



Fall is over, winter is here and the final edition of the 9th year of Hort Snacks is done. The growing season has wrapped up for the vast majority of you, unless you grow a winter greenhouse crop.

In this edition, you'll find some archived articles about signage, as well as an extensive list of workshops, webinars and conferences that span the main three months of the extension season. There are a couple of articles on pests and some interesting ideas from your peers on recognizing the contributions of others. There is also a bit of information on a program related to environmental projects (see ECO Canada – page 10), which merits a closer look.

As the winter holiday season approaches, we wish you the very best for you and your family and hope that the New Year is full of joy, happiness, good fortune and good weather. We look forward to hearing from and/or seeing many of you at the various events that we're putting on or attending (hint – you should attend them – they'll be worth it). Don't be a stranger. Drop us a note. Give us an update. Send us some ideas for things you'd like to hear about this next year.

Kudos and Congratulations

It isn't every day that we get a chance to recognize the blood, sweat and tears of those that we work closely with. However, if case you were unaware, Dustin Morton (Alberta Agriculture and Forestry) was recognized not once, but twice, for his contributions to supporting the Alberta greenhouse industry. Dustin brings great energy and passion to everything that he works on.

Dustin was one of 10 recipients of Greenhouse Canada magazine's **Top 10 under 40** ([here is the article](#)). Dustin also received the Alberta Greenhouse Growers Association (AGGA) **Meritorious Service Award** at the recent Green Industry Show and Conference.

[Send Dustin a congratulatory note](#) – he deserves it



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In this edition of Hort Snacks

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THINGS TO DO / THINGS TO THINK ABOUT THIS MONTH

- Take advantage of this “slower time” opportunity and visit with fellow producers
- Reflect on how the past season went
 - What worked?
 - What didn't?
 - What could have been done?
 - How will you improve next year?
 - What is one thing that you will add next year?
 - What is one thing that you will drop next year?
- Reflection sets the course for the future. Take the time to reflect on those who've assisted in making your business what it is today (e.g. family, suppliers, advertisers, customers, etc.) → CALL THEM / EMAIL THEM / Let them know
- Ensure your plant / seed orders are in
- Renew your annual association memberships

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.

Mental Snacktime – Valuing Others

- “Try not to become a man of success, but rather try to become a man of value.” – Albert Einstein
- “It's not that diamonds are a girl's best friend, but it's your best friends who are your diamonds. It's your best friends who are supremely resilient, made under pressure and of astonishing value. They're everlasting; they can cut glass if they need to.” – Gina Barreca
- “The value of life is not in its duration, but in its donation. You are not important because of how long you live, you are important because of how effective you live.” – Myles Munroe
- “We learned about gratitude and humility - that so many people had a hand in our success, from the teachers who inspired us to the janitors who kept our school clean... and we were taught to value everyone's contribution and treat everyone with respect.” – Michelle Obama

In the News

- [Saving energy without technology](#) – HortiDaily article
- [The education-growing connection](#) – HortiDaily article
- [Millennials in Agriculture – Part 1](#) – MSU article
- [Millennials in Agriculture – Part 2](#) – MSU article
- [This solar-powered floating farm combines agriculture and dining under one roof](#) – Inhabit article
- [Top 10 Mistakes that Break Up a Family Business](#) – The Grower article
- [5 Surprising Things Gardeners Can Learn From Iceland's Greenhouses](#) – Rodale's Organic Life article
- [Artificial Intelligence in the Food Industry: Empowering Farmers' Decision-Making](#) – Foodtank article

... more In the News

- [Technology Is Changing the Game for Growers](#) – Greenhouse Grower article
- [Use Your Signage to Build Relationships With Your Customers](#) – Growing Produce article
- [How You Can Market the Benefits of Biocontrols](#) – Greenhouse Grower article
- [7 Food Trends on the Front Burner for 2018](#) – Growing Produce article
- [How to Create Social Media Magic with Your Small Farm](#) – Growing Produce article
- [How logistics companies can help reduce food waste](#) – HortiDaily article
- [How is the marriage between biologicals and chemicals really going?](#) – HortiDaily article

