

# Down to Earth

## Editor's Corner

It's been a long, cold winter, but spring is finally on its way. Let's let out a breath of collective relief, stow away our quilted jackets, and get ready to enjoy the harvest. Of course, we're not quite there yet. In the meantime, as a way of saying goodbye to the cold, why not try out some of the warming recipes at the end of this issue of *Down to Earth*?

On February 28, many organic gardening enthusiasts geared up for the growing season at the 31<sup>st</sup> Eco Farm Day conference. Attendance was high, and by all accounts, so was enthusiasm. Read on for a detailed report of how the day unfolded.

This issue also contains updates on all of your favourite COG OSO programs, a worm composting article written by one of this year's Urban Organic Gardening Seminars instructors (it's sure to get you primed for the garden), and a farewell to Growing Up Organic program manager Alissa Campbell. Everyone at COG OSO thanks Alissa for her invaluable contributions to the organic community and wishes her well in her future endeavors.

Near the end of this edition, you'll find a "letter to the editor" written by former COG OSO chair Susan Preston. I was pleased to read Susan's letter, which details her thoughts on this year's Eco Farm Day. I welcome similarly-inclined readers to submit their thoughts (on DTE or any of COG OSO programs and events) to me at [mollycogoso@gmail.com](mailto:mollycogoso@gmail.com) for future publication. Please note that, due to space constraints, we may have to edit longer letters. Deadlines are as follows: March 1<sup>st</sup>, June 1<sup>st</sup>, September 1<sup>st</sup>, and December 1<sup>st</sup>.

Regards,

Molly Davidson

[mollycogoso@gmail.com](mailto:mollycogoso@gmail.com)

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## URBAN ORGANIC GARDENING SEMINARS

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**REGISTER EARLY** for these illustrative, informative seminars held Tuesdays and Thursdays from 7 to 9 pm at Ottawa City Hall (110 Laurier). Offered by COG-OSO, these seminars give participants opportunities for sharing and hands-on learning.

**April 14** Basics of organic growing – Soil and Composting – Instructors Pat Lucey and Eveline Lemieux, Colonel By Room

**April 16** Organic Seeds, Germination & Seed Saving – Instructor Telsing Andrews, Colonel By Room

**April 21** Organic Container Veggie Gardening Part 1 – Instructor Rob Danforth, Colonel By Room

**April 23** Organic Edible Ornamentals including Edible Flowers & Herbs – Instructor Telsing Andrews, Colonel By Room

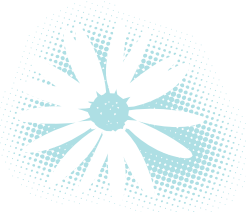
**April 28** Organic Container Veggie Gardening Part 2 – Instructor Rob Danforth, Colonel By Room

**April 30** Organic In-ground Veggie Gardening – Instructor David Hinks, Colonel By Room

**May 5** Designing an Organic Urban Garden to Support Pollinators & Pest Eaters and Pest Deterrents – Instructor Telsing Andrews, Richmond Room

Register for the affordable (half price) package of 7 seminars April 14 to May 5: \$70 for adults, \$60 for students and seniors. Individual seminar fees are \$20 for adults, \$15 for students and seniors (advance registration is advised, or register at the door as space permits).

Please visit: <http://cog.ca/ottawa/theyre-back-urban-organic-gardening-seminars-2015/>, e-mail [cog.oso.chapter@cog.ca](mailto:cog.oso.chapter@cog.ca) or call (613) 244-4000 Ext. 2.



# Worm Composting for Urban Agriculture!

BY EVELINE LEMIEUX

**W**orm composting is a method of recycling that turns food waste into a rich, dark, earthy soil conditioner. The greatest advantage of worm composting is that it can be done indoors as well as outdoors, all year long.

Worm compost is made in containers filled with moistened bedding and red worms. Add your food waste over a certain period of time and the worms and micro-organisms will convert the entire contents into rich compost.

To get started, you will need a wooden or plastic container with holes in the bottom, which will facilitate drainage. Make sure to put a tray under the container to gather the juice of the compost, and cover the container with a lid to maintain the humidity and darkness.

Begin by covering the bottom of the container with torn newspaper, then add organic residues such as fruit and vegetable peels, always alternating with newspaper. It is important to maintain a moist environment to promote composting.



The red worms should be added at the beginning of the process. They can be purchased at the following address: <http://www.wormcomposting.ca/>. Two pounds of worms are required for an average of 1 pound of waste to compost per day. Many waste byproducts can be incorporated into the composting bin, but using meat, dairy products, and fats is not recommended.

If properly done, worm composting produces no smell. The bin can be put outside during the

summer (in the shade) at a maximum temperature of 25 degrees celsius. Recovered compost juice can be used for watering houseplants. Compost can be put in vegetables in containers or directly into a garden.

Composting reduces waste in landfills, and it provides an excellent natural fertilizer. During summer months fruit flies may appear. The container can be cumbersome in small apartments; it must not be overloaded if one is to maintain the pleasant, earthy smell.

