

Down to Earth

Editor's Corner

Pull up a chair and strap on your bib because September 21-28th is National Organic Week. Celebrate the autumn harvest by attending COG OSO's "Organic Gardening in the City Fall Workshop" on September 24th at 7:00 PM at Heartwood House. The workshop will teach you about winterizing your garden and even extending the growing season. Similarly, on September 26th, another COG OSO Organic Week event will include a screening of the film *Vanishing of the Bees*. This film can be seen at the Taggart Family YMCA in the Community Room at 180 Argyle Ave., Ottawa. For more information on these or other events, please read deeper into this issue of *Down to Earth*. With another summer now in the books, I invite you to explore the success stories of COG OSO over the past four months. With the expansion of programs such as Senior Organic Gardeners and Growing Up Organic, our organization has been able to grab the imagination of a whole new audience. Thank you to all of our volunteers who have made this possible.

Matthew Orwing

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FOR THE GROWING UP ORGANIC (GUO) PROGRAM

New Partnership Announced

Canadian Organic Growers' Ottawa-St Lawrence-Outaouais (COG OSO) is thrilled to announce a new partnership with All Things Food SDG Community Food Network, the Ottawa Network for Education, Healthy Eating for Better Learning, and the Eastern Ontario Agri-Food Network to expand the reach and impact of their Growing Up Organic (GUO) program. Thanks to a generous grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF), for \$224,600 over three years, GUO will expand both its reach and impact beyond the National Capital Region.

Over the past five years, Growing Up Organic has helped thirty-one schools in the Ottawa area establish organic vegetable gardens in their schoolyards and implement garden-based education programs through curriculum-connected workshops. The program has also delivered farm-to-school activities, such as farm field trips, which provide unique opportunities for children and youth to connect with the food they eat and their local organic agricultural community. Farmers also receive training support in connecting to local schools, and on how to transition to organic agricultural practices.

"This expansion is so exciting, first and foremost because of the collaborative links it creates between the partners," explains Alissa Campbell, GUO's regional manager. "Approaching the program in this way will help us to develop a streamlined, regional network-based system and to reach more students and source more local organic food than with one community working alone."

The grant provides funds for the expansion of Growing Up Organic's garden and farm-based education into the rural communities of Prescott-Russell, and Stormont-Dundas-Glengarry. "Schools in our region have been anxious to get started on this exciting initiative which will in turn create educational and inspiring experiences for our youth within our communities" says Jennifer Cuillier, who will be overseeing the implementation of GUO programming in Prescott-Russell, as the new program coordinator.

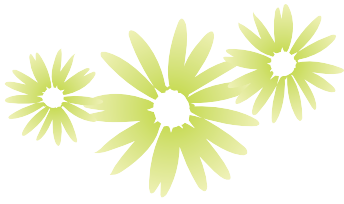
In addition to expanding geographically, two new program components will be added, focused on institutional procurement:

- 1) A pilot procurement program will introduce local organic dairy into snack and breakfast programs in select schools across the region; and
- 2) A seasonal harvest program will link schools with farms by featuring local organic fruits and vegetables in both snack and breakfast programs, and through educational classroom activities.

Finally, OTF funding will also support data collection and analysis from the region's Student Nutrition Programs to learn more about existing local food purchasing in schools, as well as where leverage points exist for increasing the amount of local and organic food purchases.

"Vegetables, fruit and dairy are an important part of every School Breakfast Program menu," says Carolyn Hunter, Director of Programs, Ottawa Network for Education. "The Province of Ontario provides significant funding for this program. It just makes good local economic development sense to direct these dollars to local Ontario producers. With this project we really hope to further develop the skills, knowledge and relationships necessary to continue to increase purchase of local, organic and seasonal products for our programs."

The grant provides funds for the expansion of Growing Up Organic's garden and farm-based education into the rural communities of Prescott-Russell, and Stormont-Dundas-Glengarry.



Organic Research at Rodale Institute

DAVID TOWNSON

Who does scientific research into organic agriculture? The Rodale Institute in Pennsylvania, founded in 1947 by J.I. Rodale, was founded to study the link between healthy soil, healthy foods, and healthy people. Rodale not only established a research institute but also a publishing company that puts out the *Organic Gardening* and *Prevention* magazines plus numerous books on organics. His son Robert persuaded the US Congress to provide resources in the 1985 Farm Bill for research that is now done by universities and federal (US Department of Agriculture) and state governments.

