2013 Organic Marketing Report by *Academics Review* found that this dramatic rise in sales comes from safety concerns about pesticides, hormones, antibiotics, and genetically modified foods. People who buy organic often don't distinguish between "organic" and "natural" foods.

> "PEOPLE OFTEN DON'T DISTINGUISH BETWEEN 'ORGANIC' AND 'NATURAL' FOODS."

A 2012 review in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* of the safety and health of organic foods, however, concluded that "the published literature lacks strong evidence that organic foods are significantly more nutritious than conventional foods." The review cited a 2012 Stanford University School of Medicine study that found no evidence that organic foods are "more nutritious or carry fewer health risks than conventional alternatives."

Farmers, of course, have differing views on the benefits of growing organic. Shellie MacDonald thinks that non-organic foods are the ones that should be labelled. "The same as on Drano, there's little symbols: *bad, bad, do not swallow*," she says. "But because of the way our culture is, what they've done is the corporations have lobbied the governments to say 'we're safe, this is fine' and has made this," she says, gesturing to the farm, "the expensive thing to do."

To start the certification process, the farmer must become a member of the regional certification body (IOPA for Vancouver Island), then pay membership fees to both the certification body as well as COABC, and submit an application that includes land-use history and the appropriate fees before a verification officer inspects the farm. Timber for raised beds and greenhouses must be untreated.

After inspection, the certification body issues one of four statuses. To be classified as "Certified Organic," a farm must meet all 17 of the Canadian Organic standards, along with any extra criteria set forth by the certification body, such as IOPA's local food security criteria. This status allows the farm to use the phrase "British Columbia Certified Organic" and the B.C. Certified Organic checkmark on labelling.

A "Transitional" farm is one still working toward meeting every guideline. In the transitional stage, a farm may not use the certified organic phrase or symbol on product labels. "Under Review" means the inspection and review were inconclusive, while "Inactive" may refer to a farm that meets all

standards but is not producing.

Once classified as certified organic, the farm must keep clear and accurate records of all production techniques, all materials brought into the farm, and all sales of goods. To maintain the status, the farms undergo yearly inspection by the certification body, which also includes an additional $344 fee to IOPA on top of the annual payment to COABC.

Based on the annual inspections, the certification body will either grant or deny the use of the organic phrase and symbol on product labels. If the farm has used any prohibited products, it must go through a 36-month transitional period before it can again be classified as certified organic.

Some buyers think the cumbersome certification process misses the point. "People can clean their conscience by saying 'oh, it's organic', " says Ali Ryan, head chef at Spinnakers Gastro Brewpub & Guesthouse. "But I think people have to be logical. Buying organic strawberries from Mexico in January—think about the carbon footprint. Why aren't you buying the strawberries off your farmers in July?"

Ryan has been head chef at Spinnakers for seven years now, and sources all local foods for the brewpub's kitchen. With humble beginnings in the Ottawa Valley, Ryan has always been connected to the idea of sustainable food.

"One of my first memories is shucking lima beans, and I was two and a half on the deck of the cottage," says Ryan. "My dad's garden could produce enough food to supply a family of four for eight months of the year." It was only when Ryan moved away for university that she realized few people lived the same.

When Ryan began sourcing food for Spinnakers, she wanted "real food, clean food." She initially looked for organic farmers, but through the years "certified organic" has moved down her list of priorities and been overtaken by "local."

"What started out as a wonderful movement has become corrupted by agribusiness," Ryan says. "For a lot of the farmers that we use at Spinnakers, they have been certified organic, but it simply became too expensive, it became too wasteful."

> "WHAT STARTED AS A WONDERFUL MOVEMENT HAS BECOME CORRUPTED BY AGRIBUSINESS."

Ryan uses a salad farmer called Dan as an example. "He used to be [certified organic]," she says, "and he had a run of plastic bags made to spec, because all of these things have to be extremely specific, to bag his greens and his spinach in, he got something like 100,000 plastic bags and the printer got the logo for 'Certified Organic' wrong and he was told by COABC that he had to throw them out."

