

Exploring Certified Organic Seed Production in British Columbia

**Part of OSDP Project:#1-055 -
*Small Scale Seed Production for Organic Farms.***

Survey Result Summary and Report

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Preamble

This Survey was a project of a small group of organic growers informally called *The BC Seed Security Project*. This group consists of Chris Wells, Patrick Steiner, Susan Davidson, Heather Pritchard, and Arthur Ralfs. Bios can be found in Appendix C.

This project was funded through an OSDP grant, received through the Certified Organic Associations of British Columbia (COABC). However, the views expressed in this report, the survey itself (or in any public communication that this group has made regarding this survey), are solely the views of this group and not of the COABC.

The total budget for this project is \$1400.

The survey was designed and distributed using www.surveymonkey.com

A complete summary of the survey results has been printed with this report as Appendix A. However, the survey is not printed in its entirety. Questions that are essentially insignificant to overall survey results have been omitted due to space and formatting restraints. Also, questions that allow for comments have only been partially printed. In most cases, the first ten responses, unedited, have been printed.

The full survey summary can be viewed at:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/Report.asp?U=258919167753>.

This online summary can be analyzed thoroughly through the filter feature on SurveyMonkey. Individual respondent results are not available for public viewing to ensure confidentiality.

A complete list of BC Seed Growers, and other seed companies mentioned in this survey can be found in Appendix C

Introduction

As a small grassroots group of farmers with an interest in seed security, we have taken upon ourselves the role of catalyst to stimulate conversation and cooperation amongst farmers on the issue of seed security in British Columbia. I will not here elaborate greatly on the specifics and scope of the issue of seed security; however, the goal of this group is to enhance the independence and success of BC's organic industry by promoting seed growing awareness amongst organic farmers.

In order to promote seed security awareness successfully, we found it crucial that we have information about what BC organic farmers are already doing to ensure their own seed security. Thus, this survey was created to gather important information from farmers. We hope that by utilizing the results of this survey, as well as continuing talks with organic farmers, that we can develop a plan to decrease reliance on larger seed companies and increase reliance on each other for sourcing quality seed.

There are several ways, as implied through the survey, that we believe we can improve seed security awareness amongst farmers. Some of these are:

- Continuing workshops on seed growing topics
- Introducing participatory plant breeding programs
- Increasing seed trading amongst organic farmers
- Use of a centralized seed cleaning facility for processing bulk seeds
- Promoting use of local and Certified Organic seeds
- Developing literature for farmers and seed growers
- Developing an informative website as a local resource

The survey asks these, and other questions, to help ensure that any actions we take, as a group, to promote seed security in BC will be meeting the needs and desires of organic farmers and are not just based on the assumptions of a small minority.

Seed Security Strategy

What does a seed security strategy look like? Such a strategy can take many different forms, but our vision may be best summarized by a list of strategies we develop early in our meetings:

Towards a Mandate:

1. To support BC farmers to grow more and better quality certified organic seed
2. To develop and promote seed growing methods that are economically viable, increase genetic diversity and thereby foster local sustainable agriculture
3. To educate seed growers and farmers about effective plant breeding and seed saving techniques
4. To establish contacts with Canadian and bioregional organic seed growers
5. To stay informed on issues and developments affecting seed democracy
6. To build national and international partnerships with those furthering these goals
7. To educate the public re: the importance of seed quality and democracy

Towards Strategies:

- a. To foster a network of BC seed growers
- b. To develop a website
- c. To survey our existing BC seed growing capacity, seed inventories and the needs of BC organic farmers
- d. To develop a database serving BC seed growers and farmers
- e. To articulate best practices guidelines for certified organic seed production

f. To support/develop seed distribution network(s)

g. To develop cleaning strategies and equipment for collective post harvest treatment and handling to organize workshops and distribute information (eg: link with COG library)

Survey Analysis

This document is not meant to serve as a thorough analysis of this survey. Though such an analysis will be important in the future to utilize and understand this information properly, this document shall serve as a summary of the more explicit points revealed through the survey. As mentioned in the preamble, survey results are available online for review and to utilize the filter feature, which allows one to more easily group and compartmentalize target groups of respondents (i.e. farmers growing on 1 acre or less).

Survey Distribution

This survey was administered electronically, with the option of having a paper copy mailed out. The survey was distributed using the following internet pathways:

- Certified Organic Associations of British Columbia Listserv (384 Members)
- Vancouver Permaculture Listserv (196 members)
- Islands Organic Producers Association Listserv (108 members)
- Canadian Organic Growers – Vancouver Island Listserv (72 members)
- BC Seed Growers Listserv (72 members)
- Direct to Certified Organic Farmers (490 farmers)

Total distribution (not accounting for cross-posting, which may be high): **1322**

Total Respondents: **275**

Response Rate

The target group for this survey was Certified Organic (CO) farmers. It was distributed to CO farmers directly and through the COABC listerv. Of the 490 total CO farmers and processors in BC that received e-mail survey requests (approximately 80 did not have e-mail addresses), there were 184 respondents. These numbers constitute a 37.5% response rate. However, as many CO producers are not seed crop farmers, but are in fact processors, grape growers, orchardists, or other non-seed utilizing producers, this response rate is better determined by eliminating them statistically. An estimated 112 producers fell into this so-called *non-seed utilizing* category, reducing total potential respondents to 378 and thus

resulting in an overall response rate of 48.6%. The non-seed utilizing growers were determined in two ways: Some simply replied to the survey request letting us know that they were not seed utilizing producers; for others, I used the COABC online database and those that had perennial crops listed as their main product were dimply marked as “declined” in the survey data. This was not done until the survey had been closed.

Based on full distribution figures (above), response rate is approximately 21%

These response rates can be rated as ‘good’ and thus give us some useful statistical data. However, a few things need to be taken into consideration:

- The accuracy of the answers;
- The quality (or lack of quality) of the question being asked;
- The accuracy of the conclusions we can draw from the survey results;
- The chance of repeat respondents.

Other discrepancies, I am sure, can also be taken into consideration. As I am neither an experienced statistician, nor an experienced survey author, criticisms of this survey are welcomed, but only inasmuch as they apply to any inferred conclusions drawn from this survey’s results. Such conclusions can only be speculative at best.

Individual Question Analysis

We will not analyze each individual question in this report. Such analysis would take more time and experience than we currently have available. Questions that will be addressed will be ones with obvious preferred answers (high percentage of a specific response), non-subjective data (i.e. acreages), and ones that relate directly to the mandate and strategies upon which the survey was built. As mentioned earlier, the survey is available online for detailed analysis and can also be found at the end of this report. Please note that the survey in this report is numbered differently than the survey online. All question numbers in this report refer to the survey at the end of the report.