July 19 was the date of the annual Field Day at the Rodale Institute, which we attended along with approximately 100 others. On this occasion, the experts at the Institute showed us what research is currently being done. Traveling in wagons towed by tractors in 35°C heat, we started with the farming systems trial, which is their oldest ongoing research program started in 1981. It compares sections of corn and soya bean crops using four different systems:

1. Organic manure
2. Organic legume (cover crops)
3. Conventional, synthetic chemicals including GMO corn
4. Two types of no-till systems: traditional (using herbicide) and organic (using no-till roller crimper)

Researchers have found that organic yields exceed those of conventional systems in years of drought and stress. They can also sequester significant amounts of carbon. Organic systems are also more profitable for the farmer because of the lower input costs.

Next they showed their experiments with growing trees along the edge of fields that can be sold for papermaking – another source of income for the farmer.

We then went to look at four huge hills of compost each about 100 feet in length. Workers turn them three or four times a week, and they use thermometers to check the temperature. They are experimenting with compost with and without animal manure.

We looked at a garden grown in the oriental style



where plants are grown in the same spot year after year. They were even experimenting with growing rice in a small water pond. A scientist from the USDA showed an experiment to encourage the growth of mycorrhizal fungi (which enable the roots of plants to take up soil nutrients) in a series of cloth pots growing bahia grass in compost and soil. The grass appears to encourage growth of the fungi, and after the grass is killed by the frost, the pot full of fungi and compost is added to the soil ready for vegetables.

In a large greenhouse, we viewed the trial to produce hydroponic plants in an organic way. We then visited the toilet block. This is a water purification eco-centre. It captures rain water, and the waste water is passed through a small constructed wetland beside the building, which filters the water. This way the water can be reused several times, and the system also fertilizes the wetlands.

We then viewed the experiment to deal with stinkbugs, where they were planting different types of crops to learn about the bugs and find ways of creating barriers to the bugs to protect organic crops. This research is in the early stages. From a distance, we saw their CSA (Community Supported Agriculture), which has been set up for local residents. Over 200 families are involved, making the CSA a training ground for future farmers. We then heard a talk on their work with honeybees. They use the “Taylor” type of hive, which enables up to three colonies to be in one wooden structure. They breed their own bees from a very calm Italian line and give classes on sustainable beekeeping practices.

Our final stop was to see the program of nutrient management of organic no-till systems. Basically, they grow cover crops (rye), which are then rolled down before flowering and corn is planted in the field. The cover crop becomes the mulch to suppress weeds. They are also experimenting in incorporating animal manure into this system. They have developed a machine that attaches to the front of the tractor to roll down and crimp the cover crop and then immediately plant corn from a planter on the back of the same tractor. This means that the whole process can be carried out in one go, saving time and money. More information about many of these research projects can be found at: rodaleinstitute.org/ourwork.

It was an extremely interesting day, and it is encouraging to know that Rodale is doing scientific research to find solutions for organic gardeners and farmers.





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Senior Organic Gardeners - An Amazing Initiative

JESSICA SINGH & AMBER KEYAD

They say that time flies when you're having fun. Well then we must be having a blast at SOG because the summer is moving along very quickly for us. Expanding the program to include five senior's homes this season has kept us quite busy and we're really enjoying the time we get to spend in the gardens with residents. As of June, all the gardens were planted and as of a couple of weeks ago the residents have begun harvesting and eating some of the veggies that they've grown. This has mainly been lettuce, radish and some herbs. However, the tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers and other delicious veggies are on their way though and we're all very excited for their arrival. Some of the workshops that have been taking place while we wait include plant care and garden maintenance, how to water in extreme heat, and soon we'll be doing some sessions on herb drying and seed saving.

Our intern, Amber Kayed, who has done some excellent work for us over the last two months, will be leaving to return to university. Before she goes we would like to take the opportunity to thank her for the invaluable contribution she has made to SOG through her work. Additionally, over the last two months Amber has been working on a literature review on the ways that gardening programs are beneficial to seniors and below she'll be sharing some of her most interesting findings with you.

In a nutshell, horticultural therapy is the improvement of a person's well-being based on caring for plants and tending to a garden. Most often horticultural therapy is facilitated by a trained horticultural therapist, but similar effects can be achieved through individual and group gardening.

Many researchers have looked into the benefits that gardening can provide on the individualistic, internal, and external factors of a seniors community. In a study of retirement home residents in Kansas, Rena L. Train (1974) found that a gardening program greatly increased social interaction within the group, a sense of pride and self-worth in the individuals, and mild physical exercise.

