

May 8, 2013

Beneficial bugs help with garden pest management

Wondering how to control the pests in your garden? Looking for an alternative to pesticides? North Island College's upcoming Organic Pest Management Workshop and Tour might offer the information you need.

"Organic gardens are free of chemicals and have a rich diversity of organisms making their living where you grow your food – and you can use this to your benefit," says Marla Limousin, owner and farmer at Nature's Way Farm in the Comox Valley. *"When a garden is alive with all sorts of life forces, encouraging beneficial organisms is a safe, easy and natural way to control those critters that think your food is their food."*

Limousin will facilitate the Organic Pest Management Workshop and Tour on Saturday, May 25. As part of North Island College's *Lettuce Grow* series, the workshop takes place from 1 to 4 p.m., and will include live examples of organic farming and pest control at Nature's Way Farm.

"To control garden pests through the creation of a balanced and diverse ecosystem, we'll examine soil health, increased diversity, agricultural methods, botanical pesticides and physical controls," Limousin says. *"We'll also talk about natural predators, planting schedules and plant health, creating spaces for natural insect predators, rotating crops to confuse pests and what controls are on the Organic Materials Review Institute certified list. Plus, we'll look at the effect of the farmer's shadow as the best pest control."*

When dealing with pest management, Kira DeSorcy, Lead Instructor for the *Lettuce Grow* program, notes that observing and understanding your environment and the organisms you are dealing with is key.

"For example, a ladybug is a beneficial predator that will help keep down infestations of aphids, and the ladybug is most beneficial for pest control during the larval stages of its life cycle, when it resembles a 12-millimetre alligator. Many people would squish this bug, not knowing the benefits it brings to the garden," says DeSorcy.

"And did you know, slugs are a favourite snack for chickens and ducks?" DeSorcy adds.

Chickens and ducks are currently permitted in Campbell River in zones RU-1, RU-2 and RU-3, and on properties one acre or larger in the Quinsam Livestock Boundary.

If you have any questions or comments on growing local food, please send them to growlocal@campbellriver.ca. Your questions will be addressed in a future Q&A article.

To register online for Organic Pest Management or any workshop in the *Lettuce Grow* series, please visit www.nic.bc.ca/continuingeducation and search course codes GENI 7911-8050.

The *Lettuce Grow* courses and article series support the implementation of the City of Campbell River's Agriculture Plan and the community sustainability goal of local food self-sufficiency and resiliency.

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Photo caption: Ladybugs mating to produce the alligator-like larvae that will eat pesky aphids.