General Response Statistics

We received responses from a wide range of farm sizes, and wide range of experienced producers. Most farms (32%) were from 2-5 acres with most farms (86%) having 1 acre or less in seed production. The range of experience covered farms that had been certified for 1-3 years to over 10 years.

Seed Growing

An important question in the survey was to determine who was and was not growing seeds (in the past five years). Roughly half (51%) of the survey participants were seed growers. The half that were not were filtered to a later question where we focus on seed purchasing. Of the seed growers, 41% also sold their seeds - with 15 people operating local seed companies (see Appendix B for contact information). Seed sellers marketed their seed a variety of ways with 25% of respondents utilizing word of mouth

Seed Trading

Only 10% of respondents stated to having traded seeds with other farmers on a regular basis. 52% responded as rarely trading seeds with other farmers. This will be an area of follow up and focus. As a note, this question was only posed to farmers who were seed growers and does not account for seed trading amongst non-seed growing farmers (who may trade seed they have received from other farmers).

Sowing Seed

Only 4% of respondents stated that all the seed they sow each season is their own saved seed. 35% stated they sowed only 5-10% of their own seed each season. When asked why they do not grow more of their own seeds, 24% stated that they did not have time to do so, though all answer were well represented in this question. This points to a multitude of factors preventing farmers from growing out their own seed, including restraints on space, economic potential, and energy.

Seed Crops

The top ten seed crops grown by farmers in the past three years were:

Garlic – 69.2% of respondents

Flowers – 57%

Tomatoes – 56.1%

Bush Beans – 54.2%

Peas – 45.8%

Potatoes – 43.9%

Kales – 39.3%

Pole Beans – 39.3%

Parsley – 38.3%

Arugula – 38.3%

Please note that potatoes and garlic are cloned crops and thus limited genetic recombination, and thus selection, is possible. Tomatoes, bush beans, and peas, are all self-pollinating crops, as are many flowers. Kales, parsley, and arugula are all frequently grown, cross-pollinating crops

22.4% of respondents have grown some of their own cover crop seeds.

Plant Selection

Respondents had a wide range of plant selection criteria, with 38.7% selecting (i.e. roguing out unwanted plants) “as much as possible”. This topic is of particular importance in terms of increasing the frequency of desired traits (i.e. kale leaf shape), while limiting opportunity for the frequency of undesired traits (i.e. early bolting)

Plant Population Sizes

39.8% of respondents upheld minimum populations sizes for their seed crops in amounts that varied with different crops. While many respondents were unsure of their population sizes, most respondents had populations under 40 plants for self-pollinating crops and under 50 plants for cross-pollinating crops.

Trials Against Other Seeds

39.8% of seed growers had trialled their seeds against others’ seeds of the same variety and 68.3% stated that their seed performed better than the other seed. While there may be some bias in answering this question, this may also speak to the importance of acclimating seeds to one’s growing conditions.

Farmer Cooperation

52.9% of respondents stated that they would be interested in collaborating with other BC Seed growers to grow seed crops to meet the demands of BC farmers. Currently, only 13.7% of growers network with others to determine which seed crops to grow. 27.5% stated interest in utilizing a centralized seed cleaning facility for such purposes, while 47.1% remained unsure. The question of a centralized seed cleaning facility elicited many valuable comments.

Seed Purchasing

Farmers purchased their seeds from a variety of local and international companies. The top five listed companies were:

West Coast Seeds – 73.1% of respondents

Other – 51.8%

Johnny's – 48.2%

Salt Spring Seeds – 39.9%

William Dam – 38.9%

For Certified Organic Seed purchases, the top five companies were:

West Coast Seeds – 70.3%

Johnny's – 44%

Other – 41.8%

Salt Spring Seeds – 39%

Stellar Seeds – 34.6%

Contact information for all seed companies can be found in Appendix B

Annual Seed Budget and Sourcing

21.5% of respondents reported spending only \$50-\$100 each year on seeds, while most respondents fell into the \$50-\$1000 range.

53.9% of respondents reported using the Internet for sourcing their seeds, but a wide range of responses points to multiple sourcing strategies by farmers

Sourcing Certified Organic and Local Seed

92.7% of respondents make an attempt to source Certified Organic Seed before purchasing from conventional seed companies and 45.6% state that it is extremely important to source Certified Organic seed. However, only 10.4% of respondents state that all seed they grow is Certified Organic. 18.1% state that they purchase 80% or more Certified Organic seed. The

even distribution of answers for this question point to issues regarding sourcing Certified Organic seed, with 78.6% stating that the varieties they want are not available in Certified Organic seed.

Most respondents, 35.6%, stated that it would be *somewhat possible* to source all seed for a season as Certified Organic.

In contrast only 25.7% of respondents stated that sourcing local seeds was *very important*, with 67% stating they make an attempt to source local seed. While most respondents were unsure of the percentage of their local seed purchases, 26.2% stated that they bought between 5-20% local seed. Of all local seed purchases, 21.6% were Certified Organic. 77.7% stated that the varieties they desired were not available from local producers.

Local and Certified Organic Seed Quality

32.1% of respondents stated that they saw *no discernible difference* in quality between conventional and Certified Organic seed, while 3.7% stated that Certified Organic seed was *always better quality*.

43.3% of respondents were unsure of the quality difference between local and out-of-province seed. 24.1% stated there was *no discernible difference* and only 2.1% felt that local seed was *always better quality*.

COABC Organic Seed Database

72.1% of respondents have never accessed the seed database on the COABC website. Of those that have, 56.9% stated the website was *somewhat useful*, and 52.9% stated that *more information about the seeds and links to websites* would improve this database.

Farmer Resources and Research

67.2% of respondents felt that the COABC standards should include standards for seed growers.

85.2% thought that seed growers would benefit from a “Best Practices” manual that offered seed growing guidelines and 55.2% stated that a seed-growing manual would be a good support to help them grow better seeds and make more informed purchases.

54.1% of respondents stated that a Participatory Plant Breeding Program would be beneficial to Certified Organic farmers. 43.7% were unsure, and only 2.2% did not think such a program would be beneficial. 63.1% stated they would be interested in participating in a Participatory Plant Breeding program and 21.9% stated they would not be interested in participating in such a program

37.6% of farmers were interested in doing seed research on their own farms, while 7.2% are already doing trials.

