

Our Home, Our Food, Our Resilience



AN ALBERNI-CLAYOQUOT PHOTOBOOK 2020

Our Home, Our Food, Our Resilience:

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Work in the Alberni-Clayoquot Region took place on the traditional territories of the Nuuchahnulth First Nations. Both labs are deeply grateful to the participants who generously shared their knowledge, photos and stories as part of this participatory research project. The project was funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council New Frontiers in Research Fund.

People, Institutions, and Forests Lab: pif.forestry.ubc.ca

Food Systems Lab: foodsystemslab.ca



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Meagan Curtis

INTRODUCTION

This photobook is the wisdom of many woven into a single tapestry that speaks to the meaning of food within our community. It captures a moment in time and carries with it the past as well as desires for the future. As individuals we exist within an inextricable collective that we create together, and it is together that we shape the food landscape we live within. We are responsible for ourselves, for each other, and for the next generations. Although the past has dictated the present, we can shape the future of food in any way we imagine. Although the stars may incline us, they do not bind us.

The traditional food culture in Port Alberni has suffered due to colonial violence, but it has

not disappeared. It survives through giving, remembering and practicing. The introduction of European agricultural methods led to the eradication of pathways and plants on the landscape that supported an Indigenous food system. Fencing off areas into private property parcels was another mechanism by which First Nations' rights to food were removed. Both humans and non-human animals had to adjust, if not by force, then by surrender.

Nevertheless, the beauty of native foods across our landscape and ocean persists. As with all wild plants, there is an ethic to picking. One is cautioned to never harvest everything visible and always leave some behind. Robbing the forest leaves wealth for none. As we connect with the land, and gather the plants around us, the truth of serendipity can be seen in action.

In our backyards, an individual's garden plot is a work of creative energy. It is a dance with nature in which nature always leads. By yielding and cooperating with our plants, in time, everything grows as it should.

Larger market garden and farm operations have been a key component of peri-urban areas since cities began. As spaces

were densified, and soil was lost, growing food for others became an occupation of some within reach of those who could not, or cared not to, supply their own diets. Today, the land we eat from is often so distant we cannot imagine the labourers nor their burdens and dreams. Despite this, an eternal need for local food can never be erased, even if it is temporarily displaced.

Port Alberni's urban core is not yet fully paved. It has been historically a place of growing, gathering, and fishing, and there remain spaces here and there in which this takes place. These are spaces where people meet, share stories over meals, and continue the legacy of food sufficiency. The flourishing of plants and food culture in urban areas seems a likely indicator of the population's overall social, ecological, and cultural health.

From the land to sea, the Alberni-Clayoquot region's abundance and potential cannot be denied despite its past struggles and future obstacles.

Meagan Curtis,
Port Alberni, British Columbia,
January 2021

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Matilda Atleo

Matilda Atleo married into the Nuu-chah-nulth community and is originally from Interior of British Columbia. Matilda had a catering business for 12 years. She attended the Dubrelle French Culinary School in Vancouver and enjoys cooking and trying new things. She is a world traveller and has experienced a lot of different foods. She would like to see all First Nations Communities have community gardens and build sustainable local food systems.



Marilyn Touchie

Marilyn Touchie, nee Clark; was born in Nisga'a and married Ladner Touchie (Laddie) from Ucluelet First Nation.

She grew up on the west coast of BC, and her dad worked for BC Packers on a scow, a floating camp all around the waters of the Prince Rupert area. He taught her how to jig for halibut and dry it, how to smoke fish, trap crabs, get abalone, rock stickers, muscles at zero tide, and dig for clams and cockles.

From age 7-17 (1962-1972), she went to Port Alberni Indian Residential School, and boarded out, so never learned anything cultural from her parents or grandparents during that time and after.

After marriage, she decided she could start doing what she had learned, and learned more from her husband. She has gradually taught her two daughters, and the cycle continues.

