



Hello and welcome to another edition of Hort Snacks, brought to you by the letter “W” and the number 3 for “weird”, “winter” “weather”. It has definitely been a strange January; other than concern for the impact on plants, it has been pretty good for humans. In that sense, we can’t complain much, unless you were using the snow for some purpose.

In this edition, you’ll find a range of short snippets of information, events, food for thought and notices. You’ll find the full Alberta Farm Fresh School agenda, with a bit of detail on what each speaker will be discussing in their session, as well as the information on registration, hotels, etc. If you are a direct market fruit, vegetable or livestock producer, you do not want to miss this. There are lots of great sessions, as well as a chance for newer growers to sign up for a time with experienced growers, or sit down with new venture coaches, GF2 program people or lenders. Registration fees have been reduced somewhat this year and the event includes food, lots of networking and there are other things that come with registration. Register soon and get your hotel room booked (if you need it), as it isn’t a massive hotel. We look forward to seeing you there.

Otherwise, there is an article on some of the key things you should consider with any direct market operation and/or market channel, plus a couple of insects and diseases that come up periodically, depending on what you grow.

Hopefully, we run across you at any one of the great extension events being held over the next few months. If not, give us a call or drop an email to share your prospects, ideas, suggestions, and thoughts or to just say HEY! Have a great month!

Rob Spencer/Dustin Morton, Commercial Horticulture Specialists  
 Alberta Ag-Info Centre, Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development  
 310-FARM (3276)

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**Featured Website**

**Herbicide Symptomology**

<http://herbicidesymptoms.ipm.ucanr.edu/>

Resource from U of California IPM Program to identify non-target and ornamental plant damage from herbicides

**Featured App**

This app allows you to quickly search for a range of different used farm equipment and agricultural machinery. Worth a look.

[Farms.com Used Farm Equipment App](http://Farms.com Used Farm Equipment App)

## THINGS TO DO / THINGS TO THINK ABOUT THIS MONTH

- Plan to attend winter workshops / courses. At the same time, think about visiting another operation this summer [or attending some field day(s) or workshop(s)]
- Register for Alberta Farm Fresh School (agenda attached) – connect with fellow producers, get answers and ideas and share your own thoughts with others
- Plan field layout of fields to be planted
- Check / Clean / Maintain Equipment
  - irrigation connections, nozzles, filters, pump injectors
  - sprayer nozzles, pumps, filters, lines, etc.
  - planters, seeders, etc.
  - harvesters and tractors
- Check / Update signage
- Finalise plans and dates for advertising during season
- Plan for planting equipment and labour
  
- Prune Saskatoon berries (as able)
- Prune or mow primocane raspberry plants to the ground (as soon as can get to)
- Continue to monitor strawberry plant winter survival. Order extra if necessary.
  
- Ensure memberships in organizations are up to date (inclusion in websites, guides, etc.)
- Review production record notebook
  - Fertilizer response?
  - Pesticide response/efficacy?
  - Application dates
  - Pesticide applicator license update?
- Roundtable discussion with everyone involved in your operation
  - Review errors – irrigation, fertilizer, pest management, staffing
  - Collect ideas for improvement, whether it is diversification, streamlined processes, new and interesting ways to reach customers, whatever. Pick a couple to try out and put whoever contributed the idea in charge of it.
- Inventory
  - Pesticide / fertilizer storage – What do you have? Has anything expired? Does everything have the proper labels? Is everything stored correctly?
  - Containers – picking boxes, containers, pails, bags, etc.
- Complete order of fertilizer, pesticides, picking/packing containers, etc.



**Keep Alberta Dutch Elm Disease Free**

- Do not bring firewood into Alberta
- Elm Pruning Ban is April 1 – September 30
- Elm trees from a DED infected province can not be shipped into Alberta

**STOPDED**  
SOCIETY TO PREVENT DUTCH ELM DISEASE

**Alberta**

For more information call 310-0000 and ask for 403-782-8613  
[www.STOPDED.org](http://www.STOPDED.org)

### Elm Pruning Ban in Alberta

- Pruning and sanitation is an essential part of Dutch Elm Disease prevention
- Pruning of elm trees is legal in Alberta from October 1 to March 31
- The disease vectors (European elm bark beetles) are not active between these dates
- Proper pruning is very important – consult a professional arborist to determine the nature and extent of pruning required

### NEWSLETTER USE RESTRICTIONS

Please feel free to share all or portions of this newsletter with other interested parties. If you want to use content from this newsletter in other media, please request permission before doing so.

