



## Winter Reading

### For everyone

*Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation.* Hands down the best source of information on pollinators and what can be done to protect them. Special emphasis is placed on farming. Most publications are available for free download. [www.xerces.org](http://www.xerces.org)

### For the book lover

*Bee Basics. An Introduction to Our Native Bees* (48pp) USDA Forest Service and Pollinator Partnership - downloadable in PDF from [www.pollinator.org/PDFs/BeeBasicsBook.pdf](http://www.pollinator.org/PDFs/BeeBasicsBook.pdf) Beautifully illustrated exploration of native bees, their ecology, habits, habitats.

### For the agrologist in you

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. Technical documents for pollinator conservation and enhancement: NRCS leaflets, fact sheets, guides, and agroforestry notes. [plants.usda.gov/pollinators/NRCSdocuments.html](http://plants.usda.gov/pollinators/NRCSdocuments.html)

### For the wwweb crawler

Pollinator Partnership - (North American Pollinator Protection Campaign). Load of links, bee articles, very good ecoregional planting guides, news, curriculum. [www.pollinator.org](http://www.pollinator.org)

### For fun

Pollinator LIVE! A distance learning adventure. Geared toward educators, this is a good site for gleaning information in a fun way. Webcasts, citizen science, gardening, and lots more. [pollinatorlive.pwnet.org/index.php](http://pollinatorlive.pwnet.org/index.php)

### For the artist

Resonating Bodies. From Toronto, for the artistically inclined. Excellent links, you can tell this site is driven by passion and community involvement, as you watch it grow and evolve. [resonatingbodies.wordpress.com](http://resonatingbodies.wordpress.com)

### For the observant

Bumblebee.org. Get to know your bumblebees with their great pocket guide! [www.Bumblebee.org/NorthAmerica.htm](http://www.Bumblebee.org/NorthAmerica.htm)



Issue 11  
December 2011

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[www.conservancy.bc.ca](http://www.conservancy.bc.ca)

# The Cultivator

TLC's Newsletter about Conservation and Agriculture

Welcome to the Winter issue of **The Cultivator** - TLC's newsletter to share resources with our agricultural community.

## New Partners



TLC is delighted to welcome Westham Island Herb Farm to our CPP family of farms. The farm is located on Westham Island at the mouth of the Fraser River, the largest delta in the Pacific Flyway, and Canada's most significant bird area. This farm and area is frequented by 300 species of birds, Canada's greatest density of Barn Owls and greatest diversity of wintering raptors.

A significant land-use challenge in this area is balancing agricultural feasibility with the need to provide bird habitat. The Delta Farmland and Wildlife Trust (DF&WT) assists this with their Winter Cover Crop Stewardship Program which helps farmers establish vegetative cover on their fields before winter. The cost is shared by the farmer and DF&WT. These cover crops provide feeding habitat for herbivorous waterfowl and shorebirds and hunting habitat for raptors, while amending the soil and providing erosion control from heavy winter rain.

The Westham Island Herb Farm is 130-acres and has been in the Ellis family since 1916, but the family's history of farming can be traced over 100 years in Delta. Grains, vegetables, and hay were some of the crops grown historically.

Sharon Ellis is now the farmer, and grows a diversity of organic flowers, herbs, vegetables, and fruit. The crops she grows provide an abundant supply of pollen and nectar; she grows a floral diversity, and protects ground nesting bee sites. As well, much of the property is encased with set aside borders which enhance agricultural productivity and provide nesting areas for beneficial insects. Sharon has also been involved in seed trials for West Coast Seeds and DF&WT. Seed plants also provide a late food source for the bees. The success of these seed trial coincides with the pollinator success on the farm. For all of these reasons, TLC awarded Westham Island Herb Farm a

Pollinator Stewardship Award plaque at their Day on the Farm in September. In the coming year we will continue to work with Sharon to place interpretive signs that demonstrate to visitors what farmers can do to help bees.