Traditional Foods

Matilda Atleo & Marilyn Touchie

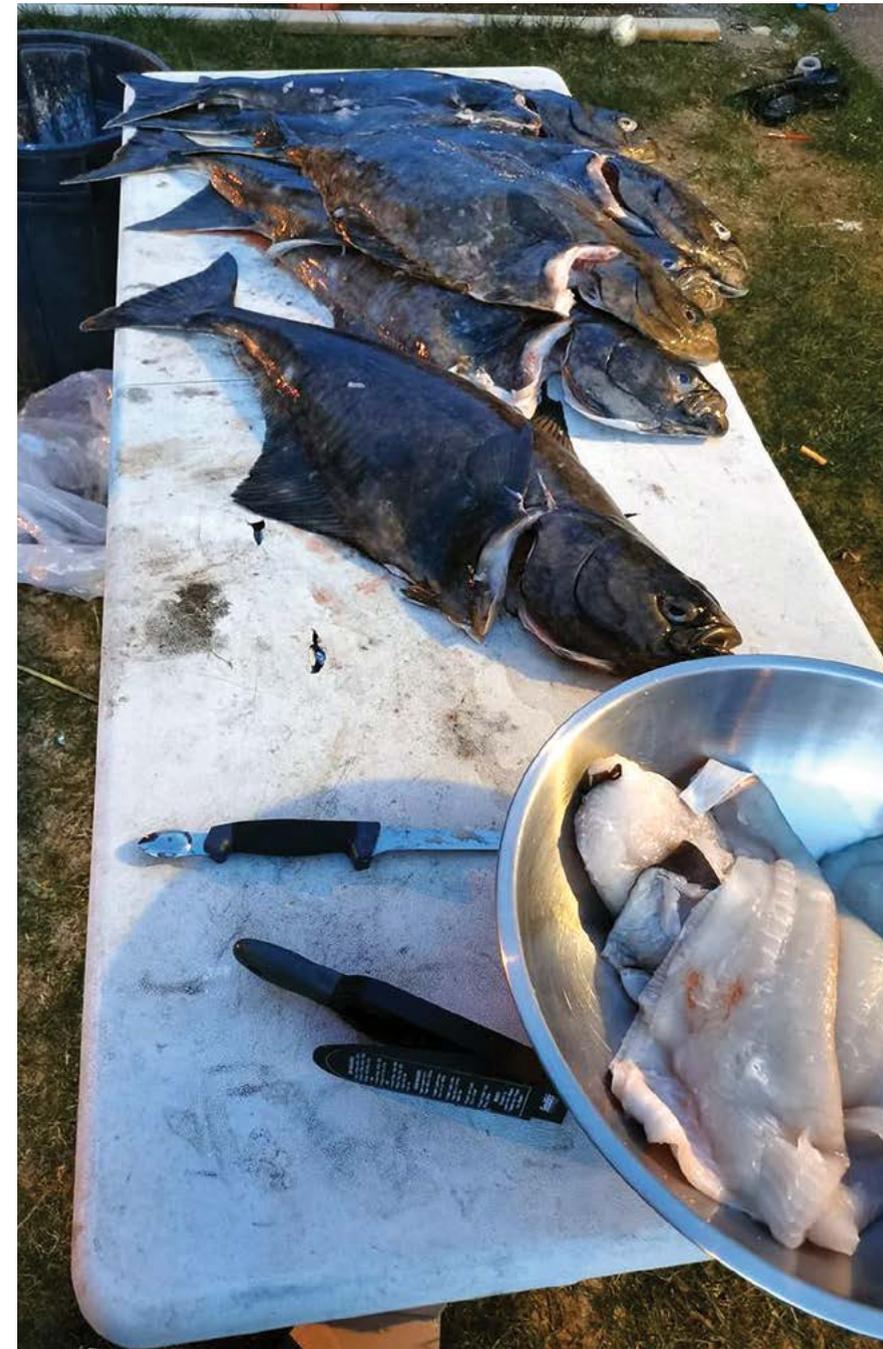


We use alder when we smoke, but it is better to use green alder. The ones you just cut down instead of having it sit awhile. Green alder burns slow whereas if you let it dry out it just burns like a fire. You don't really want that. He's cutting the bark off the alder for smoking...the bark could give a bitter taste. - *Marilyn*

We are slowly trying to get the cultural practices back. Some of our elders unfortunately were from the residential school - they are the ones that are coming up to be elders now. Even myself - I'll be 65 in October. You know, mostly we've lost some of the cultural practices although I still remember some things that my mom, dad and grandparents taught me, but I don't live it all the time. - *Marilyn*



If its taught, if you have it everyday... For instance, I used to chew the food for them and give it to them when they were babies. You don't really see that anymore. Stuff like that is not done anymore, but its something that my grandmother and mom taught me. It was also because that's all that there was. We couldn't really go out and get steaks from a restaurant or store because we couldn't really afford it, so we had fish heads, fish hearts, crabs and other things. - Marilyn



I bake the fish heads for about 40 minutes – its longer than when you bake the flesh because that doesn't take long to cook... I eat the eyeballs, but take the covering and white eye-ball off first, those I don't eat cause they are hard. It doesn't matter how you bake it or cook it...I chew on the bones, but I don't eat them. You chew on them and suck on them to get the juices out and then put them aside. The brain is hard, but once you cook or bake it its almost like a jelly. The one thing I like is the cartilage. I can eat the cartilage off chicken bones, mostly because that's what me and my mom used to do, so I just keep doing it. - Marilyn



The residential school, to me, did what it was supposed to do. Unfortunately, they broke the culture.

To me, the bands farther than the cities kind of held on to their traditions or some of the older elders helped keep it alive when they were here ... whereas ours went into logging. – *Marylin*

Its like a lot of other things when it comes to First Nations and the government and colonialism. They came along and said, "Oh you can't hunt anymore. You have to have a ticket or you have to have a license". You know? All that kind of stuff. Whereas, before First Nations just went out. – *Matilda*



I read a book about a gentleman in Ahousat, an elder. He said that they always fished. When they started having to do licenses, he said they never got licensed so they'd all end up in jail because nobody knew how to get licenses. The First Nations knew where to go to get fish, and not a lot of non-natives did, so they would be following the native people out to see where to go fish. – *Marylin*



This photo represents to me the access and availability of salmon on our river for First Nations. I think sometimes its unpredictable. Like this year, at the beginning, we didn't think we were going to get any salmon, so when my niece gave me one salmon I was so happy because I didn't think I would get even one.

Part of the challenge, I think, is how DFO (Department of Fisheries and Oceans) don't realize that First Nations actually know more about the salmon than they do. They are the ones that dictate how things are going to go and how much salmon there is and all that kind of stuff, but First Nations have actually been doing it for years, and they know.

– *Matilda*



I grew up with a garden, my mom had a garden as well. I moved here after she moved here and I said, "remember how you used to make that awesome vegetable soup"... She loved to be out in the yard, and when I get out there I think about her.

