



GROUNDBREAKERS



@bvgroundbreakers

www.bvgroundbreakers.ca

Autumn 2021

LOCAL FOOD EVENTS

Autumn is here and it's a time to revel in the harvest of the season. Dig your potatoes, press your apples, and plant your garlic. Share your excess with a neighbour, and mark your harvest chores with moments of gratitude.

- **Volunteer** for our annual Wellness Basket initiative on October 9, 2021 (See more info below).
- **Plant** your garlic before the ground freezes. Growing garlic is dead easy and highly rewarding- try it! Many producers in the Bulkley Valley supply seed garlic, and we'll be posting planting steps on our FB in the coming weeks.
- **School garden and Wild Food workshops** are back in action this fall. Follow our FB page to keep up with the action at Muheim, Walnut, Heartwood and Telkwa Elementary
- **Process** vegetables with the tools from our Good Food Tool Library. Learn more here: <https://bvgroundbreakers.ca/what-we-do/tool-library>
- **Catch** the last outdoor farmers' market of the season on Saturday, October 9, 2021.

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 OPPORTUNITIES

- **Stock up** on garlic, squash and dried flowers from High Slope Acres. Catch them at the farmer's market or email: highslopeacres@gmail.com
- **Try** some mushrooms (fresh, dried, jerky, and salt) from the fungus at Smithereens Mushrooms. Get them at the farmers' market, Out of Hand, Rejar, BV Wholesale or email: info@smithereensmushroom.com
- **Secure** your bulk storage potatoes, carrots, and beets from healthyhugsorganics.com
- **Experience** a farm stay at Living Roots Family Farm. Load up your antioxidants and Vitamin C with frozen haskap berries and haskap products by order (jam, syrup and chutney). Contact livingrootsfamilyfarm5@gmail.com

PRODUCER SPOTLIGHT - LIVING ROOTS FAMILY FARM

Rob and Ellana Zoller of Living Roots Family Farm have shared a dream to create a learning and experiential farm for others. Their farm is located near Smithers and Witsset, on Kitseguela Loop Road. They are proud to provide an accessible guest house for others to experience 'farm life' and rest among the beauty that surrounds them. Hear their thoughts on involving kids in growing and eating healthy food, the challenges of being a small-scale farm, their experience with the Youth on Farm program, and more in our interview below.

Q: For those reading this who do not know, what do you produce on your farm?

A: Haskaps are our main crop.

Q: What is so special about haskaps?

A: Haskaps are packed with high amounts of antioxidants and vitamins. They can be used in a wide range of culinary dishes because of the uniquely intense tasting characteristics.

Q: How long have you been farming in the valley?

A: We have been farming in the valley for four years.

Q: What got you interested in farming? Did you have experience in agriculture before starting your farm here?

A: Growing up on prairie grain/livestock farms and an Okanagan orchard instilled a deep appreciation in both Rob and Ellana's character. This interest in agriculture led Rob to attend Olds College to study Soil and Water Conservation and working for Agriculture Canada for a few years. Rob has also done extensive work in establishing a community garden at a school he taught in northern Manitoba as well as at an orphanage in Guatemala. Together, we've enjoyed hosting "Green Means Grow" day camps for kids of all abilities.

Q: What is each of your farming superpowers?

A: Ellana's close attention to high quality products and keeping the to do list focussed. Rob loves to share the farm experience with others to create a knowledge of food connectiveness.



Q: How do you engage your children in the farm and in food production?

A: Each of our children has unique gifts and interests. We try to facilitate an environment that they can shine in their interests of farm life. That can range from picking baskets of berries, making forts in the forest near the patch or sleep overs in the hay loft when the sow is in labour.



Pumpkin picking day with Hazel

Q: What advice would you give parents who want to involve their children in growing and eating healthy food?

A: Having them be a part of the whole process is so important. Getting dirty when prepping the soil, planting seeds (even if they're too deep or crooked rows), learning weeds and eating fresh off the plant. Our five-year-old recently said that she wants to be a brussels sprout farmer when she grows up!

Q: What is the most exciting thing that happened this year on your farm?

A: A passion of ours has been to create a farm learning environment for others to learn where their food comes from and this year, we had the opportunity to host numerous groups of student field trips. Students learned goat milking and butchering, horse care, berry picking, how to create healthy soil, and farm games.

Q: What are you looking forward to in the next year?