## Upcoming Conferences / Workshops

### February 2015

- 2015 North American Farm Direct Marketing Association (NAFDMA) Convention  
Feb 1-6, 2015 – Nashville & Knoxville, Tennessee, USA  
[www.farmersinspired.com/tn2015](http://www.farmersinspired.com/tn2015)
- 8<sup>th</sup> North American Strawberry Symposium & North American Strawberry Growers Association (NASGA) 2015 Berry Conference  
Feb 3-6, 2015 – Crowne Plaza Hotel, Ventura, California, USA  
[www.nasga.org](http://www.nasga.org)
- Hort Snacks to Go Webinar – Aeroponic Potatoes  
Feb 8, 2015
- Getting into Restaurants  
Feb 9, 2015 – Leduc, AB
- Social Media Bootcamp  
Feb 18, 2015 – Agri-Business Centre (Sparrow Drive) – Leduc, AB  
[www.agriculture.alberta.ca/horticulture](http://www.agriculture.alberta.ca/horticulture)
- Farm Direct Marketing Forum  
Feb 18, 2015 – Airdrie Ag Centre – Airdrie, AB
- Ontario Fruit & Vegetable Convention  
Feb 18-19, 2015 – Scotiabank Convention Centre – Niagara Falls, ON  
[www.ofvc.ca](http://www.ofvc.ca)
- Alberta Gift Show  
Feb 22-25, 2015 – Northlands EXPO Centre – Edmonton, AB  
<http://www.cgta.org/Giftshow/AB/Home.aspx>
- Alberta Farm Fresh School 2015  
Feb 26-27, 2015 – Pomeroy Inn & Suites – Olds, AB  
[www.albertafarmfresh.com](http://www.albertafarmfresh.com)
- 15<sup>th</sup> Growing Rural Tourism  
Feb 23-25, 2015 – Camrose Regional Exhibition – Camrose, AB  
[www.growingruraltourism.ca](http://www.growingruraltourism.ca)

## MENTAL SNACKTIME – Values

“When your values are clear to you, making decisions becomes easier.” – Roy E. Disney

“If we are to go forward, we must go back and rediscover those precious values - that all reality hinges on moral foundations and that all reality has spiritual control.” – Martin Luther King, Jr.

“The aim of education is the knowledge, not of facts, but of values.” – William S. Burroughs

“The moment you give up your principles, and your values, you are dead, your culture is dead, your civilization is dead. Period.”  
– Oriana Fallaci

“Maturity is achieved when a person postpones immediate pleasures for long-term values.” – Joshua L. Liebman

## Explore Local Webinars

Feb 17, 2015 – Deb Krause (Heritage Harvest Gardens) – *Using Social Media to Benefit Your Business*

Feb 24, 2015 – Dianne Finstad – *Navigating Media Routes #1*

*February 2015*

## Upcoming Conferences / Workshops

### March 2015

- 2015 Manitoba Direct Farm Marketing Conference  
Mar 6-7, 2015 – Brandon, MB  
[www.directfarmmarketing.com](http://www.directfarmmarketing.com)
- Social Media Bootcamp  
Mar 10, 2015 – Airdrie Ag Centre – Airdrie, AB  
[www.agriculture.alberta.ca/horticulture](http://www.agriculture.alberta.ca/horticulture)
- 93<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Horticultural Council (CHC) Annual Meeting – “Healthy You”  
Mar 10-12, 2015 – Fairmont Château Frontenac – Québec City, QC  
[www.hortcouncil.ca/](http://www.hortcouncil.ca/)
- Canada Blooms 2015  
Mar 13-22, 2015 – Direct Energy Centre – Toronto, ON  
[www.canadablooms.com](http://www.canadablooms.com)
- Hort Snacks to Go Webinar – Weed Seed Ecology in Field Horticulture Production  
Mar 16, 2015

### April 2015

- Canadian Produce Marketing Association (CPMA) Conference & Trade Show  
April 15-17, 2015 – Palais des congrés de Montreal – Montreal, QC  
<http://convention.cpma.ca/>

## SAVE THE DATE

The Alberta Farm Fresh School is set for February 26-27, 2015 at the Pomeroy Inn & Suites in Olds, AB (on Olds College campus). The agenda is developed and speakers are mostly set. At this point, we are planning 2 streams per day and an expanded trade show. We are anticipating specific Fruit & Vegetable sessions on both days, with a marketing stream and F&V stream on the second day. Final topic streams and agendas will likely be released in January 2015. A Direct Market Livestock workshop is being developed separately for the first day, which will have crossover with the rest of the School on Day 1 and the 2<sup>nd</sup> day dovetailing into the rest of the School. The format allows lots of time for networking and smooth, stress-free transitions between speakers. An expanded trade show and a leaner/meaner session set will be part of this year's conference. There is a full social evening (& FOOD) being planned on the first day. The AGM of the Alberta Farm Fresh Producers Association will be held at noon on Day 1. Come help celebrate 30 years of the association.

