



seedlings

Delta Farmers' Institute Newsletter October - November 2015 - Issue 2

Ask Blake Lundstrum what he loves most about farming and the answer might surprise you. "I never stop learning," says the fourth generation farmer. "With so many technological changes in agriculture, there's always something new that I need to learn more about." His great-grandfather, Rudy Kamlah, started the farm in the early 1940s. His grandfather, Dennis, is still involved in the operation as is his mother, Shelley, and his brother, Ryan. The family farms about 400 acres, 300 in vegetables (potatoes, beets, peas, beans, corn) and 100 in feed grains (barley, wheat).

Having multiple generations involved in the business has its advantages and its challenges. The collective knowledge that comes with over seven decades of potato farming has to be balanced off with rapid changes in the industry. "You're constantly updating and streamlining your operation every five to ten years," says Blake. "If you don't, you fall behind." In addition to enjoying all aspects that country living offers, Blake also believes providing food for people to eat is one of the most important contributions that agriculture can make to a community's overall health

Farmer Profile



The Lundstrums

and well-being. There are economic and ecological benefits, too, as the industry provides long-term stable employment and offers natural habitat for local wildlife. As with any sector, though, there are always ongoing challenges and concerns. For example, hotter, drier summers have affected the farm's irrigation needs. Blake notes that in the past decade, the weather has definitely become more unstable and unpredictable. Another concern is the loss of acreage due to regional commercial development, which has had a two-fold effect. "There's increased competition for land to rent," says Blake, "So the price of land goes up while the availability of good land goes down."

Competition from import markets also has an effect on their operation. "At the retail end, we're competing with producers who are selling the same product but have grown it in a different area. In a lot of those areas, their labour and input costs are about half of what we pay and their land rental is about a quarter of our current prices." "When people shop at the store and see the price of food, I think a lot of them believe much of what they're paying is going back to the farmer and that's just not the case. I think they'd be very surprised to learn just how little return there is for the commodities we're producing."

Pumpkin Patch



Westham Island Herb Farm,
4690 Kirkland Road
Westham Island, Delta, BC
604 946-4393
westhamislandherb.ca

Every year we open our pumpkin patch at the end of September. These will be lit every night for the last ten days of October.

I started selling pumpkins from our farm when I was 5 years old. Over the years I have learned what works well. I continue to apply my expertise in the creation of my annual pumpkin patch. The patch offers carving pumpkins ranging in size from grapefruit to some over a hundred pounds. I plant a colourful assortment of pumpkin types ranging from Baby Boos to Big Max. There is also great variation in pumpkin colour including white, grey, orange, red and variegated. For those in a hurry or not wanting to venture out to the patch I also have a wide selection of pumpkins conveniently available direct from my retail area. Plenty of wheelbarrows are available for pumpkin retrieval.



To help with Halloween or harvest fest celebrations I also have ornamental gourds, cornstalks, miniature and full-sized hay bales and sweet sugar pumpkins for baking or cooking. Have you ever tried pumpkin soup served in a hollowed out small pumpkin, you'll never go back to bowls again! Come and see Ladner's Halloween Headquarters! My family, staff and I all love to celebrate halloween and provide a wonderful fall display for the occasion. Come see my annual display of "scarecrows" incorporating pumpkins, gourds, other farm products, implements and good old country humour. Check out the crowd of 100-150 hand carved pumpkins. Sharon Ellis

The Ellis Family has been farming in Delta for over a century in the same location since 1916.



*D*anielle and Alicia Guichon have had a passion for produce for as long as they can remember, although it has not been in the traditional sense that their family name would suggest. 🌿 Coming from a pioneering farm family, these fifth generation farm girls have been selling produce from a very early age, starting in 2001, as the youngest vendors at the Ladner Village Market.

The idea that people within the community wanted to buy locally and support local farmers began to stick. Many customers wondered why chain grocers in town did not have more local produce and with that, the seed was planted. 🌿 After many years of small scale roadside produce sales, the dream came to fruition. In the spring of 2014 Danielle and Alicia Guichon decided to re-open the fruit stand on the corner of **28th Avenue and 52nd Street between Ladner and Tsawwassen**, focusing on fresh local produce grown on their family farm and neighbouring farms.



🌿 Backroads Family Farm Market is now your one stop shop for seasonal and local produce. Carrying an array of fresh fruits, vegetables, milk, eggs and honey, the girls firmly believe in supporting the farm families that make up Delta. Helping their customers get closer to the farming community in Delta has been one of their biggest goals. Backroads Family Farm Market is open everyday from the end



Danielle & Alicia

of May until Halloween. 🌿 Currently the shop is stocked with fall veggies such as potatoes, squash, cabbage, corn, rutabagas, garlic, beets, carrots and more! 🌿 We have your favourite varieties of Okanagan apples, plums, pears, ever-bearing / late strawberries, raspberries and blackberries.

