



GROUNDBREAKERS



@bvgroundbreakers

www.bvgroundbreakers.ca

Spring 2021

LOCAL FOOD OPPORTUNITIES

- **REGISTER** for Woodgrain Farm's 2021 CSA Program. New shareholders welcome! Visit woodgrain.ca for details and registration.
- **JOIN** the team at ReJar Zero Waste! ReJar will be advertising a part-time position soon - watch their [Facebook page](#) for details.
- **EAT** some delicious, prepared *Squash Carrot Ginger Soup* tonight. The majority of ingredients were grown/gleaned by [GRENDelGrow](#). They've made Garlic Scape Salt, too! Find it all at Nature's Pantry.
- **GRAB** some Hive & Honey creamed or liquid honey next time you're refilling your jars at ReJar Zero Waste. ReJar soon hopes to carry Hive & Honey creamed/liquid honey in bulk.
- **COOK** up some delicious grub, straight out of our [KIDS DIG FOOD](#) Cookbook, available at Out of Hand.
- **PLAN** to include the new additions to our [lending library](#) in your processing plans this year - we've added a dehydrator, water bath canner, and pressure canner. Reservations will take place through our website, and Out of Hand will serve as the depot site for our library items. More details to come.

ABOUT GROUNDBREAKERS

If you like yummy food that comes from your own neighbourhood, Groundbreakers is the right place for you to keep a pulse on the local food movement, or get super involved - whatever you prefer.

Groundbreakers Agriculture Association is a non-profit charitable organization focused on local food and gardening education, since 2012.

We believe in building strong, healthy communities through supporting the Bulkley Valley local food economy and teaching citizens, young and old, about the benefits of local food and how to grow their own.

LOCAL FOOD EVENTS

- **TOUR** High Slope Acres flower beds and hoop houses and arrange your own bouquet. Aug 11, 18 and 25 and Sep 1 and 8. Email highslopeacres@gmail.com to book.
- **Celebrate** 10 years of Nature's Pantry! Due to COVID, Nature's Pantry reinvented their traditional customer appreciation event, and spent the month of February giving customers 15% off coupons (redeemable until May 29).

Experiments with Greenbeans and Growth:

Growing alongside the seeds we sow

As a species, we do a pretty good job of inoculating ourselves from different ways of being in the world. There's a solid chance that this is an evolutionarily adaptive strategy - the more you invest in your own in-group, the better off they (and you) will be.

But many of us have experienced that a mix is a good thing; while we remain creatures of habit, we realize that we become more colourful versions of ourselves when we brush up against the unknown. The intersection of old and new is where growth happens, and where the creativity to solve problems comes from.

Social media - and now, social distancing - make it tough to get outside our own mental and physical bubbles. We really have to overcome our own habit-loving inertia to access that sweet spot where growth happens and life blossoms.

Lucky for us, spring is coming.

Every year, the dirt around us gives us the chance to combine the wisdom of the ages with the stirrings of something completely new. You feel it with each seed you press into the soil - sure, there are rules to follow if you want to grow a tomato in the Bulkley Valley, but the process simultaneously requires curiosity and a bit of experimentation.

No one knows everything about plants and gardening and soil and microclimates, and yet here we all are. Planting away. Whether you have a single pot of basil or an entire Eden, you still walk straight into the unknown each spring.



Digging into the unknown
(you'll have to forgive the terrible metaphors in this piece. Gardening is just ripe with them)

Growing things offers a gentle opportunity to access the sweet spot where change and personal growth blossoms. And when we grow things alongside other people who are older or younger or otherwise different from us, that opportunity multiplies.

GROWING PEAS AND PEOPLE, TOO

The Northern Roots Community Garden invites members to learn from one another about the plants they grow, and - if they're open to it - themselves.

"The community garden can't help but promote interaction between people of varying ages," Community Garden President, Scott McMillan, acknowledges matter-of-factly. "From our work bees, to our day-to-day interactions as we come and go while tending to our plots, we are regularly engaging with people we might not otherwise know."