When I think way ahead, there is going to come a day when people are going to rely on all these farmers. That's where they are going to get their food. Like the way they used to. That's where they used to get it – they'd trade. I'll share my pork for some eggs. That's what they used to do, you know, a long time ago. – *Matilda*



Some believe that having one sea urchin a day for a month will get rid of your arthritis. Its so powerful" – *Matilda*

Stop and savour the food and really taste it. You will notice that you will really enjoy all the food. You should never cook when you are angry because that anger will go into the food and it will not taste so good. Food was a living thing at one time. – *Matilda*





When you go into their house, they are always going to offer you something. It a social thing. When you come together you are always going to put something out. When you come together, you eat and celebrate. Connecting with family. When you think about doing something its usually around food. And I think food actually also creates memories. – *Matilda*



I'm actually from Nisga'a – up from Terrace area. They have more seaweed. I actually went to get some seaweed from Kwisitit [part of Long Beach] and dried it because you need the sun. When it dries, it dries dark, but Kwisitit is really sandy, so it got really sandy. So the batch I did a couple years, I washed the salty taste out because I was trying to get the sand out of it. In the Prince Rupert area there is no sand right. This one I washed in seawater so it kinda tasted a little better...Usually I have it with rice, seaweed and ooligan grease. That's another thing – ooligan grease – and the only place you can get that is up in the Nass. So I went there 3 or so years ago and I bought 5 quarts. – *Marilyn*





The way things have changed here is that they used to put spruce boughs in the water for the eggs. But now someone comes from Bella Bella with the eggs thick on kelp. That's what people really like since its less work then picking it off all the on branches. – *Matilda*

Actually, the herring came here last year right in the harbour. They hadn't done that for 50 years. A grey whale came here and ate the herring eggs that were floating around. I got some of it because someone on the reserve put down a tree branch. I noticed how we cook it up home versus down here is different. Down here in Ucluelet, they cook it long and the egg gets hard and white. In the Prince Rupert area, we throw it in boiling water and take it off the heat, and its still opaque when we eat it. – *Marilyn*



Everybody loves upsquee. I don't smoke mine very long – maybe about 6 hours and then I take it out and put it in the sun where the sun can dry it out more, but a lot of people keep it in there for 3 days and its hard as a rock and thats how they like it. I guess it all depends on how you like it. I like mine smoky, but a little chewy and dried by the sun. – *Marilyn*

Upsquee is like dried salmon strips. Jerky – like that. You smoke it, cut it real thin and put it in the sun to dry and you eat it. Its so good. It takes time, I used to make it all the time, but lately, even though I love it and eat it, its time consuming. – *Marilyn*





Wild Foods

Debi Brummel & Sheila Hertel

Sheila Hertel

Sheila Hertel is a 57-year-old grandmother who is privileged to be living on land that she feels deeply connected to; the very same land, originally purchased by her grandfather, that she grew up on. This acreage, situated at the base of the Beaufort Mountains in the beautiful Alberni Valley, continues to provide sustenance for what is now the fifth generation of family through vegetable gardens well supplemented with rich compost as well as wild harvesting in the meadows and surrounding forest.

Debi Brummel

Debi Brummel utilizes the outdoor world as a safe and immune enhancing teacher, classroom and healing place for all beings. A generational forager, she was taught to search out fruits, nuts, mushrooms and outdoor sanctitude, with the changing seasons. The ocean, mountains, rivers and forests of Port Alberni with its plethora of available, local wild foods, is home.

You will find Debi facilitating wholistic healthy lifestyle classes including Wild Nutrition, Yasei Shinrin Yoku (Wild Forest Bathing), courses, retreats and seasonal Feral Food Forages. Her photography intrinsically captures and exposes the beauty of our incredible valley's wild edible offerings and the reverence she feels about connecting and rewilding with it all.



Some believe there is an indigenous species of hazelnut in the Alberni Valley area of the Nuu Chah Nulth Traditional Territory. Its not proven, but some of us believe it...The hazelnut is the tree of knowledge. It always hangs around rivers so it can spread its knowledge down the river. - *Debi*



🗨️ We go out and experience all those little tastes and they are tiny little tastes, but they are free and they are there for us.

Mother Nature gives them every year, in the same place; you just have to go for a walk. When we use wild foods we have to retrain our thoughts to be more accepting and more open to new tastes. Very new tastes a lot of the time! – *Debi*



🗨️ Nature will provide what you need in season. So, if you eat what's in season, like the stinging nettles that come up in the spring, you can naturally replenish nutrients that you will likely be short on; like the Vitamin C, iron and Omega 3 fatty acids found in nettles. This is assuming you are eating the way you eat when you are living off the land - not going to the grocery store - the way we used to eat. If you just follow the cycle of nature, it provides you with what you need. – *Sheila*



I pick the rose petals sustainably so the bees are still attracted by the vibrant colours of the blossoms and will still come to pollinate the flowers.

Responsible wildcrafters take a pledge to only pick 10% of what they see. You can't go up to a plant and decide, "oh here's a good patch, I'll just pick all of this because there must be more in the forest even though I don't see them".

– Debi





This is what grows naturally. Look at the weeds that come up if you just let Mother Nature do her thing. You are likely to get edible weeds, like mild, buttery flavoured Lamb's Quarters, that want to grow. If you allow Mother Nature to feed you, she will. – *Sheila*



Many weeds, like this purple dead nettle, are edible, and they also have medicinal properties like herbs. We eradicate them, but we could be eating them in salads, comforting teas and home medicines. – *Debi*



Last year, I was walking down the alley and saw walnuts on the ground, so I picked them up. But, I also saw lots inside the fence. I went around to the front door, knocked, met the resident and asked, "Could I clean up your yard a little?"