Upcoming Conferences / Workshops

December 2017

- Great Lakes EXPO Farm Market Bus Tour
Dec 4, 2017 – Grand Rapids, Michigan
<http://bustour.greatamericanmediaservices.com/>
- Canadian Food & Drink Summit 2017: Measuring Performance, Taking Stock, Inspiring Action
Dec 5-6, 2017 – Calgary TELUS Convention Centre – Calgary, AB
<http://www.conferenceboard.ca/conf/foodsummit/default.aspx>
- Great Lakes Fruit, Vegetable and Farm Market Expo
Dec 5-7, 2017 – DeVos Place Convention Centre – Grand Rapids, MI
www.glexpo.com
- Bridging the GAP: Making CanadaGAP Work on Your Fruit & Vegetable Farm
Dec 6, 2017 – Agriculture Business Centre – Leduc, AB
To Register – 1-800-387-6030 or [online](#)
- Explore Local Webinar – Selling Online: Carve Out Your Niche, Increase Sales and Gain Loyalty
Dec 6, 2017 – [Register](#)
- Explore Local Webinar – Bringing Your Story to Life
Dec 13, 2017 – [Register](#)
- Hort Snacks To Go Webinar – Soil Fertility & Soil Health
Dec 18, 2017 - [Register](#)

January 2018

- Potato Expo 2018
Jan 10-12, 2018 – Rosen Shingle Creek – Orlando, Florida, USA
www.potato-expo.com
- Hort Snacks-to-Go Webinar – Challenges & Successes of Larger-scale Greenhouses in Alberta
Jan 15, 2018 - [Register](#)
- Agronomy Update 2018
Jan 9-10, 2018 – Sheraton – Red Deer, AB
Ropin' the Web (www.agriculture.alberta.ca) – Coming Events
- Scotia Horticultural Congress 2018 – “Farming’s Changing Landscape”
Jan 22-23, 2018 – Old Orchard Inn Convention Centre – Greenwich, NS -
<http://www.horticulturens.ca/index.php/events/scotia-horticultural-congress/>
- Manitoba Potato Production Days
Jan 23-25, 2018 – Keystone Centre – Brandon, MB
www.mbpotatodays.ca
- Explore Local Webinar – Human Resources Essentials Online Toolkit
Jan 24, 2018 – [Register](#)
- Pricing Principles – Moving to Retail Workshop
Jan 18, 2018 – Airdrie Ag Centre – Airdrie, AB
Jan 30, 2018 – Provincial Building – Grande Prairie, AB
To Register – Call 1-800-387-6030
- 20th Annual Pacific Agricultural Show
Jan 25-27, 2018 – Tradex Exhibition Centre – Abbotsford, BC
www.agricultureshow.net
- 37th Annual Guelph Organic Conference & Expo
Jan 25-28, 2018 – Guelph University Centre, Guelph, ON
www.guelphorganicconf.ca

Upcoming Conferences / Workshops

January 2018 continued

- Hort Snacks-to-Go Webinar – Season Extension – Sustainable Farm
Jan 29, 2018 - [Register](#)
- FarmTech 2018
Jan 30 – Feb 1, 2018 – Edmonton Expo Centre at Northlands – Edmonton, AB
www.farmtechconference.com
- 49th Annual Northwest Agricultural Show
Jan 30 – Feb 1, 2018 – Portland Expo Centre – Portland, Oregon, USA
www.nwagshow.com

February 2018

- 33rd Annual North American Farm Direct Marketing Association (NAFDMA) Convention
Feb 1-7, 2018 – Los Angeles, California, USA
<http://www.farmersinspired.com/Convention/>
- Organic Alberta Conference – Sustainability & Profits – Organic Ideas to Help You Grow
Feb 9-10, 2018 – Westerner Park – Red Deer, AB
<http://organicalberta.org/news/2018-conference/>
- Explore Local Webinar – AHA Food Regulation for Farmers’ Markets
Feb 7, 2018 – [Register](#)
- Hort Snacks-to-Go Webinar – Nuts and Bolts of Running a Market Garden
Feb 12, 2018 - [Register](#)
- Explore Local Webinar – Creating Top Notch Job Descriptions
Feb 14, 2018 – [Register](#)
- Ontario Berry Growers Association Annual Meeting
Feb 20, 2018 – Niagara Falls, ON
www.ontarioberries.com
- Ontario Fruit & Vegetable Convention
Feb 21-22, 2018 – Scotiabank Convention Centre – Niagara Falls, ON
www.ofvc.ca

SAVE THE DATE

The **Alberta Farm Fresh School** is tentatively set for February 22-23, 2017 at the Pomeroy Inn & Suites in Olds, AB (on Olds College campus). This conference is offered by Alberta Farm Fresh Producers Association (AFFPA).

Watch www.albertafarmfresh.com for details.

FYI, a day-long Sour Cherry & Haskap Production Workshop for New Growers (as well as some more advanced Haskap sessions later in the day) has been planned before the School on February 21st.

Explore Local is putting on a direct marketing workshop in Leduc featuring Alf and Sandee Krause, on February 21st.