Conclusions

While no solid conclusions can be drawn about the whole survey at this point, there are a few things that stand out about the survey:

- A number of farmers took a good amount of time to spend with the survey and to submit their feedback. For that I say thank you. That, in itself, is an indication of interest in progressing with improving seed security issues in BC.
- While there is room for improvement in the purchasing of organic seeds, many farmers are already doing a good job in this area, demonstrating that it is achievable. It will be good to get their feedback to learn how it is they are able to do so.
- Support for Participatory Plant Breeding seems strong and this may lead to a thorough program being developed
- Support for more education and training is strong as well and will hopefully continue to be strong in the years to come
- Communication amongst farmers regarding growing and trading seed could be greatly improved. Once again, we can learn from those already doing so.
- There seems to be some hesitancy about the idea of a centralized seed cleaning facility. Hopefully more discussion on this topic will evolve.

- Although many farmers stated they thought it was important to source Certified Organic seed, only a small percentage purchased all organic seeds. The importance of buying local seed did not appear to be a concern to growers either.
- There are many seed companies out there to choose from. Please check Appendix B for a thorough list

Once again, thank you to all who participated in this survey. Your input has been invaluable not only to your fellow growers, but to future growers as well.

Appendix A

Exploring Certified Organic Seed Production in BC.

Survey Results

Are you a Certified Organic Farmer who purchases or grows seeds for your operation?

	Response Total	Percent total
1 Yes, I operate a Certified Organic farm and purchase or grow seeds	184	67
No, I am a Certified Organic processor or other business and do not use seeds at all	35	13
No. I operate a Certified Organic farm but grow only tubers and root crops	11	4
My farm is NOT Certified Organic BUT I am still interested in participating in this survey	46	16

2 Is your farm or operation located in British Columbia?

	Response total	Percent total
Yes	179	98
No	3	2

3 How long has your farm been Certified Organic?

	Response total	Percent total
1-3 years	52	29
4-6 years	47	26
7-10 years	33	19
10+ years	46	26

4 How many acres of land do you have in Certified Organic production?

	Response total	Percent total
1 or less	17	9.5
2 - 5	57	32
5-10	39	22
10-20	22	12.5
21-50	20	11
50+	23	13

5 Are you currently or have you in the past five years GROWN any Certified Organic seed crops?

	Response total	Percent total
Yes	90	51
No	88	49

NON - CO FARMERS (Questions A-E)

A Is your farm or operation located in British Columbia? (Non-Co)

	Response total	Percent total
Yes	33	94
No	2	6

B How many acres of land do you farm? (NON-CO)

	Response total	Percent total
1 or less	9	25
2-5	9	25
5-10	7	20
10-20	3	9
21-50	3	9
50-100	0	0
100-250	1	3
250+	3	9

C	<u>Are you currently or have you in the past five years grown any seed crops? (Non-CO)</u>		
	Yes	Response total	Percent total
		23	92
	No	12	8
D	<u>How much land do you have in seed production? (Non-CO)</u>		
		Response total	Percent total
	1 or less	15	84
	2-5	2	11
	5-10	0	0
	10-20	0	0
	21-50	0	0
	50+	1	5
E	<u>Are the seed crops that you are growing exclusively seed crops or are they bi-products of your produce crops (check all that apply) (Non-CO)</u>		
		Response total	Percent total
	I grow most of my seed crops exclusively as seed crops	5	28
	My seed crops are mostly bi-products of my produce crops	5	28
	Where feasible my seed crops are bi-products of my produce crops	3	17
	This varies greatly throughout my different seed crops	1	6
	I have no crops that I grow solely for seed	4	21
6	<u>Are the seed crops that you are growing exclusively seed crops (not harvested as produce during the growing season) or are your seed crops integrated with your produce crops (i.e. - crops are grown mainly for produce and the seed saved at the end of the season)?</u>		
		Response total	Percent total
	I grow most of my seed crops exclusively as seed crops	17	18
	Most of my seed crops are integrated with my produce crops	32	32
	I integrate my seed crops with my produce crops as much as possible	9	9
	My seed crops are mostly bi-products of my produce crops	36	37
	This varies greatly throughout my different seed crops	4	4
7	<u>How many acres of land do you have in Certified Organic seed production?</u>		
		Response total	Percent total
	1 or less	82	86
	2-5	10	11
	5-10	1	1
	10-20	0	0
	21-50	2	2
	50+	0	0
8	<u>Do you sell your seeds?</u>		
		Response total	Percent total
	Yes	41	37
	No	71	63
9	<u>Do you market your seeds yourself?</u>		
		Response total	Percent total

Yes	31	76
No	10	24

10 Do you operate your own seed company?

	Response total	Percent total
Yes	15	48
No	16	52

11 Which seed company do you operate? (Optional)

- Edible Landscapes*
- Salt Spring Seeds*
- Planting Seeds Project*
- Marlinspike Gardens*
- Full Circle Seed*
- Eisenhower organic produce*
- Two Wings Farm Seeds*
- Rebecca's Garden Seeds*
- Steveston Stock and Seed Farm*
- Across the Creek Organics*
- Stellar Seeds*
- Maple Bay Organic Seed Garlic*
- Sunshine Farm Seeds*
- Seeds of Victoria*

12 Do you sell your seeds to OTHER seed companies as well?

	Response total	Percent total
Yes	4	29
No	10	71

13 How do you market your seeds? (Choose all that apply)

	Response total	Percent total
Own website	12	13
Others' websites	2	2
Mail-out catalogue	5	5
Seedy Saturday	14	16
Farmers or other markets	17	18
Word of Mouth	23	25
COABC database	6	7
Other (please specify)	13	14

- tiny stores*
- Books, articles*
- IOPA listserve*
- ad in local newsletter, also local craft fair and markets*
- Other links and databases*
- Farm Market Stand*
- Seed Savers Exchange*
- through wholesale customer sales*

14 Do you, or have you ever, sold your seeds to a SEED COMPANY?

	Response total	Percent total
Yes	7	70
No	3	30

15 Which seed companies have you sold your seed to? (Optional - Please list one per line please)

Salt Spring Seeds; Steller Seeds
west coast
Stellar Seeds
Salt Spring Seeds
stellar seeds
Stellar Seeds
Stellar Seeds