Through hosting school tours and events like Day on the Farm her involvement with TLC and work with DF&WT, Sharon shares her passion for agriculture by showing people where their food comes from. Thanks for what you do Sharon- you are helping the community to reconnect with the land that feeds it!

At the on-site general store you will find flowers, herbs, vegetable seedlings, vegetables, and fruit. The selection also includes breads, jellies, jams, and honey from neighbouring farms. The farm is open daily from 9 a.m. - 5 p.m., May to October.

**Website contact:** [www.westhamislandherbfarm.ca](http://www.westhamislandherbfarm.ca)

# Conservation Tip



## Winter Planning - Seed Saving

Though it is largely an autumn activity, the most important steps in seed saving start now, with planning which open pollinated seeds you wish to grow for seed and where they will be placed to ensure proper pollination.

Seeds are part of the "birds and the bees" cycle of life. We are all conscious of the importance of bees to seeds; but what about the importance of seeds to bees? Plants grown to seed complete their life cycle - they flower. These flowers can be used in gardens and vegetable areas to provide food source, and increase floral diversity. A field of broccoli is void of pollen, but if a section is left to seed one will be rewarded with thousands of white or yellow flowers, which are attractive to bees. Many vegetables provide a late season flower, which is especially important to bumble bees that begin hibernation as late as November.

### Publications:

*Saving Seeds As If Our Lives Depended On It* by Dan Jason (of Salt Spring Seeds, founding member of Seeds of Diversity Canada and the Seed and Plant Sanctuary for Canada). Dan will show you how saving seeds can be simple, easy, and straightforward. The book also provides personal and professional background into the social movement of the preservation of our seed heritage. It is currently on sale from his website, which is also packed with practical information. [www.saltspringseeds.com](http://www.saltspringseeds.com)

*DIG: Diversity In Gardens* by Sharon Rempel (of Grassroots Solutions, founder of Seedy Saturday, past director of BC's Heritage Seed Program, dedicated to conservation of heritage varieties of food crops). This book is a wonderful read. A wealth of information, interesting facts and activities, written for the whole family. Free download from [www.grassrootsolutions.com/pdf/DIG.pdf](http://www.grassrootsolutions.com/pdf/DIG.pdf)



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## Pollinator Course

On December 9, 2011, TLC's Conservation Partners Program (CPP) had the opportunity to take eleven pollinator enthusiasts to Mt. Vernon to a pollinator short course by Xerces's, Dr. Eric Mader. The participants included some of our CPP partners-farmers, scientists and individuals from other like minded organizations. The focus of the presentation looked at the plight of bees, their importance to agriculture, and the simple things that farmers can do to improve the health and habitat of native bee populations. The course included learning to identify bees and their habitat on your farm, protecting existing areas, enhancing those areas, and then finally creating more.



If you are interested in TLC's 'Native Pollinator Enhancement Project but could not attend the course this holiday season we will be sending our CPP partners a copy of *Farming for Bees: Guidelines for Providing Native Bee Habitat on Farms*. We hope you will have time to read this book before farming season starts up again, as it will help you plan your season with native pollinators in mind. If you would like to become a pollinator conservation steward farm, or require more information please call Nathalie Chambers 250-896-2261.

Best of the season to you all.

*Nathalie Chambers*

# Program Updates



## The Native Pollinator Enhancement Project

TLC has stepped up to be the change by targeting pollinator decline through the CPP-Native Pollinator Enhancement Project. There are more than 400 species of native bees in B.C. and they are critically important to flowering plants, including 35% of the crops most prominent in the human diet. Native bees are under researched, under appreciated, and in need of conservation action. Farmers are ideally poised to help.

Our work with native bees is a natural extension to our Conservation Partners Program. As a thank you for your good work, all of our partners will receive a copy of *Farming For Bees: Guidelines for Providing Native Bee Habitat on Farms* from the Xerces Society. We encourage you to pass this along to others who will find this informative and inspirational.