Jonah and Rebecca turning compost at Northern Roots, circa 2017

Northern Roots maintains five raised beds built for elderly members, and members with mobility challenges. These beds are front and centre in the garden, next to the kids' play toys. It's a brilliant recipe for interaction and connection.

Members at Northern Roots span a broad range of ages as well. "Most plots are surrounded by multiple others," says Scott, "so you are guaranteed to have members of varying age around you. The older members often have lots of advice to share, and the time to be present frequently enough to share it."

This was certainly the experience of Groundbreakers member, Ally Dick. Back in 2016, Ally took up an offer to help her older friends Jeannie and Roger Benham, with the upkeep of their Northern Roots Community Garden plots. It was a good deal for Ally - a bit of weeding in exchange of a hearty share of the harvest.

“This was a fun way to be connected with my older friends, learn (so much!) about their preferred ways of gardening, the foods they like to grow, and how they preserve the fruits of their labor,” says Ally. The relationship grew beyond soil and seeds, and when Jeannie passed away in the fall of 2019, Ally found herself searching for a way to keep what they’d created alive.



Roger and Jeannie’s Wild Things

“Jeannie always devoted a section of our community garden plot to ‘where the wild things grow’” Ally recalls fondly. “I loved this idea, and have continued it on in her memory, allowing weeds and ‘volunteer plants’ to grow more liberally in that section of the garden.” Ally is also working with the SSS wood working class to build and install a Memorial Bed of perennial plants, a permanent celebration of the individuals who have contributed to the Community Garden and since passed on.

MORE EXPERIMENTS

Northern Roots Community Garden isn’t the only place where this space for growth-through-green-things can be found.

One of Groundbreakers’ flagship projects is the facilitation of school gardens at a number of elementary schools, including Muheim. Two of the beds at Muheim are dedicated to elderly community members as personal growing space. And in non-COVID years, the abundance from the Muheim garden has been harvested by Groundbreakers’ summer students, and delivered to the Meadows Assisted Living.

Then consider Youth On Farms, another of Groundbreakers' flagship projects. "The program connects youth and young adults of all backgrounds with producer, who are folks in our community that they would not otherwise get to know," says program coordinator, Jen Hegan.



Youth on Farms participant, Liam Dewer

And over ten years ago, the Princess Neighbourhood Garden made its mark by turning an empty lot behind Safeway into a communal gardening project. "We saw the garden bring together kids in the surrounding neighbourhood, Indigenous People, and some of the Anglican Church seniors as well," Groundbreakers founder, Gail Jenne, recalls. Princess Garden was on borrowed time and was eventually replaced by development, but its memory is palpable among those who experienced it.

Whether you're learning as you grow in the solitude of your own garden, or you're out rubbing shoulders at a community garden or with a local farmer, growing things is a gentle nudge towards an openness to change. Gardening asks us to meet in the middle, combining curiosity and experimentation with age-old wisdom and experience.

Let's stretch our COVID-imposed and self-made bubbles by tapping into gardening's promise this spring - to grow right alongside the seeds we sow.

By Andrea de Vries

Want to be even more inspired? Learn more about the Princess Neighbourhood Garden story in [this beautiful piece in Northword](#).

A photograph of a farm scene. In the foreground, a red tractor is partially visible. In the middle ground, a person is sitting on a large pile of hay. To the right, an older man in a plaid shirt stands next to the hay. A golden retriever is standing in the lower right corner. The background shows a line of trees.

YOUTH ON FARMS 2021

FARMERS:

Interested in a wage-subsidized, local worker?

YOUTH (15-30):

Want to be paid to work alongside expert, local farmers?

[Click Here to Contact Coordinator Jen Hegan for details](#)

SCHOOL GARDEN PROGRAM UPDATE

We're excited to get back to gardening with Telkwa, Muheim, Walnut and Heartwood Elementary schools in 2021.

We will be offering five to six workshops per school for seed starting, windowsill sprouts, and garden bed planting.

We will also be offering noon hour garden clubs at each of the schools periodically over the spring.

Spring salad days are also an event we hope have at each school at the end of June.