16 Do you TRADE seed with other farmers?

	Response total	Percent total
Yes on a regular basis	11	10
Yes as much as possible	10	9
Yes but rarely	52	46
No not at all	33	29
Other (please specify)	6	6

re question 26 it is less than 5 %
not yet, likely will in future
Sometimes
I intend to trade and sell my seed.
trade and give to other gardeners and friends
would be very interested in trading more

17 What percentage of seeds that you sow each year are your own saved seed?

	Response total	Percent total
5-10%	40	35
10-25%	19	17
26-50%	14	12
51-75%	11	10
76%+	11	10
All the seed I sow is my own	4	3
Not Sure	15	13

18 Why do you not use more of your own seeds? (Choose all that apply)

	Response total	Percent total
Not enough space to grow enough of my own seed	31	16
Not enough time to grow enough of my own seed	44	24
Not economically viable	23	12
Too much work	24	13
Varieties I want are difficult to grow for seed	29	16
No desire to grow more seed	2	1
Other (please specify)	33	18

experimenting with new varieties from other growers

We are just learning to grow seed and are proceeding gradually. We hope to grow nearly all the seed we need in the future.

don't save cross-pollinators

still adding new diversity

cross-pollination concerns

some hybrids are better for production so we grow those too

I take my job as a seed grower very seriously. There is the need for variatal grow outs.

I grow varieties from collections of stock seed that need to be grown out for the purpose of having certified organic seed available.

Industrial Hemp pilot project

clarification: not enough space for isolation distances, like growing too many varieties for isolation, like to grow some hybrids (and lots of o.p.)

I grow several varieties and worry of cross polination, safer to buy?

19 Please check some of the seed crops you have grown in the past three years:

	Response total	Percent total
Artichoke	4	3.7
Arugula	41	38.3
Basil	32	29.9
Beets	31	29
Broccoli	17	15.9
Brussels Sprouts	2	1.9
Bush Beans	58	54.2
Carrots	19	17.5
Cauliflower	2	1.9
Celery	11	10.3
Collards	9	8.4
Corn	28	26.2
Cucumber	29	27.1
Eggplant	9	8.4
Flowers	61	57
Garlic	74	69.2

Head Lettuce	40	37.4
Kales	42	39.3
Kohlrabi	1	.9
Leeks	31	29
Lettuce for Baby Greens	37	34.6
Melons	12	11.2
Mustards	35	32.7
Onions	31	29
Oriental Greens	30	28
Parsley	41	38.3
Parsnips	17	15.9
Peas	49	45.8
Peppers, Hot	34	31.8
Peppers, Sweet	29	27.1
Pole Beans	42	39.3
Potatoes	47	43.9
Pumpkin	24	22.4
Radish	26	24.3
Romaine Lettuce	28	26.2
Spinach	29	27.1
Summer Squash	25	23.4
Swiss Chard	30	28
Tomatillos	24	22.4
Tomatoes	60	56.1
Turnips	6	5.6
Weeds	21	19.6
Winter Broccoli	5	4.7
Winter Squash	38	35.5
Other (one per line please)	38	35.5

chicory.. not enough land space for crossers

Rapini

fringe permaculture plants medicinal herbs

Unknown

Soybeans

Sunflowers

Cilantro

Fava beans

Dry Beans - fava, soy, dry peas - lentils,garbanzos

cilantro caraway

20 Do you grow any of your own cover crop seeds?

	Response total	Percent total
Yes	24	22.4
No	83	77.6

21 Do you do specific selecting when growing your seed crops (i.e. do you rogue out unwanted plants or mark desirable plants before they flower)?

	Response total	Percent total
Always	24	22.6
As much as possible	41	38.7

Sometimes	28	26.4
Never	13	12.3

22 What prevents you from doing specific selection on your seed crops?

	Response total	Percent total
Not enough time	4	28.6
No reason to do selection	4	28.6
I think more plants equal greater diversity	1	7.1
Never even crossed my mind	5	35.7

23 How careful is your selection process when growing out a seed crop (select two choices if need be)?

	Response total	Percent total
Very careful - I make careful selections on all seed crops	25	24.3
Somewhat careful – I do as much selection as I can	42	40.8
Careful – I would do more careful roqing or selections if I had the time	14	13.6
Not too careful – I do as much selection as I have time for	24	23.3
Not careful at all – I simply save the seed when it is ready.	13	12.6

24 Do you try to uphold minimum populations for your seed crops

	Response total	Percent total
Yes	41	39.8
No	32	31.1
As much as possible	30	29.1

25 What are your usual MINIMUM populations for SELF-pollinating crops?

	Response total	Percent total
1-2 plants	4	3.9
2-5 plants	10	9.7
5-10 plants	14	13.6
10-20 plants	20	19.4
20-40 plants	8	7.8
40+ plants	16	15.5
Not Sure	28	27.2
Other (please specify)	16	15.5

26 What are your usual MINIMUM populations for CROSS-pollinating crops?

	Response total	Percent total
Not sure	40	40
10-20 plants	14	14
20-50 plants	13	13
50-100 plants	8	8
100-200 plants	4	4
200-400 plants	4	4
400+ plants	1	1
I usually require thousands of plants	1	1

27 What are your USUAL population sizes for Squash or Pumpkin seed crops?

	Response total	Percent total
I do not grow squash seed	52	50.5
5-10 plants	20	19.4
10-20 plants	11	10.7
20-30 plants	2	1.9
30-40 plants	3	2.9
40-60 pants	3	2.9
60-100 plants	3	2.9
100+ plants	2	1.9
Other (please specify):	10	9.7

28 Have you ever trialed (done side by side comparisons) your seeds against another's seeds of the same variety?

	Response total	Percent total
Yes	41	39.8
No	62	60.2

29 How did your seeds compare?

	Response total	Percent total
They performed better than the other seed I trialed against	28	68.3
No discernible difference	11	26.8
They did not perform as well as the other seed	5	12.2
Not Sure	3	7.3

30 Would you be interested in collaborating with other BC Seed growers to grow seed crops to meet the demands of BC farmers?

	Response total	Percent total
Yes	54	52.9
No	11	10.8
Not sure	37	36.3

31 Do you network with other farmers or seed growers to determine which seed crops to grow?

	Response total	Percent total
Yes	14	13.7
No	72	70.6
Sometimes. I have grown specific seeds when requested.	16	15.7

32 Would you be interested in utilizing a centralized seed cleaning facility (BC-based) for processing your seeds?

	Response total	Percent total
Yes	28	27.5
No	26	25.5
Not sure	48	47.1

33 Would you like to make some comments about the idea of a centralized seed cleaning facility for BCs Certified Organic seed growers? (OPTIONAL)

it would be fantastic if it was central enough it was accessible great for building community, learning, networking

Is there any risk of mixing my seeds with other growers'?