Learning about urban organic gardening is an enriching experience!

**Eveline Lemieux** has a Master's Degree in environmental sciences. She has worked as a research supervisor, management director, and consultant throughout Quebec and Ontario for government and private enterprises in the food, agriculture and environment sectors. Eveline is the president of SOL-AIR Consultants. She is an instructor for the **Urban Organic Gardening Seminars** offered by Canadian Organic Growers - Ottawa St. Lawrence Outaouais Chapter. These seminars will be held from April 15 to May 5, 2015. For more information, visit [www.cog.ca/ottawa/](http://www.cog.ca/ottawa/). Advance registration is highly recommended.



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# Eco Farm Day, 2015

KRISTINE SWAREN, BLUE CHICORY FARM

**“Healthy Land, Healthy People, Healthy Profits”** was the theme of Eco Farm Day’s keynote presentation and the conference day as a whole. As it turned out, we also had a healthy turnout, a healthy lunch, and a healthy dose of inspiration. This was, perhaps, one of the best Eco Farm Days I have attended.

A full room of farmers and friends listened to keynoter Tony McQuail (of Meeting Place Farm, Lucknow, ON). About 300 people learned from and laughed with Tony as he recounted personal experiences from his early days of farming and described how his adoption of Holistic Management has made quantifiable differences in his family’s quality of life and their farm’s profitability.

Holistic Management is a management approach that looks at farm life as a whole. It began with Allan Savory in Africa; his methods have been developed and adopted around the world. Tony and Fran McQuail are educators with the Holistic Management Institute as well as certified organic farmers in southern Ontario.

One of the biggest laughs of the morning was in response to Tony’s statement that it’s important to “make your plan but assume it will be wrong” (the basis for monitoring and adjusting, for aiming towards your goal while adjusting the plan. Holistic Management provides you with the tools to define your holistic goal, resources and action plan, then use decision-making testing questions and feedback loops.

It’s worth spending some time mulling over this point, too: “focus on what you want, not what you don’t want. Where you put your focus gains strength.” Where is YOUR focus? Act quickly to join Tony and Fran’s next Holistic Management course in Greely (Ottawa); it starts March 28th. Get details from the McQuails at [mcqufarm@hurontel.on.ca](mailto:mcqufarm@hurontel.on.ca)

Fourteen workshops were offered after the keynote. At my farm, we grow just under 1 acre of veggies and have 40 beehives, a dozen chickens, and sometimes a couple of pigs. I went to workshops that I hoped would help me improve and expand our operation.

Cute pigs and cute kids were the photo-show backdrop as Samantha Klinck (Funny Duck Farms, Jasper, ON) talked 1.6 kilometres a minute, starting with the difficulties of finding certified-organic weaner piglets and the obvious solution – grow your own. This solution may be obvious, but it’s not always easy. Sam described the challenges of over-wintering adult pigs, including keeping those big mamas happy and their tiny piglets thriving. Actually, she made a lot of it sound pretty easy and even appealing (aside from the size of those sows).

Samantha offers on-farm Pastured Pig workshops; check her website for more information. [www.funnyduckfarms.com](http://www.funnyduckfarms.com)

Profitability with Sustainability was the theme of Robin Turner’s talk called Scaling Up the Market Farm. Robin described how Roots and Shoots Organic Farm (Ottawa, ON) has expanded from 1 to 11 acres and from 60 CSA members to over 300 over the course of five years. They also sell at two farmers markets and to restaurants. The audience appreciated hearing the success stories, seeing the scale-appropriate equipment and methods that Robin’s team has developed; it especially appreciated hearing that the gross sales allow a 15-30% take-home for owners Robin and Jess. While the equipment and methods discussed weren’t all that different from those discussed at simi-



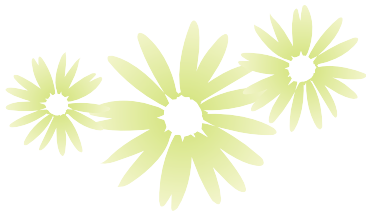
Vermont Beekeeper Ross Conrad speaks to standing room only crowd. Photo by Ron St Louis of Radical Homestead

lar growing-your-farm presentations, Robin differed in his focus on managing and growing people. He takes a thoughtful approach to training, leading, and giving leadership to his employees.

My hardest choice came next, when I had to choose between Dan Brisebois’ talk on considerations for contract growing vegetable seed crops and Sean Butler’s on profits from laying hens. I ended up seeing a bit of both, and I came away with more ideas than I know what to do with, at least for this year. Other topics (of workshops I didn’t attend) included root cellaring to increase

Senior Organic Gardeners SPONSOR

**Pantry**  **plus**



profits, beekeeping (how to help the current state of affairs), diversifying with medicinal plants, using sprayer equipment, managed grazing, and the three workshops in the field crops stream – open-pollinated field corn, precision farming technologies, and weed management strategies.

If you want more information, the speakers program is still available on the COG OSO website. We hope to have all of the presentations posted there soon. Please check out <http://cog.ca/ottawa/eco-farm-day/>.

