

January 2, 2013

Local gardening, farming taking root with appetizing articles and more *Lettuce Grow* workshops

Want to learn to grow your own food – or make money in Campbell River’s budding agricultural sector?

A new series of *Lettuce Grow* workshops at North Island College (NIC) starts with “**Farming for Profit**” on **Saturday, Jan. 12**. Local experts Gary Rolston (P.Ag) and Andrea Lawseth (M.Sc, P.Ag.) will guide participants through planning and developing a farm business – from a small back-yard enterprise to berry farms, orchards, animal husbandry and more. Course information will include how to create a business plan for a farm, and provide key information about farm production and operations as well as marketing, financial planning and regulations.

“The success of the first Lettuce Grow series indicates that people in and around Campbell River are interested in getting back to our roots,” explains Kira DeSorcy, lead instructor for the NIC School of Continuing Education and Training *Lettuce Grow* series. *“We know the demand for local food is on the rise, and the profitability of local agriculture is ripe for the picking, so we’re designing this course to show people how to grow food for profit.”*

Although agriculture hasn’t been a dominant industry in Campbell River’s recent history, early settlers appreciated the area’s prime soil, and a census taker from May 1891 wrote of *“splendid cultivated fields with high rail fences”* farmed by First Nations people.

“There are also accounts of successful farming by early settlers, including Fred Nunns, who wrote about planting cabbage, turnips, lettuce; and raising pigs and cows,” DeSorcy says. *“Campbell River currently produces less than one per cent of its food locally, and we can grow much more.”*

The City’s Sustainable Official Community Plan encourages growth in the agricultural sector. The related Agriculture Plan includes a background report that documents abundant potential for local food production. *Lettuce Grow* courses coming up in January and February will continue to bring people together to learn and share about backyard gardening, community gardening and local farming.

Planning is also underway for the spring/summer *Lettuce Grow* series. People are welcome to suggest a topic for a workshop by sharing ideas on DeSorcy’s *Lettuce Grow* Facebook page.

To complement the *Lettuce Grow* series, the City of Campbell River is producing appetizing articles focused on growing local food. Send questions, comments and ideas about local food and agriculture to the City’s sustainability manager Amber Zirnhelt at amber.zirnhelt@campbellriver.ca.

“The feedback we get will provide the direction for the topics of upcoming workshops, and the most commonly asked questions will be answered in the article series,” DeSorcy says. *“Keep your (potato) eyes peeled for upcoming local food features!”*

‘Tis the season for learning about farming and small scale agriculture at North Island College (NIC). Lettuce grow some community around local agriculture; sign up today!

To register online for Farming for Profit or any workshop in the *Lettuce Grow* series, please visit www.nic.bc.ca/continuingeducation and search course codes GENI 7928-7933. For more information on these workshops, please call Julia Peters at North Island College (250-923-9724).

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Photo: ***Farming in Campbell River’s early days***, courtesy of the Museum at Campbell River