Ryan makes it clear that she is not against certified organic foods—one of the largest suppliers to Spinnakers is Saanich Organics—but through her experience as a chef she has seen more drawbacks than positive effects of the certified organic movement.

"It's really tricky," says Dave Chun, the Haliburton apprentice, about one day having a certified organic farm. He recently spoke to a farmer friend who said, "I don't need the certification board to tell me that I'm organic, I know that I'm organic."

The concept of being certified organic or simply organic has created a rift in the local farming community. For Haliburton representative Elmarie Roberts, there is no question about being certified. "If someone tells you they're organic, you ask them one question," she says. "What is your farm number?"

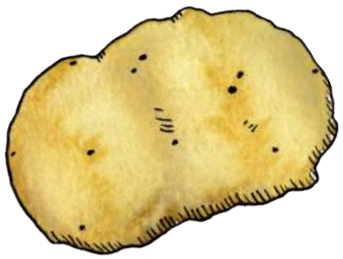
She explains that to comply with certified organic labelling processes, Haliburton Farm must display their certified organic certificate from IOPA and use a specific sign while selling goods. This sign includes the farm name, the certification body's name (IOPA), the farm number, as well as the B.C. Certified Organic symbol. This information, she says, is the only way to know for sure if the produce you are buying is certified organic.

Chef Ryan justifies not always buying certified organic by visiting her farmers at home. "All these farmers live on their farms," she says. "It is their life, it is their job, it is their entire existence. Their kids play on their farms, their pets play on their farms. That to me is an indicator of clean food. If somebody's happy to raise their family on the farm, you know that they're not poisoning their land."

Ryan says the best thing for people to do is to get to know their local farmers. "That's the beautiful thing about farmers' markets," she says. "They are putting themselves out there. It's not some faceless label in a grocery store. They're there to be asked the questions, and you're keeping your money within our local economy."

Eating locally, she insists, outweighs the benefits of certified organic. Many other chefs, farmers such as Shellie MacDonald, and eco-conscious produce buyers have started to look beyond the labels, too. Who grew your food, it seems, is more important than who approved it.

Photo: Razzle B Photography



Hali Farmers (2014): ***Back row, left to right****: Shawn (H&R Veggies), James (Saanich Native Plants), Kristen (Saanich Native Plants), Emily (Littlest Acre Farm), Dave (apprentice), Heather (H&R Veggies), Ray (H&R Veggies), Mike (New Mountain Farm)* ***Front row****: Nate (New Mountain Farm), Denver (apprentice), Elmarie (Sunbird Farm), Derek (Barefoot Farm)*
Not shown*: Lila (Shooting Starts), Morgan (Shooting Starts)*

Rewilding The Food Chain

A decade after their inspiring experiment, B.C.'s original 100-mile dieters still think globally and eat locally

by Sasha Gronsdahl

Take a moment to think about your last meal.

If you had to map out where the ingredients came from, how far would you have to go? Maybe the cereal you munched at breakfast was made from wheat grown in the Prairies or the American Midwest. Maybe the olive oil you used to stir-fry vegetables was pressed and packaged in Italy. Or maybe the garlic you minced for extra flavour travelled all the way from China to your grocery store, where you bought three heads for $2.99.

Calculating the distance our food travels is a key part of the "local" movement, which has flourished in the past decade. In 2005, Vancouver writers J.B. MacKinnon and Alisa Smith were astonished to learn that the food we eat typically travels between 1,500 and 3,000 miles from farm to plate. So, they embarked upon an experiment: for a year, they would only eat food that came from within a 100-mile radius of their Kitsilano apartment.

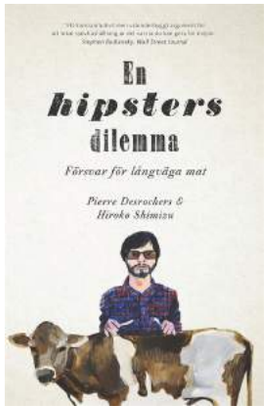
They blogged about the ups and downs of finding local food on the B.C. online news site The Tyee, and through the power of the Internet, their experiment became a global phenomenon. "I've never seen anything like it," The Tyee's editor Dave Beers told the couple a few months after the first article was posted. "You're blog celebrities." There were requests for interviews, hundred of speaking engagements, and the creation of "locavore" groups across North America who wanted to try the diet. In 2007, the pair published their story as a book called *The 100-Mile Diet: A Year of Local Eating* (published in the U.S. as *Plenty: Eating Locally on the 100-Mile Diet*), and later even hosted a TV series called *The 100-Mile Diet* with Food Network Canada.