At some point during the information blast, I joined the line-up for lunch. Feeding 300+ people



Lineup for the always-loved organic buffet lunch. Photo by Brenda Norman of Kozroots Garlic and Herb Farm, Monkland.

at the same time is a bit of a challenge, but many folks in line took the opportunity to meet some new friends as well as catch up with old ones. I'm always amazed when I see people meet for the first time over lunch, only to discover that they



each have something that the other needs. Networking at its best!

Lunch was, as always, delicious. Kudos to the organizing staff who sourced the food from local farms and companies, and thanks to the producers.

The volunteers on the organizing committee did a fantastic job of bringing together a strong roster of presenters and a full trade show. Thank you!

The trade show was full. There were 30+ exhibitors, many of whom were there for the first time with new products and services. Exhibitors' comments submitted to the organizing committee included some of the following positive evaluations:

- "Loved this show. Lots of interest in our company. Good Exposure."
- "I am pleased with the contacts I made, the sales that occurred and this well-organized well-run event (The food is fabulous!)."
- "Made great contacts and a few friends too!"
- "Talked to more prospective students than expected. Great job on getting the younger generation out!"

Such feedback from the businesses and organizations that provide services to farmers is proof of



Simon Neufeld of Earth Alive Clean Technologies presents on uses for sprayer on organic farms. Photo by Brenda Norman of Kozroots Garlic and Herb Farm, Monkland.

the vibrancy of the organic movement in Eastern Ontario and Western Quebec.

So thank you, thank you, thank you to the volunteers, to the exhibitors, to the participants, and to our great sponsors at all levels. We need you all to make Eco Farm Day happen each year, and this year was another healthy success.

The event website includes an evaluation form and the roster of speakers and sponsors from this year. If you want to get in touch or find out more, please visit <http://cog.ca/ottawa/eco-farm-day/>

Here's wishing you all a healthy growing season!

#### LETTER TO THE EDITOR DOWN TO EARTH

### Congratulations for such a successful Eco Farm Day in 2015!

Every part of the Eco Farm Day event was first class. The keynote was engaging, relevant, informative, and spoke to the very real, practical challenges that most people face, offering real, practical solutions. The 'trade show' was packed and lively – people clearly benefited from those connections.

We attended the workshops on Cold Storage, Certification Alternatives, Bee Keeping, and Seed Contracting. Each presenter was excellent, and each session was very well attended.

The food looked beautiful and was excellent. Everything ran on time, there were good questions and discussions, people were fully engaged. The main hall was packed for the keynote, an excellent indication that people continue to find Eco Farm Day a really worthwhile event to attend.

Notably it was wonderful to see so many people of all age ranges – youth, young families, all of us in the middle, and the wise elders – all together, all sharing. It was excellent to see the fresh roster of speakers, and encouraging that some of our 'younger' regional organic entrepreneurs have reached a stage that they have a lot of valuable innovative experience to share. This was a successful event by any standards, and all the more so because you pulled it together in a fraction of the usual time! Three cheers to the 2015 EFD Team!!!

Very best regards,  
Susan Preston  
(former Chair, COG OSO)



# GROWING UP ORGANIC UPDATE

AMANDA WILSON, REGIONAL MANAGER GROWING UP ORGANIC

Despite all of the snow on the ground, Amanda, Alain and Jennifer have hit the ground running in preparation for another great year of Growing Up Organic educational programming. We are hopeful that we will secure new funding for our Ottawa-based programming in the near future. In the meantime, Amanda is developing a new financial framework to continue offering workshops and establishing a Growing Up Organic Bursary Fund to ensure workshops remain accessible to all schools in Ottawa. In SD&G, Alain has been busy meeting with schools and community organizations, including the Social Development Council of Cornwall and the Seaway Valley Community Health Centre. Discussions have explored the delivery of garden-based programming in schools as well as community parks and social housing over the summer months. We are taking a similar path in Prescott-Russell, exploring opportunities to expand the program outside of schools as well as expanding our FarmGate Cafe relationships between schools and local farmers.



Amanda in Barn

## GUO IS LOOKING FOR GARDEN TOOLS!

Do you have any trowels, spades or shovels collecting dust in your garage? If so, Growing Up Organic would love to take them off your hands and put them to good use in our edible school gardens. Please contact Amanda Wilson at [guo-ottawa@cog.ca](mailto:guo-ottawa@cog.ca) if you have any tools to donate.

## Celebrating 40 Years!

COG is celebrating its 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary this year! Fundraising is an important pillar of our organization - our survival in fact.

We are planning a number of fundraisers over this anniversary year.

What do you think about a Summer Choir Concert at our Demonstration Garden in the Central Experimental Farm on Prince of Wales Drive? This would be a fundraiser for our Growing Up Organic program in the schools!

What a great way to support the kids!

Sound good?

Let us know please at [growinguporganic@gmail.com](mailto:growinguporganic@gmail.com)

## Farewell Tribute to Alissa Campbell

Alissa Campbell has been the life and soul of the party at Growing Up Organic (GUO) since 2011. She has developed the program using her many talents, along with a lot of hard work.