Heliker et al (2000) found that individuals who participated in horticultural therapy experienced feelings of reduced stress and lower blood pressure. Moreover, a study was performed that assessed the effects of a horticultural therapy program on seniors suffering from dementia. They found that gardening activities could be altered to suit the needs of each participant based on

their cognitive, physical, and social abilities and that seniors who participated in horticultural activities showed more positive engagement than shown while performing non-horticultural activities (Jarrott *et al*, 2002; Jarrott & Gigliotti, 2010).

Wang and Glicksman (2013) found that another benefit to gardening is that individuals are more likely to consume more servings of fruits and vegetables if they experience the growing process. Thus, growing plants provides physical, mental, and social benefits to participants. In essence, gardening is a cost-effective, creative outlet that has numerous benefits to seniors.

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debbie holzman designs

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Canadian Organic Growers
Ottawa-St. Lawrence-Outaouais

ORGANIC GARDENING IN THE CITY

FALL WORKSHOPS 2013

**GREAT INSTRUCTORS
TWO NEW TOPICS
REASONABLE FEES**

"WINTERIZING YOUR GARDEN & EXTENDING THE GROWING SEASON"
Tuesday, September 24 from 7-9 pm

"GROWING GARLIC ORGANICALLY"
Thursday, October 17 from 7-9 pm

LOCATION: HEARTWOOD HOUSE,
400 MACARTHUR AVENUE (NEAR ST LAURENT)

REGISTER ON LINE: www.cog.ca/ottawa/
E-mail cog.oso.chapter@cog.ca or call 613 244 4000 ext. 2

COG OSO Promotion Team Leader

The Ottawa – St. Lawrence – Outaouais chapter of Canadian Organic Growers (COG OSO) is seeking a **volunteer Promotion Team Leader**.

We are a regional chapter of a national charity, whose mandate is to lead local and national communities towards sustainable organic stewardship of land, food and fibre while respecting nature, upholding social justice and protecting natural resources.

We are a lively and enthusiastic group based in the Ottawa region, and we offer numerous events and programs year-round to support knowledge and skills for farmers, gardeners, educators, children, seniors, and anyone who is interested in eating healthy food and living in healthy environments. Details of our activities are available at our new website: www.cog.ca/ottawa. Nearly all of our activities are coordinated by volunteers, and are sponsored by many different organizations.

COG OSO is currently seeking a Promotion Team Leader to join our volunteer team and to invite new recruits.

This role is best suited to someone with good organizational skills and good communication skills (English is essential, French would be a wonderful asset). Experience with promotion and building market plans as well as involving other volunteers in promotion campaigns for COG OSO events are essential. It would involve getting to know COG OSO, our mission, our fundraising and events as well as an estimated minimum average of 3 hours per week, but could be developed into much more depending on the interests of the person selected for the role. It is hoped that a commitment of at least a year would be possible. Please send a letter or resume to Laura, Coordinator of Volunteers at cogoso.volunteers@gmail.com or call her at (613) 244-4000 Ext. 5.

JUST FOOD START-UP FARM PROGRAM

Cultivating New Farmers in the Ottawa Region

Are you an aspiring farmer with skills and experience growing food, but not sure if you're ready to make the leap to running your own farm? Just Food may be looking for you! The non-profit organization, which works on a range of food and farming issues in the Ottawa region, established a Start-Up Farm Program in 2013 to support new farmers in transitioning to running their own farm business. Supported by seed funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, the City of Ottawa, and Beau's Brewery, the program offers up to three years of on-site support at the Just Food Farm. This includes access to land, shared equipment and infrastructure, as well as a series of training workshops designed for new farmers that covers everything from organic certification to marketing and sales. The training courses are also open to any new farmer in the region.

"Farming is a difficult business to get into," says Leela Ramachandran, Manager of Farm Programs for Just Food. "Even with significant skills and experience, it's still a huge risk as a new grower to buy farmland

and equipment, build your infrastructure and purchase inputs before starting to do business. What we're offering is an entry point into farming that decreases the risk, while allowing people to test their ideas and build their business before scaling up to a larger, longer-term operation."

The program started in 2013 with 9 farm teams growing at the Just Food Farm in Blackburn Hamlet, on land rented from the National Capital Commission. The farm's location in the Ottawa Greenbelt, accessible from downtown Ottawa by public transit and bicycle, is part of Just Food's plan to create a center for urban agriculture and food education. The farm is in the process of becoming certified organic, which means that all participating farmers must comply with the Canadian Organic Standards and undergo an annual inspection.