Thanksgiving and Halloween are just around the corner and Backroads Family Farm Market (open 9am-6pm daily) is the perfect place to get your fresh, local fall veggies and a pumpkin or two from our pumpkin patch! 🌿 Educating consumers about where their

food comes from is something both girls are very passionate about. If more people make efforts to buy and support local farming, our next generation of farmers will have to carry in the footsteps of their family's previous generations. You can't have food without farmers and we hope farming in Delta continues to flourish. Please check us out on Facebook and Instagram!

Thank you for your support! 🌿



Delta Farm Facts

300,000,000
Total \$ amount of Delta annual farm gate sales

76
percentage of Delta ALR acreage actively farmed (16,534 acres)

53
percentage of BC potato acreage

23,235
amount of Delta ALR acreage

91
percentage of tomatoes grown in BC

Source: 2011 Statistics Canada

DFI Seedlings newsletter information

You will find the Seedlings newsletter in Delta at your local food venues, community hubs and farm stands. The purpose of the newsletter is to create awareness and education about agriculture in Delta B.C. We welcome your submissions, comments and ideas. Space is free, but limited. We reserve the right to edit content for proper grammar usage and brevity. Dates are subject to change. Please Email to confirm late submissions. Please call Leisa Yee at 604.940.2024 for submission inquiries. Send newsletter submissions to: dfinewsletter@telus.net or mail to: P.O. box 18565, Delta, BC V4K 4V7

The Salt Wedge and Delta's Agricultural Water Supply

The “salt wedge” is a phenomenon that occurs in all-tidal estuaries of the world. Salty and dense ocean water entering a river mouth forms an underlying wedge beneath the lighter fresh water that is exiting. Water that is high in salinity (salt levels) can reduce or destroy crop yields, affect aquatic ecosystems and damage infrastructure.

The distance the salt wedge extends up the river changes with the tides and seasons. During the spring snow-melt, the river is high and the toe of the wedge stays near the mouth of the Fraser River located in Steveston. During late summer, river flows are low and the salt wedge reaches Annacis Island. The elevated salinity levels impact the quantity of water available to local agriculture irrigation intakes.

Climate change is likely to worsen these concerns in the future. Climate models predict warmer, longer and drier summers with Delta farms requiring more irrigation water. Cranberry farmers need a lot of water in the fall, to flood their fields and float the berries that are harvested. Cranberries are just one of many important crops that make up the local agricultural base.

Local sea levels are predicted to rise by up to 1.0 metre by the year 2100 and may also contribute to an increasing quantity of salt water pushing up the river. Farmers in Delta and Richmond are concerned that removal of the George Massey Tunnel will lead to an

increased depth and extent of dredging in the river system. This is comparable to removing a dam that currently restricts the intrusion of the salt wedge up the river.

There is a real need to understand salt wedge distribution and the level of salinity in the Lower Fraser River system. Salinity is also a concern for the forestry and fishing industries. Teredos, (marine borer invertebrates) eat wood and can damage logs stored in salt water. Salt contamination is also a problem for wood waste that could otherwise be used in bioenergy applications. The Fraser River Juvenile White Sturgeon is a threatened species with historical and cultural significance, whose populations are in decline and are more sensitive to temperature and salinity.

Existing salinity data for the Lower Fraser River is not sufficient to assess the impacts of in-river works encouraged by the proposed bridge development. The Delta Farmers Institute (DFI) is working with other river user stakeholders to develop a salinity bench-



Lower Fraser River, view of Steveston, Ladner, Canoe Pass, and Mt. Baker (Rees, 2007)

marking study that will help address some of the following questions: When will we need to upgrade infrastructure? What will happen when under-served and unserved areas (e.g. Westham Island) are connected to the irrigation network? What are our options and what are the costs? When designing a program to monitor salinity, what are we really looking for?

Given the scale and scope of the tunnel removal and future dredging changes, DFI is concerned that the proposed action, if not thoroughly evaluated and designed to address

broader goals, could adversely impact the agricultural water supply. DFI is looking for cooperation with other Fraser River stakeholders. Feasibility work for the proposed tunnel replacement provides an important opportunity to advance wise planning of the Lower Fraser River and its unique resources, in a manner that optimizes ecosystem health, water supply, and efficient goods movement.

John ter Borg is a graduate of UBC's Master of Land and Water Systems program.