She developed a partnership between GUO Stormont-Dundas-Glengarry and All Things Food, as well as a partnership between GUO Prescott-Russell and Eastern Ontario Agri-Food Network.

Alissa managed GUO regionally, applying for and receiving funding from a number of organizations. These included a significant three-year grant from the Trillium Foundation.

Alissa came to COG OSO and Growing Up Organic with many relevant experiences and excellent qualifications (including a BA from McGill and a Msc from York).

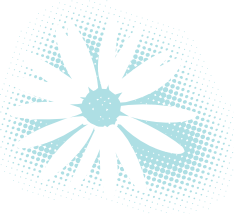
She leaves us to follow her lifelong dream of becoming a farmer; she will be interning on a farm in 2015. COG OSO owes her so much for all of her dynamic work, and we will be honouring her at a "Thank you and Good Luck" Reception on April 19 at Joan of Arc School. Our hope is that Alissa will stay in close touch with COG OSO in the years to come!



Alissa Campbell

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## Senior Organic Gardeners Update

BY ADELE MCKAY & MARGARET TOWNSON

Senior Organic Gardeners has been active during the non-growing season, partaking in horticultural therapy activities in the SOG locations and keeping organic gardening in mind as we build momentum for the gardening season.

At the long-term care seniors' facilities, we have been carrying out floral and herb bouquet-making sessions; we also got into the Christmas spirit last December, decorating rosemary and lavender Christmas trees.

At the OCH seniors' locations, activities have varied; they've included sprouting sessions, growing organic micro-greens, cooking with herbs and exchanging recipes, preserving herbs in olive oil, choosing unique heirloom and organic-certified seeds for the new garden season in 2015, and discussing garden designs.

SOG works on a three-year plan. In the first year, we help to set up garden beds and advise on soil and the selection of plants and seeds. We also offer workshops about planting, watering, and maintaining the gardens, plus (of course) harvesting and enjoying! In the second year, we encourage more independence, with a local volunteer taking the lead role. In the third year, we try to prepare volunteers and seniors to take over

completely so that the gardening continues beyond SOG's direct involvement. During the non-growing season, horticultural therapy activities build momentum, give pleasure, and encourage sharing with others.

We have had speakers at various seniors' residences, including an indoor gardening and grow-lights workshop at Brooke Towers, where we also held a session on bringing potted plants to market with the intention of creating a social enterprise. This is just one example of the initiatives surfacing among seniors in relation to gardening.

SOG then withdraws from direct work in the fourth year, but gardening advice is still available when there are blights or other problems in the gardens.

This means that we have space to take on new locations. We are planning to do this in Ottawa as well as expanding to the Outaouais.

The vision and plans for SOG can be found on our updated website at [www.cog.ca/ottawa/senior-organic-gardeners/](http://www.cog.ca/ottawa/senior-organic-gardeners/). Feedback, suggestions and questions are always welcome.

Email us at [sog@cog.ca](mailto:sog@cog.ca) or [cog.oso.chapter@cog.ca](mailto:cog.oso.chapter@cog.ca) or call (613) 244-4000 Extension 8 (Adele) or 2 (Margaret).

We are currently doing a funding campaign for individual donations and sponsorships from local companies and organizations: <http://cog.ca/ottawa/sponsorship-opportunities-benefits/>

Our campaign also includes organic seed sales at Pantry Plus Health Food Store in Orleans and Rainbow Foods on Richmond Road, where we sell seeds donated by Greta's Organic Seeds and Cottage Heritage Gardens. This is just one example of the local community's contribution to the financial success of SOG.

We hope to raise enough funds locally to keep our project manager on the job until at least the end of the planting season, and until we hear from all of our potential funders.

SOG faces similar challenges to Growing Up Organic in finding a balance between local donations and sponsorships and grants. We have been pursuing grants from New Horizons for Seniors, the Howard Webster Foundation, and the *Pacte rurale* in the Outaouais. We expect news from these funders in the very near future.

We appreciate the huge support we have enjoyed from our community. Thank you.



### Watch for the Senior Organic Gardeners Summer Garden Tour

The SOG gardens are special – planted and cared for with tender loving care! You will be invited to tour SOG gardens in July when they are at their best.

Watch for announcements in COG OSO E-News and register to participate with Door Prizes and entertainment! We invite your support of this program!

Russell Manor



## Neonicotinoids killing bees?

**Rebuttal to *An Open Letter to Ontarians: Getting the Facts Straight on Honey Bees* (ad published in the *Globe and Mail* on Saturday January 31, 2015)**

It would indeed be a good idea to get the facts straight on honey bees. But this ad, purporting to represent all Ontario farmers, does the opposite.