Experiences over the last year demonstrate to us that many of our partners (within the ethic of maintaining intact natural areas, diversity, and health) are doing great work. A number of our partners are already undertaking specific planning to benefit pollinators.

This is the change we want to see in the world.



Our goal with our Pollinators Program is to show the world stories of success; practical, personal examples of the good work being done by farmers so that others can learn and be inspired themselves.

We ask that any of you who are concerned with, or actively involved in, protecting pollinators to e-mail or speak with us. We have a program that allows us to work with farmers on assessments, planning, restoration, and public demonstrations. Most of all we want to share stories and learn more about limitations or challenges that may be faced by the farming community in adapting to this environmental change.

*The Xerces Society has just released a Native Bee Conservation Pollinator Habitat Assessment Form and Guide for farms. It is a valuable tool in providing directions people may wish to take to enhance the health of their property for bees, utilizing the resources readily available.*

[www.xerces.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/PollHabAssess\\_june11\\_1v3-Web.pdf](http://www.xerces.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/PollHabAssess_june11_1v3-Web.pdf)

## Dr. Edith Marion Patch's Pollinator Prediction



Dr. Patch was convinced of the enormous and irreplaceable importance of insects to humans. Some forty years before the publication of *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson, Dr. Patch warned against the indiscriminate use of pesticides. In 1937 she predicted that in the future, "Entomologists will be as much or more concerned with the conservation and preservation of beneficial

insect life as they are now with the destruction of injurious insects, and that by the year 2000...the President of the United States would issue a proclamation claiming that land areas at regular intervals throughout the U. S. would be maintained as 'Insect Gardens' under the direction of government entomologists. These would be planted with milkweed, hawthorn, and other plants that could sustain populations of butterflies and bees."

No president has yet made such a proclamation, but US Congress has formally recognized the importance of pollinators in the 2008 Farm Bill - making bees a central concern of conservation programs and providing support for habitat creation and research.

To put this achievement into perspective (and create envy in neighbours to the north) the 2008 US Farm Bill:

- Makes pollinators and their habitat a priority for every USDA land manager and conservationist
- Identifies pollinator habitat as a priority when determining funding under the Environmental Quality Incentives Program
- Requires that pollinators are considered during the review or development of Conservation Practice Standards
- Encourages the inclusion of pollinator habitat in all USDA administered conservation programs
- Provides \$20 million annually (2008-2013) to fund research, capacity and monitoring.

## Coming Events



### Seedy Saturdays:

January 28, Denman Island - Denman Community Centre Large Hall 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

January 28, Ladner - 5624 Ladner Trunk Road 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

February 4, Qualicum Beach - Qualicum Beach Civic Centre 10 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

February 4, Nanaimo - Bowen Park Complex

February 11, Salt Spring Island - Farmers Institute 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.

February 18, Victoria - Victoria Conference Centre

February 25, Vancouver - Van Dusen Botanical Garden 37<sup>th</sup> & Oak St.

March 3, Courtney - 411 Anderton Avenue 11 a.m. - 3 p.m.

March 10, Cobble Hill - Cobble Hill Hall

March 10, Powell River - Powell River Recreation Complex TBA - Sooke, Kelowna, Penticton, Lillooet, Duncan, Nelson, N. Vancouver, Kaslo, Port Alberni, Mission, Slokan Valley, Enderby, Rossland, Prince George, 100 Mile House, Williams Lake, etc.

### Pacific Agriculture Show

January 26-28, Abbotsford TRADEX Center

### 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Island Agriculture Show

February 3-4, Cowichan Exhibition Park - 8:30 a.m. - 5 p.m. \$5

### COABC - INNOVATIONS Conference

February 24-26, Chilliwack Best Western (feature speaker: Cuban World Agro-Biodiversity Leader and musician-Humberto Rios Labrada)

### Agro-Biodiversity Study Trip

March 3-18 [www.cubavivacan.org](http://www.cubavivacan.org)