He said, "I already picked up most of the nuts, but just a second". Then he came out with two big bags of walnuts for me and said, "I'm happy to share these – thank you for dropping by".

Its easy for people to share when they can come together and talk, when they are not afraid of their neighbour. – *Debi*





Chanterelles are among the latest mushrooms – in fact, this year I was still finding them in good condition in the last week of December. Edible shrubs and fungi fruiting practically, sometimes literally, year-round.
– Sheila



This is my driveway that used to be a forest trail. There are now five loads of gravel compacted on it and these Shaggy Manes still come up, deformed because of having to squeeze up. I don't even know how because they are so soft; they don't have any rigidity, but they manage. Mother Nature will not be thwarted if she wants to grow there.
– Sheila



This was ten minutes walking through the forest, and I wasn't even there hunting for mushrooms. I was just going for a walk. I knew there would be mushrooms along the path, but I wasn't specifically looking. Its a lot easier to identify the ones that you are familiar with picking all the time.

Every year or so I pick up knowledge of one or two additional edibles, and I have to get really comfortable with recognizing them before gathering, especially with mushrooms. I'll find out about one, pick it and then forget about it. Then the next season comes along, and I'll spot it again in its immature form, and then maybe forget to go harvest it when its actually mature. After a couple years of that, I'll recognise that variety with confidence, know and remember when and where to get it. – Sheila





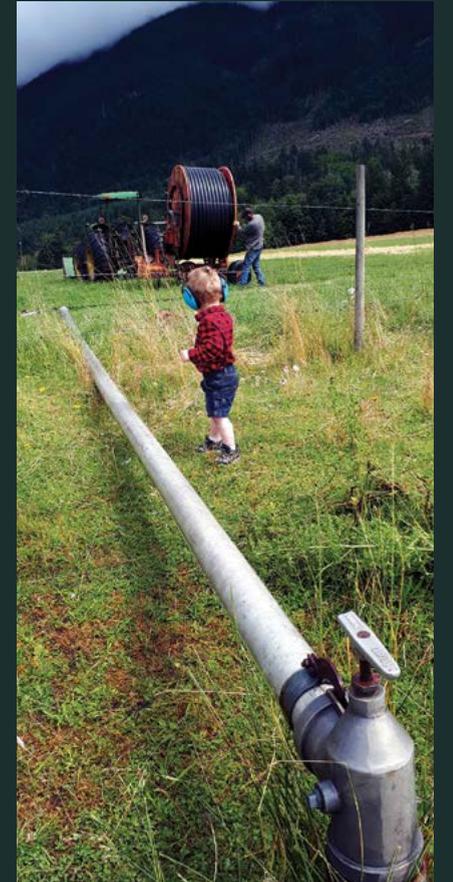
A diversified farm operation

*Lisa Aylard,
Stonehaven Farm*

Lisa Aylard is a 53 year old female farmer whose family has had various agricultural ventures over four generations. She runs a 178 acre farm, purchased in 1992 with her husband, that has had to transition a few times due to changes to markets, global trade deals and unconsented regulation constrictions. Off-farm incomes have been required to support the operation, but she places hope in the next generation and a future in which agriculture becomes an economically viable option.



As our grandson, Ryan, grows up on the farm, we hope he will form a relationship with the land. It takes time and energy to teach him, but its an investment in the future. He mimics what he sees others do on the farm with his toys later – with his tractor.



We introduce him to everything including safety on the farm. I hope that the next generation takes up the challenging, but rewarding task of growing food, and caring for the environment in all it encompasses.





We worked this neighbour's field after the farmer passed away. This is a story of neighbours helping neighbours in need. They required the annual hay crop to be harvested and it is located close by. It can be used for feed and bedding.



The fields are usually re-seeded every couple of decades or as needed. All animal fertilizer is a golden resource to introduce nutrients into the soil. Some say that chicken manure can grow grass on cement. Pig manure was very beneficial when we had them.





Our communities should be doing more seasonal production. They should learn how to winter store and preserve food stuffs as we used to do, in order to be more sufficient without the transportation of foreign goods. Working with Mother Nature as our forefathers did.

These apples are from one tree. One tree produced all of them. It was planted in the 1950s – its an apple that keeps well over winter. Juice, pies and cider are all made from this source. Fruit and nut trees are a time investment in the land and it takes some years to realize that effort, but then you have lots of yearly reward and seasonal work with pruning and watching for any virus or decay. With a good pollination season you can get great crops as long as you can harvest before the birds or other wildlife.



Family farms and other landowners, are constantly having to choose how their agriculture venture can be maintained.

The Agricultural Land Reserve – the ALR – was created in British Columbia in 1973, but it seems to have come with the continued decline of local food production. The preservation and maintenance of family farms, along with economic guarantees to farmers that were promised, did not continue as originally mandated.

Current regulations negatively affect how family farms will be able to carry on. Crown Land in the ALR is not being utilized and I think that helps maintain the high cost of land. We live in a favorable climate which attracts others to our locale – people that may not necessarily be interested in food production, but rather investment speculation.



This year was a big swarming year. We caught four swarms, so people didn't have much for honey. We have a very limited supply and it is very sought after. Year to year, the honey production changes depending on what other people are doing and growing in the area. Our goal is to help the bee population and pollination – the honey is a nice indirect side effect.



We have always maintained that bigger is not better. Environmentally, you are far better off to have small functioning agriculture, especially if you are going to support local sustainability. There will be those that cater to the export market, as the province and federal government is focused on. Many in the dairy industry were told to go big or get out – bigger was said to be 'more efficient'. We had 20 dairies in the 1940's in Port Alberni, now we have two.