Both alumni of the University of Victoria and former editors of its student newspaper, *The Martlet*,

J.B. MacKinnon

MacKinnon and Smith were at the forefront of a movement that asked questions about the social and environmental impacts of where our food comes from. When he and Smith started the experiment, MacKinnon says, "if you went into a store or restaurant and asked what was available that was locally grown, people would just look at you like you were crazy."

Today, many vendors make local food a part of their identity. A glance around the food scene in Victoria proves the point—the Victoria Public Market, opened in 2013, features weekly farmers' markets and advertises "products so local, we're on a first-name basis."



As the local food movement has grown, so have the choices available to locavores. At the beginning of their experiment, MacKinnon and Smith realized they couldn't eat bread or pasta until they could find a local source of wheat. For the first seven months of their diet, they only found one sad bag rescued from a farmer's barn that was half grains, half mouse excrement.

Now Brock and Heather McLeod, proprietors of Makaria Farm in the Cowichan Valley, have even created a website and support network called Island Grains that provides information on how to grow wheat and other grains on Vancouver Island. Other critical staples are also now available locally. "You can even get 100-mile beer these days!" says MacKinnon.

However, MacKinnon cautions against the narrow view that local eating is only about calculating the carbon footprint of a meal. "It's an environmental issue, it's a social issue, it's a personal issue, it's a health issue, it's a community issue," he says. "To focus on any one of them would do harm to the whole thing."

For instance, researchers in the U.K. conducted a study in 2005 to compare the environmental impact of local tomatoes grown in greenhouses to those imported from Spain, which could grow in unheated greenhouses. They found that the carbon dioxide emissions per ton from growing and transporting the Spanish tomatoes were about a quarter of the emissions of the tomatoes grown in the U.K. But questions like that overlook the more fundamental lesson, says MacKinnon: "Don't eat fresh tomatoes in winter."

Another troubling development is the ascension of local food and even community gardens as "status objects"—with the price jumps that accompany the "artisanal" label. MacKinnon and Smith would like to garden in their own neighbourhood, but the waitlist for a plot in their local community garden is lengthy.

Critics point to the increased cost of food on a local diet as a major problem of the movement. This is the main argument of the book *The Locavore's Dilemma: In Praise of the 10,000-Mile Diet*, by University of Toronto geography professor Pierre Desrochers and economist Hiroko Shimizu. (The book has been published as *En hipsters dilemma* in Sweden.) They write that our global food system has made it possible to feed millions for less, and that corporations have made food safer and cheaper thanks to economies of scale. The local food movement, according to the authors, takes a backwards step into the inefficient food system of the past, when people struggled to survive off the land around them. "If things were so great in our great-grandmothers' time, why did things change so much since then?" Desrochers told *Maclean's*.

> "It's an environmental issue, it's a social issue, it's a personal issue, it's a health issue, it's a community issue"

MacKinnon maintains that eating locally can be affordable if adopted as a lifestyle choice: buying foods in bulk that are in season and then taking the time to preserve them at home, for example. The bigger challenge is to expand the whole system of local-food production and distribution.

"The local food movement was very good at producing demand for local food," says

MacKinnon. "But at some point you need a response on the government's side to expand the supply." He points to policies like implementing carbon taxes, removing subsidies for industrial-scale farms, mandating humane treatment of animals, and protecting the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) in B.C. as initiatives to support local food production.

"There's a lot of groups out there that have very good ideas about how we can support small-scale farmers," MacKinnon says.