The ad fails to mention that neonicotinoids are used on almost 100% of corn crops in the province and 60% of soybean crops and that these two crops alone make up more than two-thirds of farm acreage in Ontario. Neonicotinoids are used increasingly not only in corn and soybean production but increasingly on wheat, canola, potatoes, fruit and other trees, and on ornamental plants sold for home gardens. The ad fails to mention that with each application of neonicotinoids, plant pollen and nectar become toxic to pollinators, soil concentrations rise and the pesticides enter our surface water and ground water systems, affecting not only honey bees but other beneficial insects and amphibians.

The ad fails to mention the Worldwide Integrated Assessment of systemic insecticides, a huge research effort involving dozens of scientists from 10 countries that analyzed more than 800 scientific papers and concluded that neonicotinoids were responsible for a major decline in pollinators around the world. The ad fails to mention that 58% of Ontario's bee hives failed to survive the winter last year; that's 58,000 colonies that died in one year alone. This compares to the 15% of hives that failed to overwinter in less contaminated times.

The sponsors of the ad claim to represent 28,000 farm families in Ontario. They do not. They don't represent my son, who is a farmer in Grey County, nor many of the other farmers in his neighbourhood, who are growing vegetables, fruit, grains, beans and other crops without the use of pesticides. They don't represent those farmers who belong to the National Farmers Union, which supports the Ontario government proposals to restrict the use of neonicotinoids. They do not represent beekeepers in the province, many of whom produce



*Photo courtesy of Covenant Farm*

honey and other food products on their farms. They don't represent those farmers whose crops are dependent on pollination by bees.

It is no surprise that the organizations that have signed onto this letter include CropLife, lobbyist for the pesticide industry. Or the Canadian Seed Trade Association, whose members include Bayer, the world's largest neonicotinoid manufacturer, Dow, Dupont, Monsanto, and Syngenta, all chemical companies deeply invested in neonicotinoids and other toxic pesticide systems.

Let's get real here. There are big players behind this ad, players who have the bucks to take out a full page ad in national newspapers and who also have a big stake in neonicotinoids continuing to be used in Ontario. They are going to do everything they can to avoid regulations that reduce the use of these pesticides, including "open letters" like this one to lull readers into thinking that these toxic chemicals are harmless.

**Jennifer Penny** of the OBA and U of T Beekeepers Association

P.S. If you look at the Ontario numbers at <http://www5.statcan.gc.ca/cansim/a47> the numbers don't reflect what the ad is saying. Number of beekeepers has grown, so have the number of colonies, but the honey production has fallen dramatically.

## Steering Committee Report

The COG-OSO steering committee continues to meet on the fourth Tuesday of every month. Steering Committee members and other volunteers have been actively working on Eco Farm Day, which was held on February 28 and was a great success.

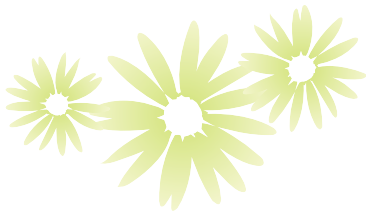
If you are a regular reader of *Down to Earth*, you are likely aware of the challenges we are facing with regards to securing long-term,

*If you are interested in volunteering as a member of the Steering Committee – or in some other capacity – please don't hesitate to get in touch!*

sustainable funding for two of our key programs – Growing Up Organic and Senior Organic Gardeners. We thought it was an important time to take a strategic look at the work of the chapter and ensure that we have the resources (people and funding) available to deliver some of our key programs and activities.

To that end, the February meeting of the Steering Committee focused on some strategic planning for the organization, building on earlier gap analyses that have been done. At the meeting, we also decided on a co-chair model for the Steering Committee and we welcomed two co-chairs – Stephanie Lane and Marley Lewington. Marley will be responsible for all communications of the chapter and Stephanie will take charge of other aspects of the organization's governance, including chairing meetings and being the liaison with the national office. In addition, Barbara Koch has volunteered to be the chapter's secretary. Gary Weinhold will continue on as treasurer for the organization.

COG OSO is a charitable organization driven primarily by passionate volunteers; there is always plenty to do here. If you are interested in volunteering as a member of the Steering Committee – or in some other capacity - please don't hesitate to get in touch! More information about the governance of the chapter will be available on our website in the next little while.



## Chinese get closer look at Dobson's Grass-fed Beef

BY STEVE NEWMAN [steve.newman@metroland.com](mailto:steve.newman@metroland.com)  
FROM THE RENFREW MERCURY, THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2014



*Some of the livestock at Dobson's Grass-Fed Beef.*

It used to be his great-great-grandfather William's farm in the 1850s. But the farm looks a lot different now. Once the home to lots of chickens, pigs, cows and some cash crops, the focus for the past 30 years has been on livestock production, hence the name Dobson's Grass-fed Beef.

Sept. 11, Dobson hosted a tractor-pulled, wagon-ride tour for 19 Chinese visitors. "What I hope is that they learn something they didn't know before they came, about certain agricultural and water-management practices," said Dobson.

The delegation's interpreter, Joseph Liu of Ottawa, accompanied them on the two-and-a-half-hour tour, whose first stop was a shelter belt of trees.