Watch [www.albertafarmfresh.com](http://www.albertafarmfresh.com) for details.

## Hort Snacks to Go

– Horticulture Winter Webinar Series

Feb 9, 2015 – Dr. Michele Konschuh (Alberta Agriculture)  
– *Aeroponic potatoes*

Mar 16, 2015 – Dr. Eric Gallandt (U of Maine) – *Weed seed ecology in field horticulture production*



## Alberta Farm Fresh School

**A two-day conference for producers to learn, network and build capacity in direct market fruit, vegetable and livestock production and marketing.**

**Day 1:** Fruit and vegetable production and marketing and direct market livestock sessions

An evening of awards, networking and food; hear from the Honourable Verlyn Olson, Minister, Agriculture and Rural Development

**Day 2:** Fruit and vegetable production and general direct marketing sessions

One-on-one consultations with granters/lenders/experts and grower mentors

A trade show will be held both days.

### Workshop Details

<b>Dates:</b>	February 26 and 27, 2015	
<b>Time:</b>	Day 1: 8:00 am - 5:30 pm (plus an evening event) Day 2: 8:00 am - 4:30 pm	
<b>Cost:</b>	\$175/person/2 days (AFFPA member rate) <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• includes all sessions, snacks, lunches and evening session</li></ul>	\$225/person/2 days (non-AFFPA member rate) <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• includes all sessions, snacks, lunches and evening session</li></ul>
<b>Special Rates:</b>	Farm unit discount / One-day and Student rates available	
<b>Location:</b>	Pomeroy Inn & Suites, Olds College Campus 4601 46th Avenue, Olds, AB	

### Participants will:

- Access industry specific information and data
- Obtain resource materials
- Receive support to move forward
- Connect with peers
- Meet industry suppliers


### Registration and Information:

Registration forms are available at [www.albertafarmfresh.com](http://www.albertafarmfresh.com) under the *News & Information* tab

**Registration Deadline:  
February 19, 2015**

Alberta Farm Fresh Producers Association  
Toll Free: 1-403-558-0189  
Email [info@albertafarmfresh.com](mailto:info@albertafarmfresh.com)

**Thursday, February 26, 2015 – Day 1**

Fruit	Vegetables	Direct Market Livestock
<b>8:00 – 8:05 am – Welcome &amp; Introductions – Rob Spencer – AARD</b>		
<b>8:05 – 9 am – Rural Peace – Collaborating With Your Neighbour – Judy Kolk (Kayben Farms) &amp; Cherie Andrews (Chinook Honey)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How two farms can work together to be mutually successful</li> </ul>		
<b>9:05 – 10 am</b>		<b>9:05 – 10 am</b>
<b>Business Start Up &amp; Planning – Kathy Bosse – AARD</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Key considerations for direct market business start-up and operation</li> <li>Basics of business planning</li> </ul>	<b>Understanding Soil Biology – A Tour Down The Worm Hole</b> – Dr. M. Jill Clapperton – Rhizoterra Inc. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fundamentals of what makes up a soil and its biological components (flora, fauna, organic components)</li> <li>Soil biological interactions</li> </ul>	<b>Understanding the Regulations in Direct Market Meat – Mark Miller – AARD</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand the regulations that apply to livestock producers</li> <li>Food safety fundamentals</li> <li>Funding options and how AARD can help</li> </ul>
<b>10 - 10:30 am – COFFEE BREAK &amp; TRADE SHOW</b>		
<b>10:30 – 11:55 am</b>		<b>10:30 – 11:55 am</b>