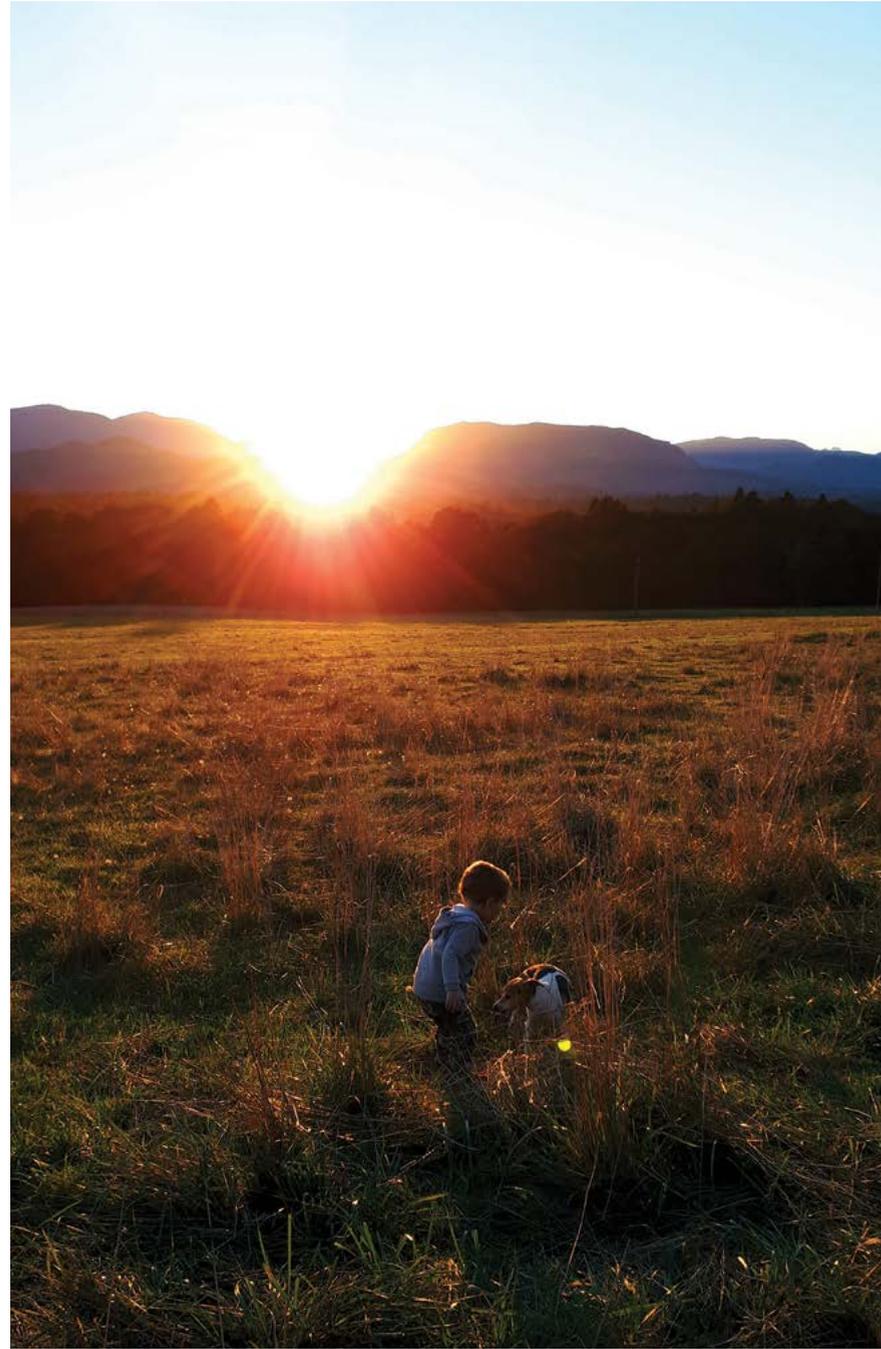


The sheep are dewormed seasonally. The dots, the markers, on them indicate who has been dewormed. We make sure that the ewes have good nutrition before they cycle in the fall. Then they are more likely to have twins or triplets. The lambs are put out in the field with the ram in October for 6 weeks and the gestation period is 5 months. They are sheared in spring and the wool is composted.



The garden bed is 25 years old. It doesn't just feed our family, it also feeds our extended family throughout the year.

January is planning time for the garden. It's a time for crop planning and a time to take stock of what is left in the freezer and cupboard.



Canning is not just an autumn activity – it is an all-year endeavour. You can or preserve as things are ready – berries, rhubarb, green leaf pesto are all things you can in the spring. It's a skill our grandparents had.

Family gatherings are centred around food. Celebration, gathering and food are all interconnected.





A biodynamic garden

Jacqueline, Gary, & Louis Swann, Leda Farm

Leda Farm is an 80-acre biodynamic farm purchased in 1974, approximately one acre of which is under cultivation as a market garden. Locally grown produce is grown in order to benefit people's health and the health of the planet. The biodynamic practices taught and practiced on site have nearly 100 years of history.



Our goal is to be a self-contained unit, a farm which can operate within its own footprint. We follow Rudolph Steiner's biodynamic methods. This photo shows biodynamic preparations used in homeopathic amounts: cow horns, horn silica and basalt.



We believe that the Alberni Valley needs to work towards feeding itself. Cutting down on food transportation helps with climate change disruptions and can provide therapeutic local employment.