At this point I do not have trouble cleaning seeds except for 1 or 2 out of over 600.

could be a great resource, as long as the facility needed minimal financial assistance to run.

lots o' issues to resolve

I live quite rurally, and would need to have a convenient situation for my seed. There has been some talk in the past about travelling seed cleaning, and I have done this often with my seed winnower.

Seed cleaning facility in NE BC

Control of facility to ensure product is certified may enable more local seed production may be easier to purchase cert. seed

how about decentralized

Full support! while I do not sell or trade, other CO farm managers do and, from what I have observed, do not trust particular growers seed purity or germination. Local feedback is that particular CO seeds do not germinate.

34 Which seed companies have you bought seeds from in the past THREE YEARS?

	Response total	Percent total
Environmental Seed Producers	3	1.6
Fedco	3	1.6
Full Circle Seeds	35	18.1
Johnny's	93	48.2
Nichols Garden Nursery	7	3.6
Planting Seeds Project	29	15
Richter's Seeds	63	32.6
Salt Spring Seeds	77	39.9
Seeds of Change	56	29
Seeds of Victoria	24	12.4
Snow Seed Companies	0	0
Stellar Seeds	68	35.2
Terra Viva Organics	16	8.3
Territorial Seed Company	41	21.2
Tomatofest Certified Organic Seeds	3	1.6
Turtle Tree Biodynamic Seeds	3	1.6
Two Wings Seeds	37	19.2
West Coast Seeds	141	73.1
William Dam	75	38.9
Other (please specify):	100	51.8

Family seeds

Seed Savers Exchange US Wild Garden Seeds US

pacific northwest

Rebecca's Garden

The Garden Path

I prefer to read all the items before I respond to any7. Can't do that wityh this desgign.

Chilterns, Horizon Herbs

Agrestal

...

stokes seeds

35 Approximately how much do you spend each season on seeds?

	Response total	Percent total
\$50 - \$100	41	21.5
\$100 - \$250	38	19.9
\$250 - \$500	32	16.8
\$500 - \$1000	33	17.3
\$1000 - \$1500	7	3.7
\$1500 - \$2000	6	3.1
\$2000+	14	7.3
Not Sure	6	3.1
Other (please specify)	21	11

36 How do you source your seed?

	Response total	Percent total
Internet	104	53.9
Seedy Saturdays	55	28.5
Other Farmers	62	32.1
Word of Mouth	55	28.5
Local Distributors	49	25.4
Local Shops	35	18.1
Other (please specify):	67	34.7

37 Do you make an attempt to source Certified Organic Seed before purchasing from conventional seed companies?

	Response total	Percent total
Yes	179	92.7
No	14	7.3

38 How important is it for you to source Certified Organic seed?

	Response total	Percent total
Extremely Important	88	45.6
Somewhat Important	53	27.5
Important	34	17.6
Not too important	13	6.7
Not important at all	5	2.6

39 What percentage of seeds that you purchase each year are Certified Organic?

	Response total	Percent total
5-10%	19	9.8
10-20%	32	16.6
20-40%	20	10.4
40-60%	28	14.5
60-80%	13	6.7
80+%	35	18.1

All Seeds are Certified Organic	20	10.4
Not Sure	13	6.7
Other (please specify)	20	10.4

40 What prevents you from buying more Certified Organic Seed? (Choose all that apply)

	Response total	Percent total
Too expensive	44	23.5
Varieties I want are not available	147	78.6
Poor quality	34	18.2
Can't get the quantities I require	49	26.2
Other (please specify):	38	20.3

Poorly designed questionnaires

trying to find rare plants - no seed available

I grow my own seed or people send me theirs

--some seeds are prohibitively expensive --some organic seeds have produced poor results

we have had bad luck with the seeds being true when ordering organic seed. This is a problem with conventional seed also but not as great a problem

nothing stops us

Crops currently grown are used for cattle feed of my herd.

41 How often do you buy Certified Organic cover crop seed?

	Response total	Percent total
I always buy Certified Organic cover crop seeds	35	18.1
I sometimes buy Certified Organic cover crop seeds	57	29.5
I rarely buy Certified Organic cover crop seeds	37	19.2
I never buy Certified Organic cover crop seeds	41	21.2
Other (please specify)	37	19.2

42 How possible do you feel it would be for you to source adequate quantities of Certified Organic Seeds for a season at your farm?

	Response total	Percent total
Very possible - I have no problem locating all the Certified Organic seed I need for a season	26	13.6
Somewhat possible – I could certainly get a number of CO seeds I require in sufficient quantities	68	35.6
Possible – It would take great effort to even get a portion of the CO seeds I need for a season.	33	17.3
Not too possible – I require too much seed and could not likely find many of them in sufficient bulk quantities	26	13.6
Not possible at all – Sourcing all seeds as Certified Organic would not be possible for me	27	14.1
Other (please specify)	23	12

43 What prevents you from purchasing and using more Certified Organic cover crop seeds? (Choose all that apply)

	Response total	Percent total
Cover crops I use are not available in CO seed	76	48.1
Cannot get the quantities I require	25	15.8
CO cover crop seed is too expensive	31	19.6
Not required by Certification standards	20	12.7
I do not use cover crop seeds	23	14.6
Not sure	14	8.9
Other (please specify)	35	22.2

not locally available

Illiteracy

friends give me bags of it!

We try to use only organic seed sourcing/availability is a problem.

We use a lot of natural growth for cover cropping

i have my own covercrops

We are a grazing operation and don't need it, however I do use covercrops sometimes in my CO garden.

What direction am I travelling. Lower mainland--conventional:terra link/interior--organic as available to times travelling. It's hard to get cover crop here.

We seldom use cover crop though when sowing cover crop we always use CO seed.

44 How important is it for you to source BC grown seeds?

PLEASE NOTE: NOT ALL BC SEED COMPANIES GROW THEIR OWN SEED. IF YOU ARE NOT SURE WHETHER THE BC COMPANY YOU BUY SEED FROM GROWS THE SEED THEMSELVES PLEASE ASSUME THAT THEY DO NOT FOR THE PURPOSES OF THIS SURVEY OR CONTACT THE COMPANY TO CONFIRM.