Shelter belts, two to 12 metres in width, are intended to protect both the pastures and cattle from strong winds, thus contributing to healthier growth of both vegetation and livestock. The foliage also provides a home for wildlife, which in turn helps with insect control.

Dobson's farm — located on Snake River Line just west of Cobden — features three kilometres of these condensed belts of trees across prevailing winds. There's also another three kilometres of buffer zones of tree and bush growth near his creeks that serve as berry-growing and anti-erosion sites.

The big focus on Dobson's 200-acre farm is sustainable agriculture, with

96 per cent of revenue coming from selling the beef products of more than 100 cows each year. The other four per cent comes from the sale of on-site elderberries.

Dobson, who estimated that maybe one of his cattle comes down sick every two years, said he doesn't use antibiotics, pesticides or herbicides, grain or corn supplementation, or growth hormones for his cattle.

The farm also works with a local abattoir, five kilometres away in Micksburg.

Dobson's Grass-fed Beef, Dobson points out in his own handout, is high in protein, low in fat and requires 30 per cent less cooking time than conventional beef.

Dobson also views the farm as an educational home, with two or three agricultural student interns coming each year, from France and other overseas countries. "They learn, and I feel I'm contributing to something that they're all about — sustainable agriculture," said Dobson, who has hosted about 50 students from 15 countries in the past decade. This helps maintain an average staff contingent, including Dobson, of 1.5 people per year.

Another of the 11 stops on the tour gave Dobson a chance to emphasize the point that all his cattle receive a pasture diet that's half grass and half



*This delegation of officials from China's agricultural arm of the department of finance is ready for a wagon ride around Dobson's Grass-fed Beef farm on Snake River Line. From left, in the front row, are Algonquin College forestry technician Frank Knaapen, Bob Dobson, delegation head Guoliang Han, agrologist and veterinarian Kelly Butler of Beckwith Township and interpreter Joseph Liu.*





As interpreter Joseph Liu looks on, beef farmer Bob Dobson explains the dietary importance of having legumes (like alfalfa) and grass in his livestock's pastures.



A modest investment allowed the installation of this solar-pumping watering system. This creates a healthy component of the farm known as Dobson's Grass-fed Beef. Cattle are fed water in troughs from a spring-fed pond throughout the year.

legumes (trefoil, alfalfa and clover). No grain or corn is fed to his cattle, who reach the abattoir around 1,025 pounds and one and a half years in age.

### WATER MANAGEMENT

Stops during the wagon ride gave the Chinese visitors chances to view separate watering systems. One was a solar-pumping system to access a spring-fed pond dug locally. Installed in 1994, this system keeps cattle out of local waterways and provides clean water for up to 200 head of cattle.

The system cost \$5,500, while batteries need changing every five years. The underground location of the water, between pond and trough, allows the water to be fed year-round. The trough's capacity is 4,000 litres.

The second part of the water-pumping system is another trough with capacity for 1,200 litres. This system also operates in freezing temperatures.

The Chinese also saw Dobson's two hectares of black elderberries, which are sold as fresh, frozen and concentrated products.

The delegation's leader was Guoliang Han, deputy director general for the Chinese Ministry of Finance's state office of comprehensive agricultural development.

The main reason for the visit to Canada, which included trips to Ottawa, Toronto and other Ottawa Valley farming operations, was to establish international co-operation and exchange with those who practise sustainable agriculture.

The delegation also viewed the winter feed storage facility for haylage and hay, and heard about the farm's almost exclusive focus on direct marketing and sales to consumers. Dobson's Grass-fed Beef make twice-monthly trips to sale locations in Ottawa, do regular online sales through the Ottawa Valley Food Co-op and sell at the Carp Farmers Market.

The only two retail outlets that sell his beef are Pura Vida Nutrition Store and Wheatless Wonders in Renfrew.

Dobson also has a cooking tip or two. In particular, don't use microwaves or high temperatures to cook beef. And if you like it well done, cook at low temperatures in a marinade.

For more about Dobson's Grass-fed Beef and his cooking tips, visit [www.dobsonfarm.com](http://www.dobsonfarm.com).

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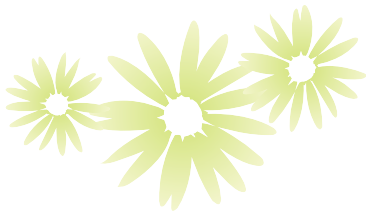
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## Recipe: TORTILLA DE PATATAS BRAVAS

BY LAURA MONCION

This recipe is a combination of two Spanish recipes – tortilla de patatas, or potato omelet, and patatas bravas, which means “brave potatoes” (associated with bravery because of the heat from the chillies). In this recipe, the spiciness is heightened by adding harissa to the egg mixture. I find that in the dead of winter, I like a little more heat in my food. If you have a low tolerance for spicy food, I suggest omitting the red chillies and keeping the harissa for its sweetish-smokey quality.