<b>Strawberry Production – Grace Fedak – Serviceberry Farms</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Detailed overview of June bearing &amp; day neutral strawberry production</li> <li>Pre-planting through over-wintering</li> <li>Varieties, fertility, stand establishment &amp; maintenance, renovation, over-wintering</li> </ul>	<b>Practices for Augmenting &amp; Enhancing Soil Biology</b> – Dr. M. Jill Clapperton – Rhizoterra Inc. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ways to build soil quality and augment soil biology</li> <li>Practices for enhancing and building on what is already in place</li> </ul>	<b>Food, Farming &amp; the Marketing Fringe – Colleen Biggs – TK Ranch</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A producer's experience of taking control of their own marketing</li> <li>Hear how they created an alternative to the mainstream, becoming pioneers of direct market grass fed beef in Alberta</li> <li>Opportunities in direct market meat</li> </ul>
<b>12 noon – 1:30 pm – LUNCH &amp; Alberta Farm Fresh Producers Association (AFFPA) Annual General Meeting</b>		
<b>1:30 – 1:55 pm</b>		
<b>Growing Forward 2 (GF2) Program Options &amp; Overview – GF2 People – AARD</b> Outline of the different GF2 programs available for producers to access		
<b>1:55 – 2:05 pm – Break to reconfigure rooms</b>		
<b>2:05 – 3:00 pm</b>		<b>2:05 – 3:00 pm</b>
<b>Organic Certification Steps – Keri Sharpe – AARD</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Processes and steps involved in achieving organic certification</li> </ul>	<b>Using Plastic Mulch &amp; Low Tunnels to Increase Vegetable Production</b> – Dr. Doug Waterer – U of Saskatchewan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discussion of plasticulture technologies used for enhancing vegetable production</li> <li>Differences between different mulches</li> <li>Research information on low tunnel technology</li> </ul>	<b>Feed Rationing for Small Scale Livestock Operations – Barry Yaremicio – AARD</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developing rations for different species on smaller-scale operations</li> <li>Common mistakes in small operations</li> <li>Feed / feed ingredient sourcing options</li> </ul>
<b>3:00 – 3:30 pm – COFFEE BREAK &amp; TRADE SHOW</b>		
<b>3:30 – 4:25 pm</b>		<b>3:30 – 5 pm</b>
<b>Saskatoon Berry Production – Marsha Gelowitz – Solstice Berry Farm</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Detailed overview of Saskatoon berry production</li> <li>Varieties, fertility, stand establishment &amp; maintenance</li> <li>Grower experiences</li> </ul>	<b>Weed Seeds, Tools and Herbicide Families: Integrated Weed Management in Vegetable Crops</b> – Rob Spencer – AARD <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How to manage weeds through reducing weed seed banks</li> <li>Tools/options for managing weeds</li> <li>How herbicides works – Herbicide Modes of Action</li> </ul>	<b>Pasture Management – Integrated Livestock Grazing &amp; Pasture Management</b> – Dr. M. Jill Clapperton – Rhizoterra Inc. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ways to increase soil/pasture health through integrated practices</li> <li>Pasture management to improve soil function</li> <li>Get to know the soil, how it works and how to make it well again.</li> </ul>
<b>4:30 – 5:25 pm</b>		
<b>Raspberry Production – Rob Spencer – AARD</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Detailed overview of summer &amp; fall-bearing raspberry production</li> <li>Varieties, fertility, stand establishment &amp; maintenance</li> </ul>	<b>Soil Testing &amp; Fertility Management for Vegetables</b> – Dr. Doug Waterer – U of Saskatchewan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The different facets of a soil test</li> <li>Understanding a soil test</li> <li>Managing fertility requirements of vegetable crops – yield response data</li> <li>Examples of fertilizer recommendations for vegetable crops</li> </ul>	