A: We are looking forward to more produce available to sell and to facilitate groups in learning on the farm.

Q: What sorts of challenges would you say you have encountered being a small-scale farm?

A: Being a small-scale farmer provides a lot of work but doesn't provide enough profit to hire a full-time worker with a fair wage.

Q: A few of our Youth on Farm participants have had the privilege of working on your farm through the Youth on Farms Program. Throughout the process, they have learned a lot and have become very inspired to grow their own food and take care of their own animals. Can you tell us a little bit about your experience being involved in the Groundbreakers Youth on Farm Program as a producer?

A: We have always appreciated the help that we get from Groundbreakers and impressed with the work that the youth provide. It is always great to see youth show interest in food production and take on new responsibilities that they might not have had before.

YOUTH ON FARMS REFLECTIONS

This year marks our largest Youth on Farm program to date. With help from the Canada Summer Jobs and Wetzinkwa Community Forest grants we employed 7 different youth who worked on 8 different farms across the Bulkley Valley. Hear the experiences of some of our Youth on Farm workers in their reflections below.



Anna bottle feeding a calf at Evelyn Mtn View Farms

Anna Van Delft

My experience this summer with Groundbreakers has been one I'll never forget. It was a summer of firsts for me. First time dealing with calves, first time driving a quad. It was so fun, and I highly recommend it to all young farmers.

Austin Des Mazes

This was my second year working with the Groundbreakers program. I can say that my experience was amazing. To begin my year, I started much sooner than many of the other Groundbreakers' employees and I averaged around 12-14 hours per week for the entirety of the season. I worked for two different farms this year; Living Roots Family Farm and Hawthorn Creek. At each operation I participated in many forms of work ranging from setting up irrigation lines to stacking hay bales. The whole time I was encouraged to ask questions and tell my employers when I felt uncomfortable

with my task. I did ask many questions but rarely found any situation I was in remotely dangerous ...except for some angry chickens, but the chickens and I worked out our differences. I also ended up meeting a variety of new people throughout the year, some of which I met up with at school while others gave me rides home. All in all, I really enjoyed all of the connections I made throughout the year which makes me excited for those who will participate in this program next year.



Austin transporting mulch at Hawthorne Creek Farm

YOUTH ON FARMS REFLECTIONS



Laska watering flowers at High Slope Acres

Laska Murrell-Rivard

This summer I worked at High Slope Acres and at local plant tea producer Stir Artisan Teas. At High Slope Acres I bunched flowers to dry, harvested fresh cut flowers, weeded, transplanted different varieties of flowers and arranged bouquets. My favourite jobs were harvesting fresh cut flowers and arranging bouquets. At Stir I learned about harvesting and drying herbs. I went to wild harvest for fireweed, rose petals, and huckleberries. I enjoyed my time spent here.



Olivia delivering garden veggies to Goodacre place

Olivia Kwak

My name is Olivia, and I'm in 11th grade this year. My summer working at Healthy Hugs Organic Farm & Northern Roots Community Garden was another amazing experience. This year was my second year working with Groundbreakers, and they have been providing excellent work opportunities around Smithers. I was able to learn many new more things, which included weeding of course!! It was the most privileged experience being able to work in nature, especially during this COVID-19 pandemic. I was able to realize once again the importance and value of local & organic farming. I was also able to donate vegetables regularly to Goodacre Place from Northern Roots Community Garden. I was not planning on working this summer at first, but once again, I found the joy of hard work farming this summer. I hope that Groundbreakers will continue their role in giving youths the opportunity to experience local & organic farming.

WELLNESS BASKET INITIATIVE

We are offering our second annual Wellness Basket initiative and are looking for 6 youth (under 30) to volunteer from **9 AM - 12 PM on Saturday, October 9** to help assemble wellness baskets for members of our community.



Volunteers will meet at the Bulkley Valley Farmers' Market where we will pick up produce and chat with local producers. We will then walk to Muheim Elementary where we will assemble the baskets outside in the school garden area. COVID protocols will be in place and volunteers will be asked to wear masks while assembling baskets (masks and hand sanitizer will be available). Small honorariums will be provided to volunteers.

If you are interested in volunteering or donating produce to these baskets, please message us on Facebook or e-mail us at: **bvgroundbreakers@gmail.com**. Please share this with the youth in your life and email us with any questions!

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