### INGREDIENTS

- 4 medium-sized local, organic potatoes, any kind
- 1 smallish local, organic onion
- 1 or 2 cloves of garlic, vaguely smashed
- 3 local, organic eggs
- about ½ cup organic milk (or water, if you’re on a budget or have dairy restrictions)
- dried red chilli peppers, to taste
- about 1 teaspoon of harissa

### METHOD

- chop the onion and potatoes into roughly the same size, place on a baking sheet with the garlic and some olive oil, salt, papper, and the red chilli peppers
- bake the potatoes at 400°F for about an hour, or until they are brown and crispy around the edges and can be pierced through with a fork
- let the potatoes cool while you make the egg mixture (this also works exceptionally well with leftover potatoes from a previous meal)
- to prepare the egg mixture, whisk the eggs in a bowl together with the harissa, some salt and pepper, and the milk or water, until combined
- when the potatoes are cool, arrange them in a heatproof frying pan or skillet and pour the egg mixture over them
- there are two methods to cook the tortilla: one, the traditional method, is to cook it on the stovetop and then flip the tortilla to cook both sides, sliding it out of the pan onto a plate and then flipping it. I prefer the more cowardly approach: cook on the stovetop over medium heat until the

bottom of the tortilla is just cooked, then stick the pan under the broiler to finish the job

- when both sides of the tortilla are browned and the middle is cooked, remove the tortilla from the pan and cut into pieces, and enjoy with some wilted greens or (greenhouse permitting) a crisp salad.

## Recipe: PARSNIP CAKE

I am mad for vegetable cakes – beet cake, zucchini cake, carrot cake – and this is one of my ultimate favourites. It’s kind of like carrot cake, but with hints of aromatic parsnip flavour. Perfect for a wintry evening snack or a slow, snowy morning breakfast. I like it as is, but you could add a simple cream cheese icing or lemon glaze if you wish.

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup flour
- 1 tsp cardamom
- ¼ tsp ground cloves
- ½ tsp cinnamon
- 1½ tsp baking powder
- ½ tsp salt
- ¾ cup brown sugar
- handful of cranberries (optional)
- 2 eggs (or 2 tbsp flax and 6 tbsp water)
- ⅔ cup vegetable oil or melted butter
- 2 cups grated parsnips



Photo courtesy drchrispinnock, flickr.com

### METHOD

- mix together the flour, spices, baking powder, salt, brown sugar, and cranberries (if using)
- mix together the eggs and oil/butter, then combine with the dry ingredients
- mix in the grated parsnips and combine well
- pour the mixture into a greased loaf or cake tin
- bake at 350°F for 18-20 minutes, or until the top of the cake is browned and a knife comes out clean from the middle of the cake

## Recipe: WINTER EVENING DRINK

This recipe is based on a late medieval English recipe called posset, which was originally made with fresh milk and ale. My version uses whiskey instead, sort of a grown-up version of the hot milk I was given as a child when I couldn’t sleep. This drink will warm you through and definitely put you in a snoozy mood on a cold winter’s evening!

### INGREDIENTS

- little less than 1 mugful whole organic milk (leave space for the whiskey)
- 1 finger Irish whiskey (or to taste)
- bit of honey (optional, and to taste)
- cinnamon, ground nutmeg, ground clove, and/or lemon zest, to taste



Photo Courtesy Paul Chenoweth, flickr.com

### METHOD

- heat the milk in a small pot over medium heat, whisking the spices in
- when almost boiling, quickly whisk in the whiskey, pour back into mug, and enjoy!

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## Leave a Gift in Your Will

Through a gift to COG OSO in your will, you can leave a legacy of caring for organic gardening with seniors and children. Two of our main programs – Growing Up Organic, which is offered to children in schools, and Senior Organic Gardeners, which is for seniors – will survive and thrive thanks to your generous support.

Making a legacy gift is a personal decision that should be made with your lawyer or financial advisor to ensure your personal priorities and your family's needs are met. We would love to talk with you about how you can leave a lasting legacy by providing children and seniors with opportunities to garden organically through your will.

### **GIFTS IN YOUR WILL**

A gift in your will shows more than just foresight and careful planning; it reveals a lasting commitment to the children and seniors in your community and a desire to make a difference that extends beyond your lifetime.

You can choose what to give: a specific amount, a percentage or the residue of your estate. You can also bequest real property or securities.

You can also choose how your money is used. Tell us which programs you would like to support, or instruct us to direct your gift to the area of greatest need.

Giving a gift in your will is also a tax-smart strategy. It will reduce the taxes your estate will have to pay. We can send you information about planned giving and a sample bequest clause to take to your lawyer or notary.

Please contact us at [cog.oso.chapter@cog.ca](mailto:cog.oso.chapter@cog.ca) or call 613 244 4000, Extension 2



## Celebrating 40 Years!

COG is celebrating its 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary this year! In recognition of this significant milestone, we'll be featuring COG and COG OSO and all its programs in many ways this year!