The first group of new farmers in the program includes people who grew up on farms but pursued other careers as adults, and are now coming back to their agricultural roots. Other participants didn't grow up on farms but have completed postsecondary programs in agriculture, or have worked on other farms. Still others are new Canadians who bring farming experience from their home countries. "We're seeing a real emergence of a new type of farmer that doesn't come from the traditional farm background," continues Leela. "One of the biggest benefits of a program like this is that people can learn with and from each other, and can collaborate in ways that would be almost impossible if they had just started farming on their own land. It's creating a learning and support network that can continue even after they leave the program."

Applications for the 2014 Start-Up Farm Program are now available at the Just Food website (www.justfood.ca) and are due by October 31, 2013. An Information Session will be held on September 18th at 6:30 PM. To register, contact Leela at Leela@justfood.ca.

For those who are interested in farming, but need more information to determine if this is a path they want to pursue, Just Food offers a course called **Exploring the New Farm Dream: Is Starting An Agricultural Business Right For You?** Held over 3 dates this fall, the course can be taken by people who are considering applying for the Start-Up Farm Program, and can help in developing an application. Visit Just Food's website for details.





Steering Committee Report

COG OSO Steering Committee has had some changes recently. We were sorry to lose Jennie Videto due to her return to studies. Thank you Jennie for your many contributions to COG OSO and our best wishes follow you. Susan Preston our chair has been on leave but is expected to be back in late September and we will welcome her warmly.

Activities and events organization has been a huge part of our agendas in July and August: Eco Farm Day, Organic Gardening Workshops in the City Fall Workshop, Feast of Fields, Organic Week and Fall Reflections.

For the past 13 years, Tom Manley has chaired the Eco Farm Day organization committee. He has done a magnificent job and will be sorely missed as he moves on to other priorities. We have been searching for a new chair and other members for the Eco Farm Day Committee. If you might be interested in involvement in this committee, please contact Gary Weinhold at (613) 244-4000 Ext. 7.

Organic Week by COG OSO will include the Fall Workshop on "Winterizing Your Organic Garden and Extending the Growing Season" with instructor Rob Danforth. This promises to be a popular new addition to our organic gardening workshop series from the spring. See the ad elsewhere in *Down to Earth* for more information.

The Organic Gardening in the City Fall Workshops are taking place on September 24th during Organic Week and on October 17th. On October 17th, David McCreery will be the instructor for "Growing Garlic Organically". This may be of interest to many people because garlic planting takes place in the fall.

Feast of Fields has been postponed to 2014 however we are hard at work on a rebranding of this stellar event for which we still have over 1000 followers on Twitter. Keep an eye out for more news on this in the near future.

COG OSO will be partnering with COG National in screening a film about pollinators on Thursday, September 26th at 7:00 pm at the YMCA. This is an exciting first for COG OSO to partner an event with COG National.

Fall Reflections promises to be an interesting event with a panel discussion about "Why local? Why organic?" There will be time for audience participation.

We will also feature our Outstanding Volunteer Award presentations, our Recognition of all our Volunteers, our Chair's Annual Illustrated Talk and Elections for the Steering Committee of 2014. If you would like to be nominated or would like to nominate someone, please get in touch with cog.oso.chapter@cog.ca or nominate at the event. COG OSO's greatest need is more volunteers willing to get involved in leadership roles for at least a year.

As you can see, COG OSO's Steering Committee has been active over the summer and yet we have had time to enjoy the beautiful weather and to tend our gardens.

We wish you all a bountiful harvest season and a great Organic Week!

COG-OSO's Outstanding Volunteer Award

As the summer season continues its transformation and as we enjoy our garden's bounty, it is now time to pause, reflect and appreciate. Recognizing loyal and faithful volunteers at the annual COG-OSO Fall Reflections has been a welcome part of the event festivities for many years.

In 2012, Outstanding Volunteer Award by COG OSO was planted in our fall traditions. We want that tradition to thrive again in 2013. Thanking outstanding volunteers who have offered their time and talents consistently over significant periods of time and with passion for the goals of COG-OSO is important to all of us.

As you read this, please think of volunteers with COG OSO that you know that are known for their years of service, various roles filled in COG-OSO during that time, creative suggestions and implementation in our chapter and their passion demonstrated to our Mission.

An Awards Committee lead by our Coordinator of Volunteers, Laura Harris will receive nominations, review the letters and make recommendations to the Steering Committee for final decisions. As in 2012, there can be more than one winner. Please consider nominating a volunteer! Current Steering Committee members are not eligible.