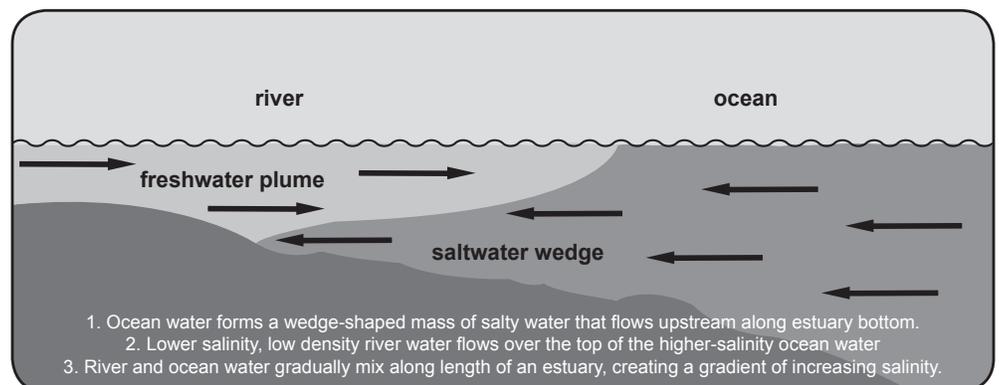
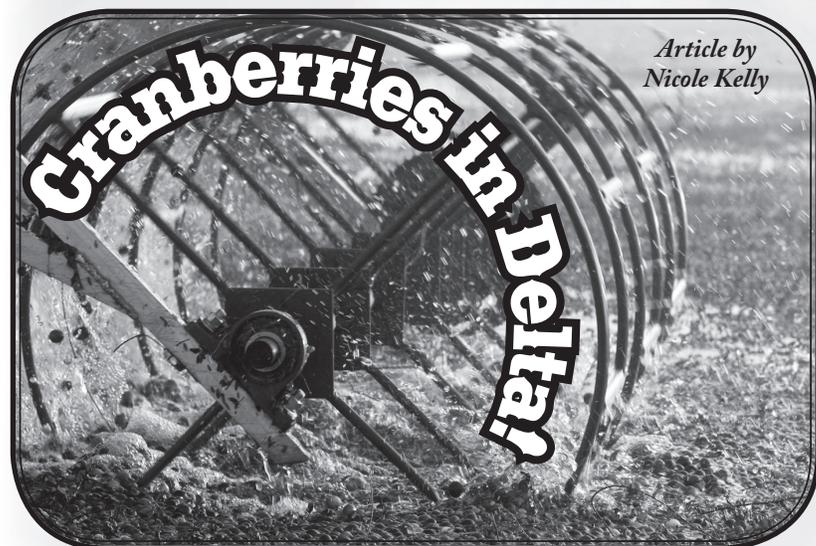


Illustration example of a salt wedge phenomenon.



During October and November you may notice fields in Delta that are transformed from nothing you have ever noticed before to a beautiful, glowing sea of red. These lakes of floating berries are an indication that cranberry harvest has begun in your town! Did you know that there are about 900 acres of cranberries currently being grown in Delta? That is a lot of berries. ☺ Cranberries are a unique crop due to their physical composition. ☺ They have a hollow pocket that enables them to float in water. This characteristic allows cranberries to be harvested in an efficient way using water to move large volumes of fruit. Cranberry fields, or “bogs” are flooded in the fall with water from the local irrigation network. ☺ The farmers then come along with a machine called a “beater” which is about the size of a smart car. ☺ Because cranberries grow so low, people have designed these machines to knock off the berries from the plant and allow the berries to float to the top of the water. Once the berries are afloat, they are manually moved and corralled using booms.

A boom is essentially a rope that creates a pocket of berries that allows the farmer to quickly and easily move them into the loading area without them floating all over the field. The fruit is then cleaned and loaded into trucks for delivery using a fruit pump or elevator. ☺ Most elevators have many hoses and nozzles that spray the berries down to clean off leaves and any debris that comes from the field. ☺ Many farmers in Delta sell their cranberries to Ocean spray which is a co-operative company of growers. Ocean Spray then makes them into Craisins (dried cranberries) and a wide variety of juices that are sold worldwide. ☺ A cranberry bog is composed of a network of drainage and irrigation systems. Cranberries are a more challenging plant to grow as they require water for a number of very important processes during the growing season.



is highly dependent on water quality and availability. ☺ Cranberries are particularly sensitive to salt levels in the irrigation water. If these levels reach too high, significant damage can occur to the plants. As water is such a valuable resource to the farming industry, it is recycled and reused using drainage networks and on farm reservoirs.

Delta is home to the first cranberry research farm in Canada. In September 2014, the BC Cranberry Research Society officially opened its doors. It is a state of the art facility that had been developed to better aid local farmers. ☺ The primary goals of the farm at this time is to assess new varieties of cranberries, gather yield data and figure out management for pests in association with specific growing conditions. ☺ Cranberries are a unique and important crop to the agricultural industry in Delta, and are one of the most beautiful sights to see during harvest. So next time you drink a glass of cranberry juice or have cranberries with your turkey, you know the exact process of what it takes to grow those berries!

The Kelly Family started growing cranberries in 1998 and currently have 140 acres in Delta. Nicole Kelly is 4th generation young farmer in Delta, BC ☺

**Delta
HARVEST DAY**

**Saturday, October 10, 12-3pm
Harris Barn**

Celebrate fall food & gardening! This free event for all ages will promote food, gardens & locally grown produce/plants.

- Seed saving workshop
- Garlic planting
- Family scarecrow making
- Winter pansies to take home
- Food samples
- Apple bar
- Beverages
- Children's craft table & activities
- Food for the Thanksgiving table – purchase pies, breads, treats & more!

Cranberry Sauce

12 ounces of cranberries ♦ 1 cup white sugar ♦ 1 cup orange juice

In a medium sized saucepan over medium heat, dissolve the sugar in the orange juice. Stir in the cranberries and cook until the cranberries start to pop (about 10 minutes). Remove from heat and place sauce in a bowl.

Cranberry sauce will thicken as it cools.