### **A SPECIAL INVITATION**

We want to celebrate our 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary by collecting stories from you our members, our supporters, our followers:

1. Please tell us what COG OSO has done for you?
2. Have you benefitted from any of our programs? Growing Up Organic, Senior Organic Gardeners, COG OSO on the Road (Booth), the Demo Garden at the Experimental Farm, Eco Farm Day, Annual Organic Gardening Workshops and Seminars, Newsletters, *Down to Earth* and much more?
3. Have we addressed issues that were of concern to you?
4. Suggestions what COG OSO should be doing as we begin the next 40 years!

Please send your comments to Marley our new Co-Chair & Communications Lead via [cog.oso.chapter@cog.ca](mailto:cog.oso.chapter@cog.ca)

## Demonstration Garden Announcement

The Canadian Organic Demonstration Garden volunteers from the 2014 growing season had a meeting in February to discuss our goals for 2015. February featured a record-breaking cold snap; from now on, our wrap-up dates will be part of our gardening season. Our official launch date has yet to be determined, but we need an early work group each spring, and the more the merrier. We ask that you "answer the call" if you can. We can only speculate about what the long cold spell has done, which makes it tricky to know when we will be able to work the garden. We have decided that a priority must be immediately lifting grass from our beds. We have never quite gotten rid of those intertwined grass roots which stayed strong in a couple of places. For your input and discussion, there is still some space for organic vegetable seeds and seedlings in the raised Vegetable bed, which is divided into five sections and is centered by the knee-high raised box bed with seating along its edge. Garlic is already in, and potatoes have a section just west of the garlic.

Our public forum and casual workshop offerings are going to be determined after we assess our talent pool this year; if you think you should be part of that pool, please jump in. Here's a message specifically for COG Demonstration Garden long-time volunteers: please feel free to offer generously of your time and ideas again this year. A call to those thinking of getting involved – you will be most welcomed, and this year promises to be a rewarding one.

Jim Davidson, Demonstration Garden Coordinator

Email: [dr241@ncf.ca](mailto:dr241@ncf.ca)



## Seeking: Photo Documentary Participants

I am writing this letter to farmers across Ontario. I am seeking participants for a photo documentary I would like to produce about farms that use ecologically-sustainable, organic practices to produce food and raise their livestock.

My name is Jordan Snobelen and I am an independent documentary photographer living in Cambridge, Ontario. Over the past year, I've become increasingly curious about the role that food plays in our physical and mental well-being. I have come to realize that society's modern view of food is broken, and that we have a lack of connection with our agricultural roots. The insights I've gained through my research have moved me to pursue a further understanding of agriculture and to educate others along the way.

I hope that with an ongoing documentary project I can encourage a dialogue about our food and bridge a connection between the urban consumer, the rural producer, and the land that provides us our food. After all, how can we care about something if we have no relationship with it in the first place? I believe this is a particularly important time to engage our society in a conversation, as more people are becoming "food aware" and questioning the modern food industry. Through my research I have come to believe that our food and the way we produce it is the most powerful resource we can harness to make a vast and positive change in the health of our nation and our quality of life.

My documentary approach tells a complete story and often takes a long time to accomplish. Projects can take upwards of a year as I amass the number of pictures necessary to get the story right. I'm not interested in just popping in to grab a photo that only illustrates the surface of a subject. I want to become immersed in the life of the farm and the lives that revolve around it. It is for this reason that it is so important that the farmers I partner with believe in this story.

Farmers who are interested in participating would be asked to host me for a minimum of two weeks at a time. This will allow me to settle in and capture your true day-to-day life. I will personally be covering all costs associated with my travel, film lab processing/printing and production. However, because of high cost and a limited budget, I am unable to pay room and board, which is why I require this help from my hosts. In exchange, I would be happy to get my hands dirty and give of my time and energy to help with tasks around the farm when I'm not shooting.

I would like to meet or speak with each participant ahead of time to discuss expectations and opportunities. Ideally, photography would begin for produce farmers at the start of the planting season, so initial interviews should begin as soon as possible. For livestock farmers, the starting point can be more flexible, but interviews should still begin as soon as possible (there are seasonal, time-sensitive events I hope to capture).

If this project sounds like something you would like to be a part of in any way, please let me know. I appreciate any level of participation, whether you would like to host me at your farm, show me around your operation for a day, or just grab a coffee and talk. The success of this project depends on the willingness of people like you to open their doors and share their stories!

Thank you for your time and interest in making this project come to life.

- Jordan

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Email: [info@jordansnobelen.com](mailto:info@jordansnobelen.com)

Phone: 519-240-6250

## Announcement from Aster Lane Edibles

Aster Lane Edibles, supplier of hard-to-find edibles and other practical plants, has been busy growing seedlings and creating a calendar of events, which include workshops and plant sales. We will

be starting with our spring fling on April 18, where we will give a short tour of our sugarbush and forest garden. Our hardiest plants will be available along with early spring vegetable starts from Holly's

Harvest. To find out more about our events both west and east of Ottawa, please visit the following web address. <http://asterlane-edibles.ca/calendar-events--sales.html>

### *Down to Earth*, COG OSO's Quarterly E-Newsletter

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Deadline for next *Down to Earth*: **June 1, 2015**. Submit articles to the Editor.

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