COG-OSO's Outstanding Volunteer Award will be officially presented at Fall Reflections on Sunday, November 24th with a Certificate and Letter of Appreciation along with photographs projected at Fall Reflections and on the COG-OSO website. Deadline to receive nominations is Tuesday, October 15, 2013.

Please write a letter of nomination to the COG-OSO Volunteer Award Committee describing the contributions of the volunteer you are recommending to our Coordinator of Volunteers, Laura Harris at cogoso.volunteers@gmail.com. If you wish to mail a nomination, please call COG-OSO at (613) 244-4000 Ext. 2.



FALL REFLECTIONS 2013

"Why local? Why organic?" Panel Discussion
Volunteer Recognition
Outstanding Volunteer Award 2013
COG OSO Chair's Illustrated Talk about 2013

Sunday, November 24th at 2:30 pm

New location: **Heartwood House**- 400 McArthur Avenue, Ottawa (near St Laurent)

Free parking, OC Transpo Bus stop nearby

More information on our website:
www.cog.ca/ottawa/fall-reflections/



VANISHING OF THE BEES

Narrated by Ellen Page (*The Star of Juno*)



A Film For Anyone Who Likes To Eat

Doors Open at 6:30
 Film starts at 7pm followed by Expert Panel Discussion
 The Taggart Family Y, RBC Community Room
 180 Argyle Ave, Ottawa
 Admission: FREE - Donations encouraged
 For more information visit www.organicweek.ca

ORGANIC WEEK
 September 21-28, 2013

This Event in celebration of Organic Week is brought to you by:   



Some of the tour group observing use of plant covers and biodegradable plastic mulch (photo David Townson)

GOG-OSO Summer Organic Farm Tours

Evening Tour, Monday July 8th, 2013 – Luxy Farm

About 20 of us were warmly welcomed by Jonny and Daizy Näf, who described their busy CSA/Farmer's Market operation on a portion of the family farm near St Albert. We saw their greenhouse, produce preparation area, cold storage that they have built themselves, and of course their field operations. This has been a very wet year, and on their clay soils this has presented challenges – including weeds. In addition to their very active CSA, their vegetables are available at the Ottawa Farmers' Market at Brewer Park, and at the Westboro Farmers' Market, as well as at the farm by calling in advance. Luxy Farm was still in pre-organic certification status, but would be fully certified by the end of August.



The greenhouse where plants are started in the spring, and winter greens are planted in the fall (photo David Townson)

Zucchini, cucumbers, cabbage, several varieties of basil and lettuce, broccoli and cauliflower were already being harvested, as well as kale and fresh garlic. We saw how Jonny tied up the leaves of the cauliflower to keep them from being discoloured by the sun. He was extremely welcoming of the many, many questions that the tour group asked about all aspects of Luxy Farm's operations, and gave generously of his time in answering them. The tour concluded with everyone agreeing that it was extremely enjoyable and informative.

Please check out <http://www.luxyfarm.com/> for all Luxy Farm details and recipes.

Many thanks to Jonny and Daizy Näf for hosting a very successful COG-OSO evening Organic Farm Tour!

In the next issue of COG-OSO's E-News, there will be a report on the tours of three organic farms that was held on Sunday 18th August, 2013.



Jonny Näf showing his plants ready for planting out (photo David Townson)



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FARMER NEEDS ASSESSMENT RESULTS

BY COLIN LUNDY

Last winter a survey was distributed throughout the farming community so that farmers could help guide the future direction of COG OSO's Farmer Outreach programming. Thank you to all of those who provided their helpful responses. I would also like to quickly congratulate Sam and Aaron Klink of Funny Duck Farms, Jill Davies of Buzz Honey Products and Debi Stoness of Stone Heart Farm were the winners of a special prize from COG OSO for providing their responses. All three chose to renew their memberships with COG OSO. Thank you!

Currently, responses are still being analyzed, after which they will be distributed in a formal report. However, at this point it is possible to note some of the highlights here in *Down To Earth*. Please keep in mind that I am highlighting some interesting issues that came out of the survey, but there was a very diverse range of responses. Not all important issues and comments are discussed below.

There were 119 respondents, which far surpassed our goal. However, about 25 of these did not go beyond the first introductory questions. Nevertheless, this left us with almost 100 substantial responses to work with. I was very pleased to see that there were many responding farmers who I have not previously met, which means there are more farmers out there whom I do not know that are interested in organic production!