	Response total	Percent total
Very important	49	25.7
Somewhat important	46	24.1
Important	37	19.4
Not too important	44	23
Not important at all	15	7.9

45 Do you make an attempt to source BC Grown seed?

	Response total	Percent total
Yes	128	67
No	63	33

46 What percentage of seeds that you purchase each year are GROWN in BC?

	Response total	Percent total
5-20%	50	26.2
20-40%	21	11
40-60%	12	6.3
60-80%	13	6.8
80+%	17	8.9
Not Sure	62	32.5
All Seeds are from BC	4	2.1
Other (please specify):	20	10.5

47 What prevents you from buying more LOCAL Seed? (Choose all that apply)

	Response total	Percent total
Too expensive	25	15.9
Varieties I want are not available	122	77.7
Seed quality is not good enough	37	23.6
Can't get the quantities I require	48	30.6
Other (please specify):	32	20.4

48 What Percentage of BC Grown seed that you buy each year is Certified Organic?

	Response total	Percent total
5-10%	23	12.1
10-20%	9	4.7
20-40%	13	6.8
40-60%	10	5.3
60-80%	16	8.4
80-99%	28	14.7
All local seeds I buy are Certified Organic	41	21.6
Not Sure	55	28.9

49 Based on your own experience how would you rate the quality of Certified Organic seed to conventional seed that you use?

	Response total	Percent total
Always better quality	7	3.7
Usually better quality	37	19.8
No discernible difference	60	32.1
Sometimes better quality	27	14.4
Never better quality	15	8
Not Sure	48	25.7

50 Based on your own experience how would you rate the quality of BC Grown seed to seed purchased from out of province or out of country seed that you use?

	Response total	Percent total
Always better quality	4	2.1
Usually better quality	21	11.2
No discernible difference	45	24.1
Sometimes better quality	18	9.6
Never better quality	8	4.3
Not sure	81	43.3
Other (please specify):	18	9.6

51 Which companies do you currently purchase your CERTIFIED ORGANIC Seed from?

Response total Percent total

Environmental Seed Producers	0	0
Fedco	2	1.1
Full Circle Seeds	29	15.9
Johnny's	80	44
Nichols Garden Nursery	4	2.2
Planting Seeds Project	17	9.3
Richter's Seeds	32	17.6
Salt Spring Seeds	71	39
Seeds of Change	47	25.8
Seeds of Victoria	20	11
Snow Seed Companies	0	0
Stellar Seeds	63	34.6
Terra Viva Organics	10	5.5
Territorial Seed Company	14	7.7
Tomatofest Certified Organic Seeds	3	1.6
Turtle Tree Biodynamic Seeds	4	2.2
Two Wings Seeds	28	15.4
West Coast Seeds	128	70.3
Other (one per line please)	76	41.8

52 What type of education training or experience do you have in the area of seed growing or plant breeding? (Choose all that apply)

	Response total	Percent total
University trained	16	8.6
Self-taught	137	73.3
Workshops	51	27.3
Apprenticeship	12	6.4
Resource Books	97	51.9
Other (please specify):	47	25.1

would love more local workshops apprenticeship or full season courses

not much at all

Really bad training!

other organic farmers

agriculture diploma (switzerland 1975) self-taught and experience all this years

College

I am a spiritual farmer. I listen to the plants and the earth. I am given directions, and follow as I am able. All levels of achievement here are my teachers. Observation is another key place for learning for me. Networking: learning from story, other growers experiences.....all levels of experience are my teachers.

53 What are some of the resource books you have used? -OPTIONAL-

Seed to Seed, Breed Your Own Vegetable Seed, and many others

Ashworth, SEED TO SEED

Salt Spring Seeds Catalogue Dan Jason's books

Pamphlets provided by various marketing co's and on-line sources

The New Organic Farmer The Flower Farmer

seed to seed

LOt, too many to remember.

J.I.Rodales "How to grow vegetables and fruits by the organic method" Tidbits from everywhere

government handout

Organic Farming by Nicolas Lampkin Numerous books on Biodynamics

54 Would you be interested in workshop or short-term classes on any of the following topics? Choose all that apply. Add your own ideas to the "Other" Heading

	Response total	Percent total
General Seed Saving	100	54.3
Plant Genetics	67	36.4
Seed Growing vs. Vegetable Growing	93	50.5
Breeding Techniques	81	44
Seed Harvesting	106	57.6
Seed Storage	88	47.8
None of these interest me	30	16.3
Other (please specify):	27	14.7

55 Have you ever accessed the Seed database on the COABC website?

	Response total	Percent total
Yes	51	27.9
No	132	72.1

56 How useful did you find this database?

	Response total	Percent total
Very Useful	8	15.7
Somewhat Useful	29	56.9
Not very useful	9	17.6
Not useful at all	3	5.9
Not sure	2	3.9

57 What would improve this database for you?

	Response total	Percent total
More information about the seeds	27	52.9
Seed prices	19	37.3
Make it easier to read	3	5.9
Links to websites	27	52.9
Other (please specify):	17	33.3

58 What support would most help you to grow better seeds and make more informed purchases? (Choose all that apply)

	Response total	Percent total
Workshops	79	43.2
Seed growing manual	101	55.2
Marketing help	23	12.6
Seed cleaning facility	37	20.2
Increased networking with other farmers and seed growers	83	45.4
More information from seed companies about seeds	80	43.7
Other (please specify)	24	13.1

59 Do you think BC's Organic Standards should contain standards for Certified Organic seed growers?

	Response total	Percent total
Yes	123	67.2
No	11	6
Not Sure	54	29.5

60 Do you think BC Certified Organic Seed growers and farmers would benefit from a Best Practices manual that offered seed growing guidelines?

	Response total	Percent total
Yes	156	85.2
No	4	2.2
Not Sure	23	12.6

61 Would you be interested in participating in a Participatory Plant Breeding Program?

	Response total	Percent total
Yes	66	36.1
No	40	21.9
Not Sure	77	42.1

62 Do you think a Participatory Plant Breeding Program would be beneficial to BC Certified Organic Farmers?

	Response total	Percent total
Yes	99	54.1
No	4	2.2
Not Sure - I would need more information about Participatory Plant Breeding to answer this question accurately	80	43.7

63 Would you be interested in doing seed research or plant breeding trials on your farm?

	Response total	Percent total
Yes	68	37.6
No	35	19.3
Not sure	65	35.9
Already doing research and trials	13	7.2

64 Are there any specific areas of seed growing or plant breeding that interest you in particular?

Response total Percent total

Yes

60

33

No

98

53.8

If Yes, please list

*un-hybridizing - going from hybrid back to open pollinated
all of it!*

small scale edible grain growing

how to produce reliably viable seed

I would have liked to be able to read through this thing before starting to answer. The designers have forbidden that option.

few plants - what to do? good harvesting techniques selection when there is no "model"

saving heritage seed varieties

selection

Areas listed in previous question

specific # needed to produce true genetic seeds for each crop.