**6:00 – 7:00 PM – Informal Mixer / Cash Bar / EVENING MEAL**

**7:00 – 7:30 PM – Awards Presentations - Alberta Farm Marketer of the Year, etc. – Honourable Verlyn Olson, Minister of Agriculture & Rural Development**

**7:30+ PM – Informal Mixer / Social**

**Thursday, February 27, 2015 – Day 2**

Direct Marketing	Fruit / Vegetables
<b>8:00 – 8:55 am</b>	
<b>The Start to Finish Experience of Value-Adding</b> – Marsha Gelowitz – Solstice Berry Farm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A grower's experience with moving from a fresh to a value-added product</li> <li>• Discussion of value-added products and available resources</li> </ul>	<b>The Basics of Diagnostics</b> – Dustin Morton – AARD <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examples of the many descriptive terms used in diagnosing disease and insect pest problems</li> </ul>
<b>9:05 – 10:00 am</b>	<b>9:05 – 10:00 am</b>
<b>Framing the Farm – How to Work With the Media &amp; Get Them to Work For You</b> – Cait Wills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Different ways of working with the media to increase the profile of your business and get your message out</li> </ul>	<b>Setting Up a Drip Irrigation System</b> – Kees van Beek – Southern Drip Irrigation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The parts and process of setting up drip irrigation in your operation</li> </ul>
<b>10 - 10:30 am – COFFEE BREAK &amp; TRADE SHOW</b>	
<b>10:30 – 11:25 am</b>	<b>10:30 – 11:25 am</b>
<b>Growing Novel Products and Creating Unique Connections with Restaurants</b> – Deb Krause – Vesta Gardens <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Growing and marketing novel/different products</li> <li>• Grower experience of creating unique connections with restaurants</li> </ul>	<b>Alberta Pest Monitoring Activities – Diseases &amp; Pests of Concern in Fruits/Vegetables</b> – Dr. Jim Broatch / Rob Spencer – AARD <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overview of horticulture pest surveillance activities in 2014/2015</li> <li>• Key diseases and pests of concern</li> </ul>
<b>11:30 – 12:25 pm</b>	<b>11:30 – 12:25 pm</b>
<b>Food Safety &amp; CanadaGAP on your farm: First Steps and Processes for Implementation</b> – Christine Anderson / Pramod Kumar – AARD <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why food safety is more important than ever – a discussion of the current situation</li> <li>• Getting CanadaGAP started on your farm</li> <li>• Resources for doing food safety</li> </ul>	<b>Fruit to Nuts – A discussion of New Prairie Fruit Releases (Sour Cherries, Haskap, Hazelnuts, etc.)</b> – Dr. Bob Bors – U of S <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion of prairie fruit breeding work</li> <li>• New releases, crops in the pipeline</li> <li>• What to watch for</li> </ul>
<b>12 noon – 1:30 pm – LUNCH &amp; TRADE SHOW</b>	
<b>1:30 – 2:25 pm</b>	<b>1:30 – 2:25 pm</b>
<b>The Skinny on Productivity on Your Farm – Potential Ways for Achieving Efficiency</b> – Jody Marshall – Sustainable Results Group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ways to become more efficient in your farm operation</li> <li>• Becoming Lean and more productive</li> </ul>	<b>Biological Control Options for Fruit &amp; Vegetable Crops</b> – Rob Spencer – AARD <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overview/Outline of the different biopesticides registered for use in Alberta fruit/vegetable crops</li> <li>• How they work and what they control</li> </ul>
<b>2:30 – 4:25 pm</b>	<b>2:30 – 4:25 pm</b>
<b>Filling Forms and Making Connections</b> – 1-on-1 time with GF2, Banks, Lenders, etc. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunity for participants to book time for short 1-on-1 discussions with people who lend, offer grants, or who can help get your business moving forward</li> <li>• Times are booked over the course of Day 1 (15-20 minute blocks)</li> </ul>	<b>Business Idea Discussions with Industry Mentors</b> – 1-on-1 time with growers – AFFPA growers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunity for participants to book time for short 1-on-1 discussions with experienced industry players</li> <li>• Times are booked over the course of Day 1 (15-20 minute blocks)</li> </ul>

4:30 PM – Conference ends





# COMMERCIAL

# Vegetable Production on the Prairies

A comprehensive resource and reference tool for new and experienced vegetable growers at all scales of commercial production.

Look at:

- planning for vegetable production
- from seeding/transplanting to harvesting and storage
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To order the book, contact

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# \$20.00



# Q&A

## Q: When do you set your product prices for the year?

A: After I receive my April gas/electric bill then I know my true costs that I need to cover

A: We develop the suggested seed potato pricing in November

A: June

Next Month's ? → [How do fluctuating input costs affect your business? What adjustments do you make?](#)

## Google Groups – HORT SNACKS FORUM

Google has all sorts of different features and tools. One that I ran across a couple of years ago is [Google Groups](#). You can essentially create and join common interest groups or discussion forums and share information and ideas back and forth. You can alter the settings to get forum updates all the time, daily, weekly or whatever.

Early last year, we created a **HortSnacks Forum**, tied to this newsletter. Anyone can submit posts (questions, comments, etc.) via Google or via email. To submit a question (or post), either log into the group using a Google account or simply send an email to [hortsnacks-forum@googlegroups.com](mailto:hortsnacks-forum@googlegroups.com) and it'll send it to all members. You can reply from email or from Google.

To subscribe to the group, send an email from your email account to [subscribe+hortsnacks-forum@googlegroups.com](mailto:subscribe+hortsnacks-forum@googlegroups.com)

Try it out today!



## Haskap Plant Suppliers

- Adamson's Heritage Nurseries Ltd.  
[info@adamsons.ca](mailto:info@adamsons.ca)
- Agri-Forest Bio-Technologies Ltd.  
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- Aubin Nurseries Ltd  
<http://www.aubinnurseries.ca/> / Tel: (204) 745-6703
- Bylands Nurseries  
<http://www.bylands.com/>
- Haskap Central Sales  
<http://www.haskapcentral.com/> / Tel: (306) 764-2514
- Jeffries Nurseries  
<http://www.jeffriesnurseries.com/> / Tel: (204) 857-5288
- Prairie Plant Systems  
<http://www.prairieplant.com/> / Tel: (306) 975-1207
- PrairieTech Propagation  
<http://www.prairietechpropagation.com/> / Tel: 780-826-6654
- Riverbend Orchards  
<http://www.riverbendorchards.ca/> / Tel: (204) 870-1140
- Van Belle Nursery  
<http://vanbelle.com/> / Tel: 1-888-826-2355
- Zosel Tree Farm  
<http://www.zoseltreefarm.com/index.html>  
Tel: (306) 874-5729

NOTE: this does not represent a comprehensive list, or an endorsement of any particular supplier.