CONVENTIONAL FARMERS' INTEREST IN ORGANICS:

Only 13 responding farmers (just over 10%) are conventional, producing mostly grains/oilseeds and livestock for meat. Of these only 3 actually completed the survey, which makes it hard to make general analyses of this type of farmer. However, it also means we still fail to effectively reach and interest conventional farmers in COG OSO and organic production.

The good news is that these farmers have considered organic production and so may benefit from further contact with COG OSO. They cited emerging markets and price premiums as motivations for transitioning to organic, as well as an interest in improving livestock and soil health. Environmental sustainability is also a concern.

There are many factors preventing conventional farmers from transitioning. Just a few include costs of certification as well as organic inputs, and the certification process and learning to farm according to organic standards. There are also concerns that organic farming requires more land to achieve same yields, and that organic standards are unrealistic and limit farmers' toolbox for managing their farms.

Having these responses will hopefully help COG OSO to reach out better to conventional farmers curious about organic production.

"ORGANIC" FARMING CATEGORIES

Nearly half of all respondents declare that they are producing organically, though without having organic certification. Just over 20% stated they farmed "ecologically". Just over 20% also have organic certification either for their whole operation or in part of it (i.e. split production). One farmer was in transition to organic and one farmer was certified biodynamic (See Figure 1).

The above classifications continue to spark much debate as indicated in comment sections of the survey. Farmers with organic certification are concerned that it is confusing to the customer and unfair to them that others can market their products as organic without having certification to prove organic

integrity. In fact, there is concern that farmers declare their products organic and yet may not be following organic standards. Conversely, declared organic and ecological farmers have several reasons for staying out of the certification process, and most indicated that they have considered organic certification in the past. They cite a variety of issues from the high cost and record keeping involved to the lack of local demand requiring organic certification; from the distrust of a national regulatory system to the disagreement with some of the rules in that system (some stating that they meet and exceed organic standards). Or perhaps they simply do not produce on a large enough scale to warrant certification. On both sides of the debate there are valid arguments, as well as misinformed judgment. However, I do not want to imply an antagonistic rift between these farmers, nor over-simplify this debate: The above discussion is just an example of differing views. The issues are surprisingly complex and will probably always persist. Hopefully these responses in the survey will help COG OSO to formulate a strategy for addressing these issues.

With that said, there were considerable similarities in the way that farmers with organic certification, declared organic farmers and ecological farmers responded to many survey questions. Many organic/ecological farmers have always farmed organically and never considered farming conventionally. While price premiums and market access are important, they are not the main motivations for organic/ecological production. More important are the health and ethical treatment of people, livestock and the environment, particularly by reducing the use of chemicals. Another key similarity is the belief that organic farming provides much more benefit than the products yielded; it also provides food that is superior nutritionally as well as public health services, ecological services, personal/social well-being, etc. Often farmers state they enjoy their livelihood and the younger generation has a greater interest in joining. These values outweigh the general acceptance that organic farming is more work, but not as productive as conventional farming (in terms of yields).

Nonetheless, there were some interesting differences among these different groups of farmers' responses. For example, some certified organic farmers admitted feeling burdened by the extra cost and record keeping for certification. They also admitted that certification gains them credibility in the marketplace and that the record keeping requirements have made them into better farm managers. Ironically, some of those that choose not to certify their products do not consider there to be credibility in certification. They consider certification merely to be paying for a piece of paper to use as an impersonal marketing strategy, and that it does not necessarily prove sustainability.

Still, many farmers would consider organic certification. What seems to need to change for them is a reduction in cost of certification, more efficient record keeping requirements, and more government supports (training and cost share programs) for certified organic farmers, etc.

SCALING UP

The survey asked farmers about their interest in scaling up organic production, as we recognize that we need both new organic farmers as well as existing farmers to scale up production. For the most part, both declared organic farmers and farmers with organic certification are interested in scaling up (see Figures 2 and 3), not only to increase production but also to improve sustainability (for example by improving their crop rotation). Access to land, knowledge and skills are *not* limiting factors to scaling up – though there is a

general interest in making extension services more available. The cost of equipment, infrastructure, inputs and labour *are* factors that limit scaling up. With these limitations, farmers are concerned about being able to uphold quality of product as well as livestock and soil health on a larger scale.

Certified organic farmers are less concerned about market demand for increased organic product than declared organic farmers are. However, certified organic farmers would like to see better cooperation among organic businesses to increase efficiency of the organic sector on the farm and in the marketplace. Certified organic farmers would also like to see a closing of the “regulatory gap” which allows farmers to declare products as organic without having organic certification (see above discussion).