It is the energy of the group and the people around it that matter. Steiner said that intention is everything in our lives.



If I intend to have a good garden and work towards it then I will. I can grab a piece of land and say "Ok, I'm going to put my fence around it and I'm going to plant it and I will make money!"

But if I look at it from a perspective that I am growing because I love flowers, I love soil, I love vegetables, my intention is raised.

When you approach your garden this way, the financial bounty will come anyways because you will have so many fruits and so many flowers you won't have enough people to give them to. That is the truth of growing.





We really want to get organic matter into soil. Decay is important. Life into death into new life...The spirit is pulled in through the soil. It is feeding people and pulling in spiritual activity.

The best way to do this is by building biodynamic compost heaps and later spreading the active humus back on the garden and greenhouse beds.



We support many bee populations: honey bees, solitary bees and bumble bees by having a succession of flowers from the crocuses in January to chrysanthemums in December.

Agriculture is a way of life for us, not an industrial activity. We don't want to do industrial agriculture with its chemical fertilizers, toxic pesticides and intensive capital outlay.

Society's church is the church of overconsumption. It is our present religion. We are willing or unwilling members.

Once you understand that this is our present-day religion, and that people have an emotional attachment to it, then a lot of things become clearer...Greed is no longer viewed as a sin. It is viewed as a virtue. The one with the most toys when they die wins. It's not based on logic. It's completely emotional.

You have to think small is beautiful. Small is the best way – small does not require a huge surplus of capital.



We encourage the development of a local food supply. We extend our season with crops like broccoli and leeks, as well as by growing main season crops, like basil.

We also extend our season by tapping Big Leaf Maple trees on our farm.





Food self-sufficiency isn't just a matter of going out to your garden for 2 weeks to plant and 2 weeks to harvest it. If you want food self-sufficiency you have to do your 10 lettuce seeds every month. Every full moon I start another tray of lettuce or kale or spinach.

Three or four days before the full moon – before is best...Above ground crops should be sown at the full moon time. Below ground, or things that have a long germination time, during the new moon. These are the two key times. Sometimes things also take longer than anticipated – have patience.

The most important thing you can do for your health and the health of the planet is to eat locally grown food.





A garden plot

John Mayba

John Mayba is an outdoors person at heart. He completed a BSc in Zoology and a BSW many years ago. He worked as a social worker by day, and a social and environmental activist by night. Now retired, his hobbies include singing, cycling, hiking and growing veggies for his family and friends.



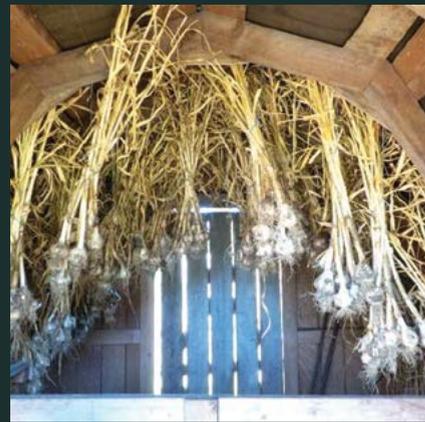
I call the garden my "farm". The garden patch is located on a larger farm and I rent it from the farmer...It is also not only, for the most part, an organic farm, it's also a carbon neutral farm. When I go to the "farm", I use either my electric bike or my electric car...there is very little carbon involved with this operation.





By gardening, in a way, we are creating culture. We are doing new things. We are emphasizing certain things. We are appreciating certain things. For others, this is one of things they know me for, growing my garden.

One of the themes of my garden is digging. And it's such hard work. I'm getting older, and I think 'this is hard work, but people have been doing this for thousands of years'. You know? This is what they did! They didn't just go to a store and buy it. They didn't just run a tractor through it. They dug.



In terms of food security, one of the things I've tried to do is to raise stuff that will last throughout the year. So I'm really big on squash. I usually raise 200lbs a year. That's about 100 squash and roughly 30 plants... Butternut keeps the best...It was March 24th when I ate my last squash from the year before.

Sometimes things I plant don't grow, so I often plant more than one variety...And the other thing I try to do from time to time is plant things in different areas of the garden. If something doesn't work in one place it may work better in another...If you have enough seed plant some here, plant some there.

These squash were planted May 11th and harvested in September. I calculated that I use 120 litres of water per plant for their 120 days of growth.



Everything is an experiment. They will probably put this on my gravestone. So much of what I do in the garden is me saying, "Well I don't know whether this is going to work out or not!" So you just try stuff. I was thinking the other day, the nice part about thinking of it as an experiment is that scientifically you are not supposed to have a feeling one way or another about the result. When the experiment fails, well it isn't really a failure, it just tells you what happened.





Urban food

Mike Youds, Uptown Urban Farming Collective

Mike Youds is a Port Alberni-based freelance journalist with interests in environmental issues, small-scale urban growing and community resilience. Born on Vancouver Island, he worked for more than 35 years as a reporter and editor in B.C.'s community newspaper industry.

Since returning to the Island three years ago, he has helped Women's Food and Water Initiative expand its annual Alberni Valley Seedy Saturday events and joined several neighbours in forming the Uptown Urban Farming Collective.

When I moved here and took a stroll around the neighbourhood, I noticed two stalls. They looked like fixtures in place for decades. One was for eggs, one for vegetables. And of course, it's the honour system, and I remarked on this on Facebook. There is something special about a neighbourhood that can still do that. It reflects a sense of trust and respect.



Due to Covid-related health concerns, our small collective opted not to participate in farmers markets as they reopened last spring. We decided instead to set up a driveway stall with an honour system for payment in order to minimize social contact.