## Interesting News & Articles

- [Applying pollen over a crop as an alternative food source for predatory mites](#) – HortiDaily article
- [Cooling of greenhouse floor leads to improved plant activity](#) – HortiDaily article
- [Medical marijuana 'gold rush' compels choices](#) – heliospectra.com article
- [China to position potato as staple food](#) – SpudSmart article (link to Gov't of China page)
- [Storm coming? Tips to prepare your greenhouse!](#) – HortiDaily article
- [New study investigates success of local organic farm](#) – Manitoba Co-operator article
- [Natural enemies 101](#) – OMAFRA article
- [Food wastage footprint: Full-cost accounting](#) – FAO report (PDF)
- [Mitigation of food wastage: Societal costs and benefits](#) – FAO report (PDF)
- [Comparison Study on Soil Physical and Chemical Properties, Plant Growth, Yield, and Nutrient Uptakes in Bulb Onion from Organic and Conventional Systems](#) – HortScience article



## Some key principles for successful farm direct marketing

You can learn a lot from watching what others do. That is ALWAYS true when it falls anywhere in the realm of farm direct marketing (FDM). While I was at the Great Lakes Fruit, Vegetable and Farm Market Expo in Grand Rapids, Michigan in December 2014, I took in the annual pre-conference Farm Market bus tour, where we visited about half a dozen businesses in the Grand Rapids area and east-central Michigan. As we went through the different operations, which ranged in size, scope, market channel and target audience, a number of principles jumped out at me, which bear some consideration. They apply to a range of direct marketing and ag tourism situations (not just farm markets/farm stores). Take a minute to see if you are or could be putting them into practice.

- **Keep the needs of the customer in mind**

In retail, customer is king (or queen). These days, people seem to think that this means catering to every single whim of the customer. However, I am inclined to believe that this just means being conscious and considerate of a customer's basic needs, and doing what you can to anticipate them and make them feel safe and comfortable at your operation (within reason).

This principle was reinforced for me at Uncle John's Cider Mill, in and around their ag tourism areas. Not only did they do a good job at providing the basics (i.e. well marked and easily located washroom facilities, good parking, etc.), they remembered that their target audience is family units, typically including those with small children. As such, they had a sizeable and roomy baby changing station, which isn't something that I've typically seen.



Good, clear signage caters to customers



Extra mile feature  
- baby changing  
area

- **There are lots of ways to reach customers and get their attention**

Peacock Road Tree Farm isn't the easiest operation to find and visit, but when you get there, you are immediately drawn into their operation and they grab and hold your attention for the duration of the visit. On the day that we visited, there were several reindeer in the parking lot area, which tied into the many Christmas and Santa-themed activities on the farm.

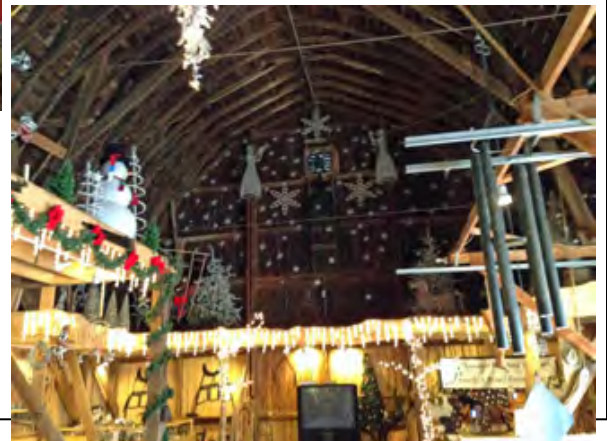


Reindeer

At the same time, when you go to any of the different parts of the farm, bright, eye-catching displays and colourful people continually engage you, whether in the Sugar Shack, the Christmas Shoppe or Farmer Ed's Feed Trough.



Attention-grabbing  
displays stick out  
and stay in your  
memory



## Some key principles for successful farm direct marketing

- **Upkeep of any and all signs is important**

How you present yourself says something about you. And your farm and all of its component parts is YOU. So, keep it neat, tidy and well maintained. Sloppy signage suggests that you haven't given it much thought and maybe the information contained on it isn't correct and/or up-to-date. Make sure that you send the right message.

A weathered sign suggests to some a lack of caring



- **People follow pathways**

In landscape architecture, there is a principle related to pathway design referred to as "desire paths" or "desire lines", which is defined as the lines or pathways of convenience that come from people finding the easiest or most convenient between two points. I always thought that this meant that no matter what you design for people to walk on, they'll just find a different (and potentially easier) way, regardless. But, from this principle, we learn one thing. People like to follow pathways, assuming that they are going within a certain reach of their convenience path or desire line.

In FDM or ag tourism, we try and entertain, and pathways are a way to both guide/direct AND entice customers. The use of train tracks, footsteps or something similar can be effective and brightens up an otherwise boring and flat landscape.