KNOWLEDGE AND TRAINING RESOURCES

In the survey, COG OSO asked farmers to assess our existing knowledge and training resources as well as comment on some ideas for new resources. In general, farmers stated that they appreciate having a diversity of ways to acquire knowledge

and training; especially since each have their pros and cons. For example, webinars are great because farmers can attend from home on their own time, but they are almost too short to provide the depth of knowledge required.

Farmers made it clear that they value personal interaction with other farmers and to see and experience new ideas in practice that they get from kitchen table meetings, workshops and conferences. The challenge for all of these training media is to deliver more advanced knowledge, to deliver more often, and to deliver in more communities (i.e. away from Ottawa). As COG OSO’s Farmer Outreach Coordinator, I am the first to admit these limitations and would like to see more of these events in more communities. So I will ask our respondents and our readers to contact me to help me do this as it takes volunteer human resources to make these things happen (my contact information is at the end of this report).

Our other main shortfall is the lack of resources we have in French. Again, this is so true. It is a concern discussed often, but we simply lack the resources (human and financial) to provide more information and training in French. These survey comments though will hopefully be a motivator to push us to provide more services in French as well as be a tool for helping us acquire funding resources to provide more in French.

I received a very large and innovative list of ideas for Farmer Outreach activities from respondents. The list is of course too large to reproduce here – and is too large for COG OSO to do it all! However, there are some good leads for us to look to improving Farmer Outreach into the future (see Figure 4). I have categorized these ideas into three sub-lists:

- internet based resources and training
- interpersonal resources and training (i.e. through personal interactions)
- knowledge and resources to help farmers
- knowledge and resources to help others to better understand farmers and farming

OTHER ISSUES

I look forward to trying to implement some of these ideas in the coming months and years. Once again, thank you for supporting COG OSO by participating in this survey and in other activities we initiate. Please feel free to contact me about the survey and other issues related to organic farming. My email is colin@cog.ca, my home phone is 613-493-0020 and my cell is 613-513-7651.

Fall Organic Gardening in the City Workshops

DAVID TOWNSON

The success of our Spring Organic Gardening in the City Workshops and the requests for further workshops have produced two new workshops for this fall season.

The first workshop is happening during Organic Week (September 21-29th) and is all about “Winterizing Your Organic Garden and Extending the Growing Season.” The workshop is offered by veteran instructor Rob Danforth and Jessica Singh, Project Manager for Senior Organic Gardeners. They are both excited to be offering this workshop on Tuesday, September 24th from 7 to 9 pm at our new location in Heartwood House.

The second workshop is about “Growing Garlic Organically” with instructor Dave McCreery. This is the perfect time of year to attend this workshop as you can go straight home and plant your garlic. We are trying to bring in a local organic garlic producer to sell organic garlic at the workshop.

Heartwood House is located at 400 McArthur Avenue (near St Laurent Blvd.). This is a newly renovated facility which is beautifully disposed for participants to be able to see, hear and participate fully. There is ample parking behind Heartwood House (turn south off McArthur onto Moorvale then go immediately right along the first alley to the end where there are at least a dozen parking spots). There is additional on-street parking on Rue de l’Eglise, Dieppe and Belisle streets nearby. Also, OC Transpo bus stop #14 is right across the street from Heartwood House.

Heartwood House allows us to keep the fees at a modest rate with discounts for students and seniors. You can register for one of both workshops with a package price available for adults, students and seniors. Registration is online at our website: www.cog.ca/ottawa/organic-gardening-workshops/

Handouts will be posted on our website below the Workshop Announcement with pdf files to be downloaded by participants before attending the workshops.

Our spring workshops were so popular that we recommend you register as soon as possible.

Kids, plants and bugs

BY TELSING ANDREWS

The Canadian Organic Growers – Ottawa – Saint Lawrence – Outaouais Chapter’s Demonstration garden is usually busy with activity as flowers bloom and set fruit along with a bio-diverse bustle of insects. However, for a month this summer, it was also alive with children opening their senses to the garden. In a series called Art meets Science, they learned observational games such as the difference between detail drawing and sketching a quick flurry of colour to capture the way those details connected together. They pressed flowers, examined the compost critters, did a simple test to grade soil and listened to readings from Thoreau’s Wild Fruits.

Luna said that what she remembers most is how the “plants feed the bugs and the bugs feed the birds. They are all together you know.” Great observation!