Walking by this sandwich board I thought, wow, that reflects a sense of community as well as the time we are living in.

Food has become such a convenience that plays a minor role in our daily lives, but then you realize that in places like Italy, food is far more important. The food is at the centre of the culture. We have been lulled into this false complacency by the North American lifestyle.



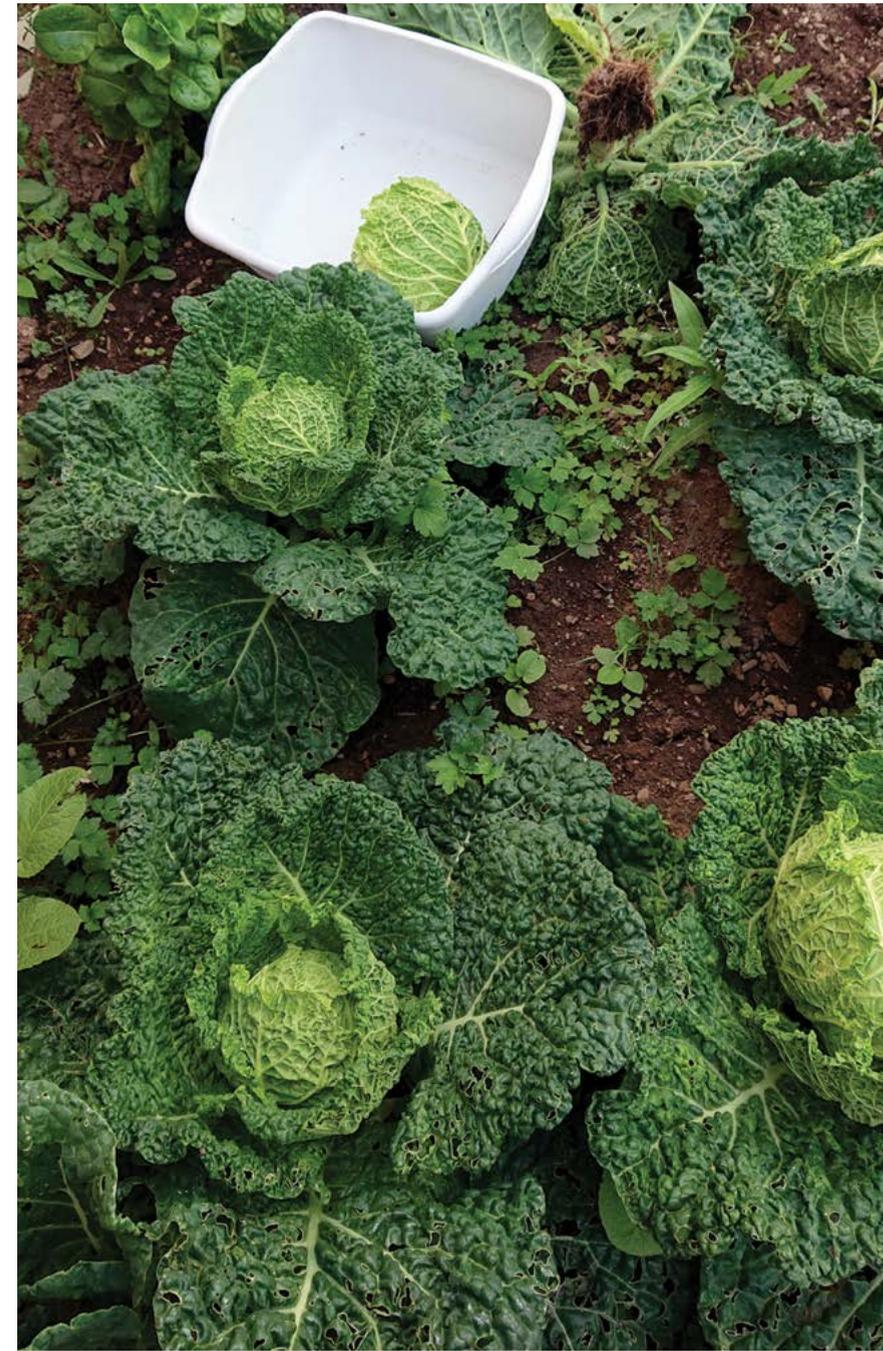
We are a part of what is known as the urban food movement. People may not think of Port Alberni as urban, but the idea of residential gardening is growing and we have seen a resurgence of interest in that, even in our immediate neighbourhood, since the pandemic started. It took a major crisis to remind us that we have a false sense of security — a false sense of food security — due to our supermarket and superstore habits.



It takes a moment of vulnerability to realize that we shouldn't be so self-assured, that we need to perhaps return to some of the ways of the past. Some of us are fortunate, old enough to have the wisdom of our elders who lived that way. We need to move towards sustainability. My dad remembered buying produce in Vancouver grown on Denman Island. Even growing up, I remember more access to local foods than we have now.



We are having to recover knowledge we have let go and re-establish some of our self-sufficiency. When I was first introduced to the concept of food security 30 years ago by a friend, a dietician in Kamloops, I thought, "We aren't food insecure! Why talk about it?" Most of us have known only an abundance.



We don't know what it means to have scarce food available. As with so many other aspects of North American culture, food has become an individual pursuit. We have lost a great deal of a sense of community that way. It's even reflected in the way we live – the nature of our neighbourhoods and houses – and neighbours don't generally communicate as they used to.