In fact, over 40 stakeholders have come together over the past two years to identify what must be done for the Capital Regional District (CRD) to be a place where all people have access to healthy and sustainably grown food. The group, led by the Victoria Foundation and the Capital Region Food and Agricultural Initiatives Roundtable (CR-FAIR), developed a Collaborative Roadmap for Achieving Community Food Security. Support for farmers and farmland are parts of the puzzle, but the roadmap also includes creating facilities for the storage and processing of local food, improving food distribution networks, and increasing access to healthy food for people with low incomes.

MacKinnon sees community and political will as the missing ingredients for change. "In Vancouver, for example, it remains policy that there has to be a parking space for every household, but not a garden spot for every household," he says. "It's always just a question of priorities."

Activists tried to put local food on the agenda of this fall's municipal elections. Nathalie Chambers runs Madrona Farm in Saanich with her husband David and has researched farmland and food security for the past 10 years. She challenged local political candidates to attend Madrona Farm's annual Chef Survival Challenge and pledge support for protecting the CRD's supply of arable land. Saanich has been relatively successful in protecting farmland, she says, but the ALR is at risk of development across the province.

"The Liberal government has dismantled our Agricultural Land Reserve," says Chambers. In June 2014, the provincial government passed Bill 24, which changes the way land-use decisions are made about ALR-zoned land in the north and interior of the province. Some fear will make it easier to remove designated farmland from the ALR for development.

Chambers says that support for local farmers is key to providing more local food and improving access to food for low-income people. "The largest obstacle to food security is the price of farmland," she says. "It's not about people not wanting to farm—it's that people can't afford to access the land."

Photo: Hannah Golding

As for MacKinnon and Smith, *the 100-Mile Diet* authors still source most of their food locally. Eating locally is an issue of environmental and social importance, but it's also delicious, says MacKinnon. "It's the best way of eating I've ever known in my life. You couldn't convince me to eat otherwise."

While still devoted locavores, MacKinnon and Smith have moved on to other projects professionally. Smith has a novel coming out in spring 2015, and she has trained to become a forensic accountant, investigating white-collar crime and corruption.

MacKinnon continues to work as an independent journalist. In spring 2014, he published *The Once and Future World*, an exploration of the idea of "rewilding." Rewilding means restoring aspects of wilderness to urbanized landscapes—for instance, by re-introducing missing species or growing native plants in your backyard.

"In many ways, it was the concept of the 100-mile diet that led me towards the concept of rewilding," he says. "We were struggling so much to eat locally on the Vancouver landscape that it got me wondering: how did the thousands of First Nations people who lived here make a go of it?" In his research, he discovered that local landscapes in the Pacific Northwest were once much richer than they are today.

MacKinnon worked with the Museum of Vancouver as a guest curator of "Rewilding Vancouver," the country's first major exhibit of urban historical ecology. MacKinnon called it an "exhibition of remembering," to jog the collective memory of a city that had forgotten it was once home to elk, wolves, and grizzlies. In 2010, Vancouverites were fascinated by a grey whale that swam into False Creek, but this visit once would have been the norm. With video projections, soundscapes, and digitally altered photographs, the exhibit asked visitors to imagine what urban Vancouver once was—and what "rewilding" the city could look like.

"It was really interesting to work in three dimensions rather than words on a page," says MacKinnon. "It was also really enjoyable to take the global set of ideas I had developed for *The Once and Future World* and then apply them to my actual home."

The rewilding exhibit lives on outside the museum walls: the Vancouver Park Board created a rewilding action plan that encourages and enables city residents to relate and connect to the natural world. "The task force believes that every Vancouver resident should be able to witness the magic of seeing salmon in their local stream, whales in the harbour, and eagles above them," said Niki Sharma, the Park Board commissioner, in a news release.

For MacKinnon, eating locally and the idea of rewilding are threads in a bigger story of reconnecting to the land we live on. That reconnection, he says, may be the essential ingredient to the effort to save our planet. "If we're not connected to the natural world, it's very difficult for us to care about it."

As climate change and environmental degradation loom, perhaps questions like where your garlic came from or what species used to live in your neighbourhood are not small questions after all. These questions might just be the wake-up call we need to realize that our relationship with the world around us is in serious need of repair.