INTERESTED IN VOLUNTEERING? WE NEED A COMMUNICATIONS VOLUNTEER

We are looking for a dynamic, positive Key Communications Volunteer to learn about Canadian Organic Growers – Ottawa St Lawrence Outaouais (COG OSO) Chapter. The role would oversee leadership of our various communication functions: our website (www.cog.ca/ottawa), our quarterly newsletter (Down to Earth), our monthly COG OSO E-News, and more.

COG OSO is a dynamic chapter of Canadian Organic Growers - a national charity with a mission to lead local and national communities towards sustainable organic stewardship of land, food and fibre while respecting nature, upholding social justice and protecting natural resources.

We are looking for volunteer who is:

- interested and passionate about sustainability and organic stewardship
- an able communicator of the spoken word
- an excellent communicator in writing, able to match the message to the audience
- ensure that our communication tools accurately reflect our mandate and overall organization
- able to use good judgement about the content of our communication tools
- willing to offer a commitment of at least one year and preferably two or three years
- experienced and qualified in communications and leadership

This is an opportunity for a volunteer to contribute in a leadership role, enjoy the support of extensive orientation and regular meetings with phased in responsibilities and to be part of a committed team.

Please write a letter or send a resume to our Coordinator of Volunteers, Laura Harris: cogoso.volunteers@gmail.com. For more information, please call Margaret at (613) 244-4000 Ext. 2.

START-UP FARM PROGRAM APPLICATIONS FOR 2014 ARE OPEN UNTIL OCTOBER 31ST

In 2013, Just Food established the Start-Up Farm Program to support new farmers in the Ottawa region to start their own farm projects. Program participants can access up to 3 years of on-site support at the Just Food Farm in the Ottawa Greenbelt. This includes access to land, shared infrastructure and equipment, and training. The program also offers training to any new producers in the area, at a per-course fee.

The Start-Up Farm Program offers a low-risk way for new farmers to test their business ideas and to develop additional skills, experience and networks before committing to a larger, longer-term farm operation. The program offers an entry point for a diversity of new farmers, including those from a non-farm background, new Canadians, and those with farm experience in other settings. This program has received seed funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, the City of Ottawa, and Beau's All-Natural Brewing Company.

Applications for the 2014 growing season are now being accepted until Thursday, October 31st at 4 PM. For program details or to apply, please visit the Just Food website at www.justfood.ca/startupfarm-program. You can also meet the 2013 start-up farmers, read news articles about the program, and see farm photos on our website.

If you would like to learn more, we invite you to attend a Start-Up Farm Program Information Session on Wednesday, September 18th from 6:30 – 8 PM at the Just Food Farm (2389 Pepin Court). To register for this session, or if you have questions about the program, please contact Leela Ramachandran, Manager of Farm Programs at leela@justfood.ca or 613-699-8650 ext. 15.

FALL FARMER TRAINING WORKSHOPS: EXPLORING THE NEW FARM DREAM AND BUSINESS PLANNING

As part of our Start-Up Farm Program, Just Food offers a series of training workshops to all new and re-strategizing/transitioning farmers in the Ottawa region. Two new courses will be offered this fall:

Exploring the New Farm Dream - Is Starting An Agricultural Business Right For You? is designed to help aspiring farmers to learn what is involved in starting their own farm, and to decide whether this is a path they want to pursue. Business Planning for Start-Up Farmers is for new farmers who have already committed to or begun farming, and are ready for more detailed business planning.

Please visit our website at <http://www.justfood.ca/startupfarmprogram/farmer-training.php> for dates and more details on these workshops. To register for either workshop: contact Leela Ramachandran at leela@justfood.ca or 613-699-6850 ext. 15.

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contributions to COG OSO!

Website: www.cog.ca/ottawa

Deadline for next *Down to Earth*: **December 1, 2013**

Submit all articles to Editor.

Advertising: Advertisements are accepted in accordance with the current advertising policy, which is revised periodically. Please request the most recent version at the time of your request.

Organic growers with produce for sale can be added to the Organic Food Directory for a small fee. COG members enjoy some discounts. COG OSO does not necessarily endorse products and services advertised in *Down to Earth* and assumes no liability resulting from their use. Please contact the Advertisement Co-ordinator for further information.

Advertising deadline: **December 1, 2013**

Down to Earth is a non-profit publishing project of COG OSO which incurs substantial operating costs. Payment of each ad is expected before the insertion of a second ad.

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