65 Can you tell us briefly about your research or trials? - OPTIONAL-

I would like to be able to read the entire survey before beginning to answer. This reflects a certain level of literacy. The designers of this survey have deliberately precluded the literate reader from reading the survey through before starting to respond.

I grow out about 1000 cultivars annually

Selecting own strawberry variety for green house every year. Selecting own yellow cherry tomato for green house every year. Selecting own Daikon seeds in green house for outside use.

I trial all fruits and vegetables that I think I can grow. I am now researching how to breed varieties of vegetables

every year is a test crop with the new requirements for CO seeds, I have experienced a wide variety of quality, ie. overall results vary wildly with various seed companies. still searching for reliability.

Participating in a BC native grass seed production trial

Every year I choose a few new crops to save seed from to expand my personal collection. I have begun the process of recording more data on these trials which for the most part have been a visual and experiential check.

Working on a storage onion. Have already developed my own cucumber.

Trials comparing varieties adapted to Pacific NW Careful selection to maintain or restore genetic quality of heirloom varieties Overwintering varieties to provide food year round

66 Is there anything you would like to add regarding the issue of seed security in BC that you think would be useful for this survey?

Do we have a seed bank?

*networking and communication and a variety of people growing different and similar crops. for security especially in cases of crop failure due to climate change
no.*

*a good data base of who had what. What you are doing is so great! Thanks, Chris!
Robin*

Seed saving for grains

Security of this information is compromised!

All power to what you are doing!

more detail about what a seed cleaning facility would provide for farmers, and what its costs might be.

no, it was fairly thorough

Appendix B - Seed Supplier List

BC Grown Seeds

Salt Spring Seeds

Box 444, Ganges P.O.
Salt Spring Island, BC
V8K 2W1

www.saltspringseeds.com

250.537.5269 (inquiries only, no orders)

Two Wings Farm

4768 William Head Rd.
Victoria, BC
V9C 3Y7

www.twowingsfarm.com

250.478.3794

Full Circle Seeds

P.O. Box 807
Sooke, BC
V0S 1N0

www.fullcircleseeds.com

250.642.3671

Seeds of Victoria

395 Conway Road,
Victoria, BC
V9E 2B9

<http://www.earthfuture.com/gardenpath/>

250.881.1555

Stellar Seeds
S6 C5 RR1
Sorrento, BC
V0E 2W0
www.stellarseeds.com
250.675.0076

Sunshine Farm
2225 Saucier Rd,
Kelowna, BC
V1W 4B8
www.sunshinefarm.net
250.764.4810

Rebecca's Garden
5014 Echo Dr
Victoria, BC
V9E 2H9
camandre@shaw.ca
250.727.3788

Marlinspike Organic Seeds
3680 Sunshine Cr
Prince George, BC
V2N 5Y2
marlin@netbistro.com
250.963.7398

Maple Bay Organic Seed Garlic
6462 Pacific Dr.
Duncan BC
V9L 5S7
www.mbgarlic.com
250.746-7466

Planting Seeds Project
604.255.2326

BC and Canadian Seed Companies

West Coast Seeds
3925 64th Street
Delta, BC
V4K 3N2

Green Space Design
P.O.Box 122 - Manson's Landing
Cortes Island, BC
V0P 1K0
www.organic-seeds.ca
250.935.0135

Across The Creek Organics
8356 Meadows Road
Pemberton, BC
V0N 2L2
www.acrossthecreekorganics.com
604.894.6463

Edible Landscapes
1732 Pell Road,
Roberts Creek, BC
V0N 2W1
www.ediblelandscapes.ca
604.885.4505

Eisenhower Organic Produce
4266 Happy Valley Rd
Victoria, BC
V9C 3Y1
[deisenhower\(a\)pacificcoast.net](mailto:deisenhower(a)pacificcoast.net)
250.474.7161

Steveston Stock and Seed Farm
2871 Steveston Hwy
Richmond, BC
V7E 2J1
www.stevesfarm..com

Richter's Seeds
Goodwood, ON, Canada
L0C 1A0
www.richters.com
905.640.6677

www.westcoastseeds.com

604.952.8820

William Dam Seeds Ltd

279 Hwy 8 RR 1
Dundas, ON, Canada
L9H 5E1

www.damseeds.com

905.628.6641

Stokes Seeds

PO Box 10
Thorold, ON, Canada
L2V 5E9

www.stokeseeds.com

905.688.4300

Lindenberg Seeds

803 Princess Avenue
Brandon, MB, Canada
R7A 0P5

www.lindenbergseeds.ca

204.727.0575

Vesey's Canada

PO Box 9000
Charlottetown, PEI, Canada
C1A 8K6

www.veseys.com

902.368.7333

More Canadian Seed Companies

Bow Seed

P.O. Box 446
Bowden, AB, Canada
T0M 0M0

www.gardenersweb.ca

403.224.3544

Prairie Garden Seeds

Box 2758
Humboldt, SK, Canada
S0K 2A0

www.prseeds.ca

306.682.1475

Terra Edibles

T & T Seeds

Box 1710
Winnipeg, MB, Canada
R3C 3P6

www.ttseeds.com

204.895.9964

Agrestal Organic Heritage Seed Co.