Photo: Samantha Wey

Royal Roads University
Learning and Innovation Centre

Jenson Chernoff Thompson Architects

Once you turn onto the campus of Royal Roads University and pass under its statuesque Garry Oaks, the bustle of Sooke Road suddenly feels miles away. Near the bottom of the entrance lane that runs along Colwood Creek loom the crenellated towers of Hatley Castle. The castle was once the estate of Lieutenant Governor James Dunsmuir; for half a century it served as the home to Royal Military College. The stone manor is best known as the set for Professor Xavier's School for Gifted Youngsters in the X-Men films. Surrounded by gardens, restored Camas mounds, and with a seaside lagoon and the odd peacock in the background, the whole campus is an inviting mix of West Coast wild and British school charm.

Paradise comes with a price, though. Royal Roads University faces the extra challenge of meeting government-mandated emission targets by 2030 as its administrators integrate sustainable design into infrastructure upgrades and new buildings.

The Learning and Innovation Centre (LIC), completed in 2011, marked a big step toward that goal. The LIC is Royal Roads' first purpose-built building and meets LEED gold standards. University leaders worked on the design with Jenson Chernoff Thompson Architects, a Vancouver/Victoria firm that specializes in sustainable structures. New buildings on a national historic site must be on previously disturbed land, so the team moved the road and covered two parking lots, without replacing either. "It proves to me you can do this," says Nancy Wilkin, Royal Roads' office of sustainability director. "Taking parking lots out of commission, you can do it. We didn't die the next day. We didn't have any protests."

Head maintenance worker Fred Havekotte oversees the building's function from the computer screen in his high-tech boiler room office. The four high-efficiency condensing boilers have variable speed drives on the pumps that save energy by controlling motor speed. Low-voltage lights are motion-activated, and those closest to windows have photo sensors that respond to natural light. Large windows brighten the moods of students and staff. "The faculty really like to teach in this building," says Wilkin, "and the students like to have their classes in it."

Taking in 100 per cent fresh air, the LIC relies on a thermal wheel for heating. The large wheel revolves between outflow and intake vents, and uses a heat-absorbing material that traps the exhaust airflow's warmth and transfers it to the fresh air. The building's design complements the already effective—and free—system with a vertical tunnel from the main to the fourth floor to create a chimney effect. By contrast, the neighbouring Grant Building is the same size but requires three times the energy to heat. The digital system allows Havekotte to track energy use and identify waste. "I love the building," says Havekotte. "It's a treat. It's a lot of fun."

When it rains, the grey water system springs into action. Rainwater from the roof supplies the bathrooms' low-flow fixtures, saving 1,672,140 litres of water a year—half the use of a conventional building. Solar panels provide hot water, and each floor has a galley kitchen with a composting centre—the containers are three times the size of garbage bins. Fifty per cent of money earned from refundable containers adds to a student bursary. On the fourth floor, the Centre for Dialogue looks out toward the Pacific. In the conference room and boardroom, users can live-stream talks, host speakers remotely, and chair board meetings with stakeholders around the world, reducing the carbon footprint of excessive business travel.

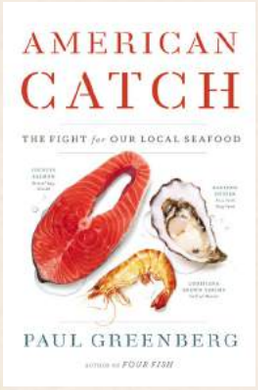
The LIC is just one part of a larger plan that Wilkin and her team at Royal Roads have been implementing. In 2014, bus pass for students, a new bus turnaround, and additional bus route plus evening and weekend service for the first time all reduced the need to drive to the Colwood campus. Royal Roads also launched a bike rental program and expanded its cycling infrastructure to complement the LIC's existing showers. The university has a completely green cleaning program and its waste diversion is up to 64 per cent, while retrofits on other buildings mean emissions reductions will soon be close to 29 per cent. "We increased our square footage with the LIC, but we didn't increase our emissions," says Wilkin. "You can build new buildings, as long as it's done right and designed right."