Not all store-bought produce is fresh and the more we can wean ourselves off the imported high-energy, high-carbon diet, the better off we will be. And in fact, circumstances may force us to do so. California is not the bottomless breadbasket we think it is.

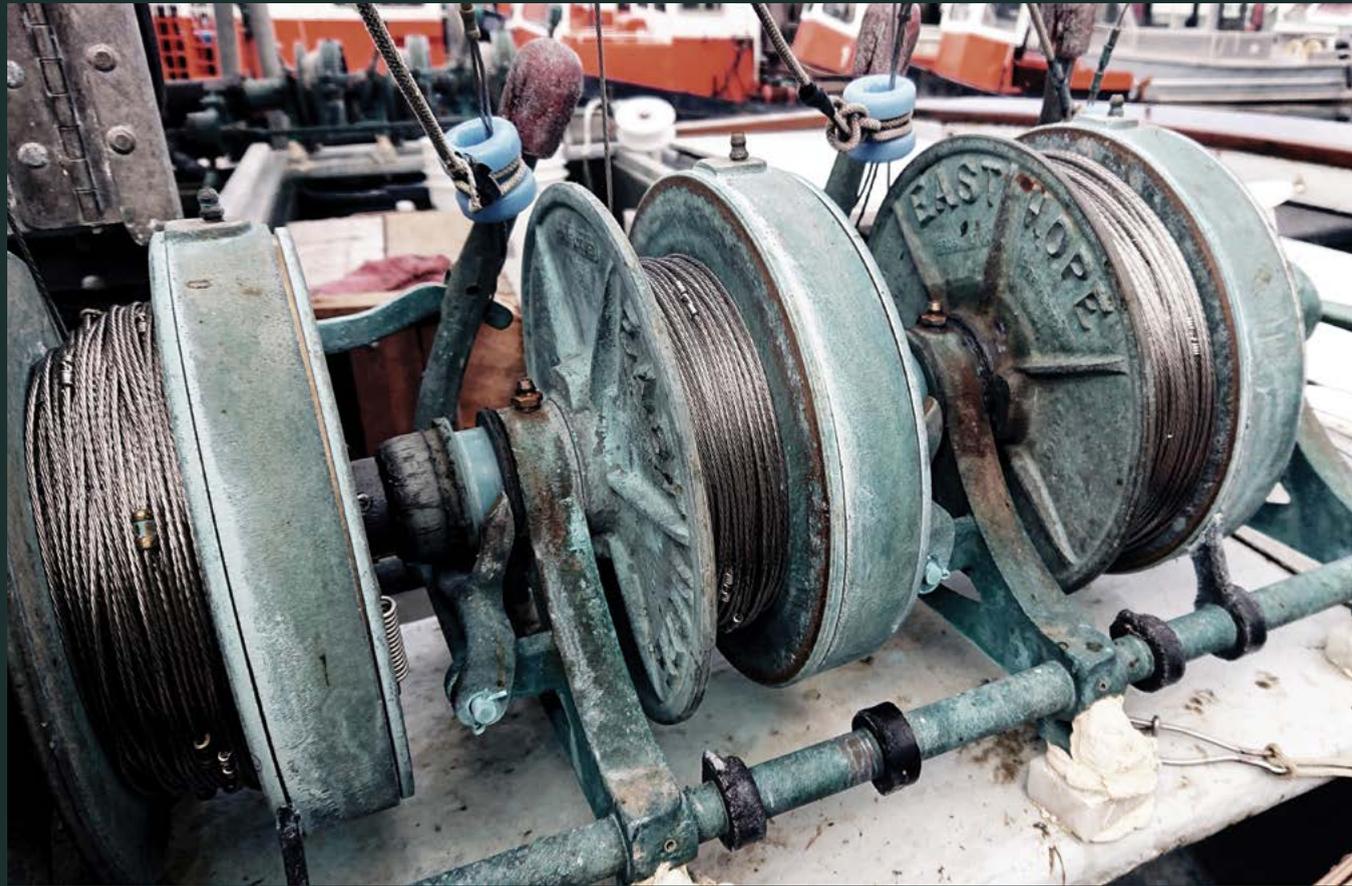


I only started planting potatoes last year at the urging of another member of our collective. I was amazed at the productivity. I had potatoes all year and enough to seed the next year's crop. This season I'm trying the Ruth Stout Method, an approach we have promoted through a local initiative called The Great Family Potato Project. Straw is used with only a few shovelfuls of topsoil around the seed potatoes. No tilling of the soil is required. I see the collective in more social and more radical terms than a garden club. It used to be just a hobby. Now, for all of us, I think it's more of a passion.



The Cherokee Purple is my favourite tomato of all time. This variety is believed to have originated with the Cherokee people and was cultivated in the late 1800s, forgotten and then rediscovered in the 1990s. It's beautiful. The skin is like a sunrise. It makes you want to reach out and eat it. That's the trick of good foods. It's very sweet, almost the sweetness of a strawberry.





I saw this commercial troller moored in Fishermen's Harbour, equipped with gear designed and developed in B.C. by the Easthope brothers in the 1960s and '70s. The Easthope name is associated with fishing along the B.C. coast because they started building dependable marine engines in Coal Harbour almost a century ago. Troll gear represents to me the rich fishing history of the B.C. coast and Port Alberni in particular, and, sadly, a vanishing way of life.

If there is a silver lining to this pandemic, I think it has people thinking about the more important themes, the fundamentals in life.

That's what I was kind of alluding to with the regular day-to-day grind, people having to adapt continually to change. We don't have this opportunity to pause and say, 'Where are we going? We can't keep doing some of these things.'