P.O. Box 646
Gormley, ON, Canada
L0H 1G0

www.agrestalseeds.com

905.888.1881

De Ruiter Seeds

320 Village Grove Drive - Unit #303
Tecumseh, ON, Canada

www.deruiterusa.com

519.739.3556

Greta's Organic Gardens

399 River Road
Gloucester, ON, Canada
K1V 1C9

www.seeds-organic.com

613.521.8648

McKenzie Seeds

30 - 9th Street
Brandon, MB, Canada,
R7A 6E

www.mckenzienseeds.com

204.571.7500

Dominion Seed House

535 Ashley Street,
Foxboro, Ontario, Canada
K0K 2B0
www.terraedibles.ca
613-961-0654

Quality Seeds
8400 Huntington Road
RR#1 Woodbridge , ON, Canada
L4L 1A5
www.qualityseeds.ca
905.856.7333

Mark Emery Seeds
307 West Hastings Street
Vancouver, BC, Canada
V6B 1H6
www.cannabisculture.com

P.O. Box 2500
Georgetown, ON, Canada
L7G 5L6
www.dominion-seed-house.com
905.873.3037

Mumm's Sprouting Seeds
Canada
www.sprouting.com
306.747.2935

Other Seed Companies

Environmental Seed Producers
P.O. Box 2709
Lompoc, CA, USA
93438-2709
www.espseeds.com
805.735.8888

Johnny's Selected Seeds
955 Benton Avenue
Winslow, MN, USA
04901
www.johnnyseeds.com

Fedco
PO Box 520,
Waterville, ME, USA
04903
www.fedcoseeds.com
207.873.7333

Nichols Garden Nursery
USA
www.nicholsgardennursery.com
800.422.3985

877.564.6697

Snow Seed Company

21855 Rosehart Way
Salinas, CA, USA
93908

www.snowseedco.com

831.758.9869

Tomatofest Heirloom Seeds

P.O. Box W-1
Carmel, CA, USA
93921

www.store.tomatofest.com

Seed Savers Exchange

3094 North Winn Road
Decorah, Iowa, USA
52101

www.seedsavers.org

563.382.5990

Pacific Northwest Direct Seed

2780 W. Pullman Road, Suite A, Moscow,
ID, USA
83843

www.direcetseed.org

208.883.3645

Horizon Herbs, LLC

PO Box 69
Williams, OR, USA
97544

www.horizonherbs.com

541.846.6704

Mr Fothergill's Seeds Ltd

Gazeley Road
Kentford, Nwmarket, Suffolk, England
CB8 7QB

www.fothergills.co.uk

0845 166 2511

Seeds of Change

USA

www.seedsofchange.com

888.762.7333

Territorial Seed Company

P.O. Box 158
Cottage Grove, OR, USA
97424-0061

www.territorial-seed.com

800.626.0866

Turtle Tree Biodynamic Seeds

Camphill Village; Copake, NY, USA
12516

www.turtletreeseed.com

888.516.7797

Family Seeds

www.familyseeds.com

Wild Garden Seed

P.O. Box 1509
Philomath, OR, USA
97370

www.wildgardenseed.com

541.929.4068

Chiltern Seeds

Bortree Stile
Ulverston, Cumbria, England
LA12 7PB

www.edirectory.co.uk/chilternseeds

Osborne International Seed Company

2428 Old Hwy 99 South Road
Mount Vernon, WA, USA
98273

www.osborneseed.com

360.424.7333

Organic Milling Cooperative

4218 Wyatt Rd.
Armstrong, BC, Canada
V0E 1B4
250.546.2712

High Mowing Seeds

76 Quarry Road
Wolcott, VT, USA
05680

www.highmowingseeds.com

802.472.6174

Kitazawa Seed Company

PO Box 13220
Oakland, CA, USA
94661-3220

www.kitazawaseed.com

510.595.1188

Harvest Moon Farms & Seed Company

PO Box 143
Union City, Indiana, USA
47390

www.felcoperuners.net

765.964.3971

Thompson & Morgan Seedsmen

220 Faraday Avenue
Jackson, New Jersey, USA
08527

<http://seeds.thompson-morgan.com/us/en>

800.274.7333

Vitalis Seeds

Hengelderweg 6
7383 RG Voorst
The Netherlands

www.biovitalis.eu

Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds

2278 Baker Creek Road
Mansfield, MO, USA
65704

www.rareseeds.com

417.924.8917

Appendix C - Organizer Bios

Patrick Steiner, Seedgrower and owner/operator of Stellar Seeds, lives and farms in Sorrento. Patrick is also currently researching and writing a handbook for farmers about how to integrate seedgrowing into their mixed farms, both ecologically and economically. The projected completion date is March 2007, and the handbook will be available online. He is a board member of USC Canada and recently attended a global gathering of seed-savers and activists in Ethiopia. Patrick can be reached by email by taking his first name and joining it to his website name "stellarseeds.com" with the "@" symbol.

Heather Pritchard is the Executive Director of Farm Folk/City Folk, a long time food activist and co-founder/farmer with Glorious Organics Co-op in the Fraser Valley. She is the grand daughter of H. G. Neufeld, recently inducted into the Saskatchewan Agricultural Hall of Fame for his work as a plant breeder in the early development of canola seed. Proud grandmother of two, she invests many of her too few spare moments tasting the wonders and exploring the mysteries of Fraser Common Farm with Schiller and Liam. You can reach Heather using email by joining the word "sustain" to the domain name for Farm Folk/City Folk, namely "ffcf.bc.ca".

Chris Wells has run a Certified Organic farm, Influence Organics, for 4 years, and has spent the past 3 years working with Victoria's Compost Education Centre teaching urban composting and agriculture. His focus has been on no-till soil management, composting, irrigation systems, seed growing. He has been very involved in local grassroots agriculture projects including organizing a number of local workshops; designing and leading workshops; and working with Victoria-based non-profits on all levels. He is the author of the seed growing survey being used to gather data for this project. To contact Chris use the name "quinoa" in conjunction with the domain name "shaw.ca".

Susan Davidson, also of Glorious Organics Co-op, is a farmer and passionate eater of all things local. She was a founding member of BCARA (B. C. Association of Regenerative Agriculture), which is one of the local organic certifying bodies. Based on many years of experience with Community Alternatives Society and consensus decision-making, she helped found Glen Valley Organic Farm Co-op. She has been active with Your Local Farmers Markets Society for ten years and is a member of Langley Organic Growers who vend at the Trout Lake Market. She receives funding from Farm Folk/City Folk to facilitate and record the steering team's phone conferences. Susan can be reached by combining the appellation "glorious" with the domain "portal.ca".

Arthur Ralfs, after abandoning a teaching career 5 years ago, moved back to Victoria in 2001 and started ArthursNursery.com, which is dedicated to producing ornamental plants using organic growing techniques. At present he produces mostly rhododendrons but wants to expand into other plants, notably Japanese maples, azaleas, magnolias, dogwoods, bamboo and other ornamental perennials suitable for potted plant production. He is interested in garlic after suffering white rot devastation and subsequently taking Fred Crowe's workshop on garlic disease management. Other interests are "hi-tech organic", which is envisioned as using hi-tech measuring and sensing equipment coupled with information systems to achieve organic optimization, and the melding of the principles of Free software with those of the Organic movement. To get in touch with Arthur stick "acralfs" in front of the domain name "shaw.ca" with the "@" symbol in between, as usual.