— Quinn MacDonald

Photos : Courteous of Royal Roads

agriculture: book reviews

American Catch: The Fight for Our Local Seafood
Author: Paul Greenberg



While many west coasters worry about monocultures on land, we take fresh seafood for granted. The same industrial food system, however, that turns forests into tree farms and GMO-laden canola fields also empties coastlines and oceans of their natural diversity.

Paul Greenberg is the author of *Four Fish: The Future of the Last Wild Fish* and a contributor to *The New York Times*. In his new book, *American Catch: The Fight for Our Local Seafood*, Greenberg uses "three iconic American local seafoods"—Eastern oysters, Gulf shrimp, and Alaska sockeye salmon—to "offer a view into the mistakes of our past, the complications of our present, and the hopes of our future."

Readers begin in New York City's once-vanished estuaries, now making a labour-intensive comeback, sail through the disappearing marshlands and shrimping grounds of the Gulf Coast, and then arrive in Alaska, where a large mine threatens the millions of salmon that annually return to Bristol Bay.

Throughout the book, Greenberg emphasizes the complex relationships between these three species and their environments—how the historic oyster beds around New York, for instance, could have protected the city against the worst devastation of Hurricane Sandy. Despite the gloomy subject matter, Greenberg maintains optimism as he highlights the organizations and people working to protect and to restore habitat and to return our society to sustainable, traditional harvesting methods.

American Catch still frames the issue around our desire to keep eating seafood. Maybe this pitch to our collective appetite is the only way to get enough people to care, but the view that the environment is "ours" to consume has been a driving force in its exploitation. Greenberg also leans on state and market solutions, such as using money collected from companies like BP to restore landscapes. Still, even he admits that 1972's Clean Water Act would "never be passed today" in the United States' pro-business political climate.

This fall, Coho salmon returned to the Gorge waterway in Victoria in higher numbers than seen in decades. The years of work by local volunteers to restore that waterway shows that, yes, we can bring some ecosystems back from the brink. The fish of Hazleton Creek, destroyed last year by the Mount Polley mine disaster in B.C.'s Cariboo region, however, may never return. It would be wise for us to protect our oceans and coastlines now rather than repeat the errors of the past and keep trying to repair what we've broken.

The Book of Kale: 14 Easy-to-Grow Superfoods
Authors: Sharon Hanna and Carol Pope

Given the recent media hype, people could be excused for suffering kale fatigue by now. Still, it remains a remarkable food: easy to grow, tenacious, and stuffed with nutrients. Even as kale pops up in gardens and refrigerators more often, I still hear from people who don't know what to do with the so-called "superfood."

They should start by getting Sharon Hanna and Carol Pope's *The Book of Kale and Friends: 14 Easy-to-Grow Superfoods* (Douglas & MacIntyre, 2014). The B.C.-based co-authors are master gardeners, cooks, and writers; Hanna's 2012 *The Book of Kale* won a Taste Canada Award, while Pope was the long-time editor of *GardenWise* magazine.

Together, they help readers create more than 130 dishes from seed to plate. The book's front sections demonstrate how to grow, store, and prepare kale, arugula and herbs such as cilantro and lovage. Don't know how to chiffonade? No problem, they've got you covered. The book includes every course, from starters and drinks, to soups, mains, and desserts, and has loads of vegetarian, vegan, and gluten-free options. It even features two dishes to satisfy your canine dinner companions.

The book's title font makes some names hard to read, but the ingredients are neatly laid out and the directions easy to follow for any level of chef. The recipes come with friendly backstories and are flexible enough that you can improvise to suit personal taste or whatever's in your kitchen. (If you don't have white wine for the Magic Chicken with Kale and Herbs, red wine works just fine!) My personal favourites so far have been the Green Eggs, with kale and Swiss chard, and the Warm Zucchini Salad, which was so overwhelmingly delicious that I had to call my mom to tell her about it—and I'm not even a "foodie."

Hanna and Pope know their stuff, and the book's value as a resource will give it staying power after the kale trend ends. I haven't had time to test all the recipes, but I have lots of inspiration for the winter and into the spring. (Most anticipated: Potato-Crusted Kale and Smoked Salmon Tart.) That's one of kale's biggest virtues: you can enjoy it fresh and local all year long.

— Quinn MacDonald

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