Train tracks add interest and direction

- **Signage and design elements need to be consistent**

In my experience, people like things to be the same, or at least close enough that they don't have to subconsciously worry about the disharmony of differences. Keeping your signage consistent means that they quickly learn how to mentally navigate your signs and get the information that they require.

If you have a certain way of doing things or of presenting your brand in your operation, keep it consistent across the entire operation. At Peacock Road Tree Farm, their signs showed that they were all done by the same person. The consistency unified the operation, at least in my mind.



A consistent look for signage is preferable

- **Display your pride**

Each operation out there does great things. Each has history, accomplishments and things that they have done that merit recognition. Celebrate them and invite your customers to celebrate them with you. At the same time, it'll send the message to your customers that you are worth visiting, buying from and generally recommending to their friends and family.

Celebratory displays show off the great products that are on offer



Photos by Robert Spencer

## Some key principles for successful farm direct marketing

- **Recognizable, consistent brand**

If you have invested time and money in creating a brand and/or logo, make sure that everything around the operation shows and represents that brand. Be consistent.



Recognizable brand on the coolers



- **Get your name EVERYWHERE**

Make sure that your farm name and logo appears on everything, from produce signs in the market to all of your directional and informational signage around the farm.

Farm name on the sign



I seem to remember hearing that something needs to be repeated 7 times in order for us to truly assimilate and learn it (I probably heard it 7 times...). If you want people to remember your logo, your operation, and to associate things with it, you have to create a memory link to them. Sietsema Orchard and Cider Mill had this down. Their coolers had their logo and slogans on them. Their tables were branded (literally – the logo was burned into top of display tables).

Logo and product is prominently featured in this display



- **Great experiences stick out**

Let's face it, ag tourism is all about the experience. And, while there are many common points that you'll find within ag tourism operations, the truly great operations have stuff that sticks in your brain and stands out from the rest. In the case of Peacock Road Tree Farm, they had an intense and unforgettable Santa Claus connection, with the Santa Express Train, a Santa's cabin and a chance to sit down and hang out with the jolly elf himself for more than a few seconds.



Great staff and features make for memorable visits – L – Santa train conductor; M – Santa's cabin; R – Santa



- **Great staff are CRITICAL to making a great experience extraordinary**

Staff are instrumental in delivering the products and services to the hordes of people that you want coming to your FDM operation. Average staff get a job done. Good staff make things work well. Great staff make a customer's experience unforgettable and create a repeat customer. At Peacock Road Tree Farm, there were a few different staff (including some of the owner's family) that made what would have been a neat/interesting experience memorable. The hyperactive Santa train conductor/engineer got you excited about both the train ride AND safety. The authentic Santa Claus was totally approachable (and not creepy). And all customers were greeted (and bid farewell) at the front gate by a friendly and knowledgeable staff member that had been around since most of the trees were seedlings (and knew each of them like his own children). Find these staff and KEEP THEM!

Photos by Robert Spencer

## Some key principles for successful farm direct marketing

- **It's the little touches**

Sometimes the difference between something good and something great is almost infinitesimal. The little things matter. This principle was demonstrated at Peacock Road Tree Farm, where out in the woods, across the road from Santa's cabin, near a quaint little stream, there was a campfire burning (gently, with a safety barrier). It added to the ambiance of the setting. But what put this over-the-top were the marshmallows that you could roast on the campfire. NICE!

Marshmallow roast



- **Education can create sustainability**

Keeping your customers coming back to you year after year should generally create stability and sustainability. This is done by keeping the customer engaged, by creating a connection to your products and your operation, either by offering new products, services or through catching their attention in some other way. Swisslane Dairy Farms has created sustainability for their large dairy farm by adding a strong educational component to what they offer their client base. It allows them to educate their customers (and neighbours) on their practices and the things that they are doing to be environmentally responsible. They are able to nip some of the concerns that are prevalent in the media and society in the bud. Overall, this means that they'll likely be an acceptable option for their customers (current and future) for a long time to come.

Dairy cows and education using common words



- **Join with / promote others**

You can't produce everything that customers want yourself, at least not if you want to stay happy and healthy. So, capitalize on the talents and energy of your neighbouring peers. Join up with and/or cross-promote products and farms. It can't hurt.



- **Use terminology that resonates**

One farm promoting another

Swisslane Dairy Farm realized that if they wanted their customers to understand what they were doing (without changing it completely), they needed to use words, phrases and terminology that people recognized, understood and could accept. For them, this meant that instead of using common agricultural jargon (e.g. agronomist, feed), they used more culturally common verbiage (e.g. nutritionist, food) that non-ag people would relate to and recognize. In a way, they humanized the description of what they were doing and so gained acceptance and understanding in their customer base (and community).

- **Sell what you are known for**

While not always the case, most farms have a signature item or product that represents a significant portion of their sales and/or is readily associated with their core business. Over time, you will develop a reputation for something, whether fresh, ripe strawberries or a special processed product. Andy T's Farmers Market is known across Michigan for their pumpkin rolls and let everyone know it as they arrive.



Andy T's is known for pumpkin rolls and lets you know it

## Thrips – Eastern / Western Flower Thrips

*Frankliniella tritici*, *F. occidentalis*

### Crops Affected:

strawberries, raspberries (and other caneberries); cucumber, tomato, peppers (field and greenhouse); weeds, tree fruit, ornamentals

### Life Cycle:

- Thrips are tiny, cigar-shaped insects
  - Adults are brown to yellow, with fringed wings
  - Nymphs are wingless, pale yellow and speedy
    - Nymphs pupate in the soil
- Eggs are laid inside plant tissues
- Thrips tend to hide in protected places in the plant (flower clusters, plant crevices, etc.)
- Thrips often migrate in on southerly winds during the growing season and are not known to overwinter outdoors
- Thrips may enter greenhouses via vents or doorways or may move on infested plants, soil, equipment, tools and clothing
- Thrips may have more than one generation per growing season
  - The rate of development of thrips is strongly tied to temperature and humidity
    - The rate is faster in warmer and drier conditions
- Thrips can be a vector for the transmission of Tomato Spotted Wilt Virus in tomato and pepper crops in some areas

### Symptoms:

- **Berry fruit**
- Feeding by rasping/sucking mouthparts damages the affected areas
- Berry tissues may crack and split (under fruit calyx) and become scarred and discoloured
  - Symptom is referred to as “bronzing”
  - Feeding damage on 1-2cm berries
- Berries tend to be reduced in size, seedy, cracked and somewhat brown in colour
- **Other Crops**
- Feeding by nymphs and adults results in silver-white streaks, specks or striations on plant tissues (leaves, blossoms and fruit)
  - Brown fecal matter (frass) may also be visible
- Photosynthetic ability and yields is reduced
- Fruit of some crops may be deformed (e.g. cucumber fruit)



**Western Flower Thrips nymph**

Photo by: Whitney Cranshaw, Colorado State University, Bugwood.org

1476101

### Monitoring:

- **Berry Crops**
- Count the number of thrips at various locations in the field, at bloom or in small fruit stages (1cm)
  - Collect 10 flower buds from each location or 50 random fruit
  - Put flower buds or collected berries in plastic bags and use heat to kill thrips, making counting easier
  - More than 10 thrips per blossom or 0.5 thrips per berry necessitates treatment
- **Other Crops**
- Blue (or yellow) sticky traps can be positioned throughout the crop
  - Want immature thrips populations of less than 10 per leaf (check a minimum of 25 leaves per 2000m<sup>2</sup>)

### Management:

- Repeated introduction of biological control agents are necessary to keep thrips populations in check
- Cover vents with fine mesh to prevent introduction into greenhouse
- Clean up plants and disinfect greenhouse between crops
  - Heat greenhouse for several days after crop is removed
- Chemical controls can be used, but tend to be difficult to apply due to where thrips feed
  - The sensitivity of predatory insects and the tendency of thrips to develop chemical resistance are other issues

## Edema

Causal Organism: *N/A*

Crops Affected: potatoes, cruciferous vegetables (cabbage, etc.) greenhouse vegetables, etc.

### Disease Cycle:

- Caused by differences between daytime soil temperature and moisture levels and night-time temperature and moisture levels
  - Days with warm, wet soil followed by cool and saturated night-time air
- Water uptake by the roots is rapid and exceeds the rate of transpiration
  - Cells under the surface of the leaves are stimulated to enlarge and divide, creating enough pressure to rupture the surface layers of leaf tissue
  - Injury to the epidermal layers by blowing sand or feeding insects (e.g. thrips) can increase the problem
- In greenhouse situations, poor ventilation can slow transpiration while root pressure remains high

### Symptoms:

- On cabbage, small, wart-like growths or bumps that develop in varying densities on the either interior or exterior surfaces of several of the outer leaf layers of cabbage
  - May grow together – irregularly shaped elevated areas
  - Growths may split and turn whitish – creates a crystalline appearance (initially)
  - Turn brown and corky
- In greenhouse crops (tomato), leaf tissues may become waterlogged, resulting in raised, blister-like growths on upper or lower leaf surfaces; fruit may also develop edema

### Management:

- Avoid over-irrigation when day and night temperatures differ greatly
- Ventilate greenhouses properly and regulate watering in situations when humidity may build up



Edema on greenhouse cucumber

Photo by Richard Nemeth

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