HortSnacks-to-Go:

2017/2018 Webinar Series

To register: Email dustin.morton@gov.ab.ca

Time: 1:30 PM Cost: Free



October 16, 2017 – Dr. Bob Bors

Dr. Bors is an assistant professor at the University of Saskatchewan where his research focuses on prairie hardy fruit breeding. He'll be discussing some of the new haskap varieties they're working on and new innovations in the pipeline.

October 30, 2017 – Dr. Bridget Behe

Dr. Behe is a professor at Michigan State University and will be discussing the practical implications of her research using eye tracking technology in garden centres and how owners and operators can capitalize on this.

November 20, 2017 – Ron Valentin

Ron is Bioline AgroSciences technical lead for North America and will be discussing how other areas of the world are using biological controls in field scale vegetable and fruit crops and how Alberta producers can take advantage of this growing area.

December 18, 2017 – Dr. Kate Congreves

Crop fertility is a balancing game; soil fertility, fertigation, top dressing, foliar fertilizer, the list goes on. Dr. Congreves research focuses on soil health and fertility and she'll break down each of these and how best to manage your crops growth.

January 15, 2018 – Eric Doef, Doef's Greenhouses

Eric is the second generation of growers at Doef's Greenhouses in Lacombe, Alberta. Doef's own an 11 acre state of the art greenhouse in Alberta and will talk about the challenges and success of growing at that size in the Alberta climate.

January 29, 2018 – Dawn Boileau, Sunrise Gardens

Dawn and her partner Kate own and operate Sunrise Gardens in Onoway. Dawn and Kate have invested heavily into season extension and Dawn will discuss how this has allowed them to shrink their acreage while still sustaining the farm.

February 12, 2018 – Chris Blanchard, Purple Pitchfork

Chris is the host of the popular "Farmer to Farmer" podcast and a former farmer. He'll be discussing the nuts and bolts of running a market garden including risk management, making a living, and working for the farm you want.

March 12, 2018 – Graeme Murphy, bioLogical control solutions

Graeme is an advocate for biocontrol solutions for common pest problems and will focus on the cost and economics of biocontrol in bedding plant production.

Growing Forward 2 

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Pricing Principles

Moving to Retail

Planning on selling to retail? Expand your understanding of the costs related to setting a profitable price.



Attend this workshop if you are looking to:

- Price your products for profit
- Understand the components of pricing for the retail market
- Understanding retail buyers needs

Registration Information

Dates: January 18, 2018

Agriculture Centre
97 East Lake Ramp NE, Airdrie, Alberta

January 30, 2018

Provincial Building
Grande Prairie, Alberta

Time: 9 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Registration starts at 8:30 a.m.

Cost: \$25 per person

(includes snacks, lunch and GST)

To register
call the **Ag-Info Centre** at

1-800-387-6030

2017 Webinar Series



To register please visit our website at
www.explorelocal.ca/events
or
[online](#)

November 1, 2017 (Part 1)
November 8, 2017 (Part 2)

Navigating Online Food Sales Regulations

Want to sell food online to customers in Canada? Know the rules before you start. In this two part series, Ileana Costiuc will help you understand the licensing and regulatory requirements for selling food online.

The first webinar, on November 1, will look at current legislation and how it applies to different products and markets whether they are full retail or online. Some of the proposed regulatory changes will be highlighted as well.

The second webinar, on November 8, will provide details on the specific rules and regulations governing online food sales. Ileana will review packaging and labelling requirements as well as the tools and resources available to help you do it right.

November 22, 2017

Exploring Food Hubs

Have you ever wondered what food hubs are all about? Could the food hub model be the right choice for your business and local community? Margurite Thiessen will introduce you to the food hub concept, the benefits provided by food hubs and how you might start. Margurite will explore diverse food hub business models and discuss some of the resources available.

December 6, 2017

Selling Online: Carve Out Your Niche, Increase Sales and Gain Loyalty

Deb Foisy has figured out a way to sell plants online through her website, using various social media platforms to advertise it. Find out the successes and challenges she's faced the last two years with this exciting venture. What are the benefits of selling online? How hard is it to make a website? What did it cost? What about shipping? The answers to these questions and more will be answered and you will have the opportunity to ask questions.

December 13, 2017

Bringing your Story to Life

Marketing expert Jonathan Strome will discuss the importance of developing your brand and explore strategies for sharing your story with your customers to build brand loyalty. You will discover the value of using diverse online platforms from websites to social media outlets to build a community around your brand using written, photo and video content.



Growing Forward 2 

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2017 - 2018 Workshops



Getting Into Local Food

Learn about local food opportunities and the different farm direct marketing channels, their benefits and challenges. This one-day workshop is for producers who are new to selling food through farmers' markets or other direct-to-consumer methods. You will learn about available services and market options for selling food direct to consumers, and hear about the regulations that apply to your business directly from the agencies responsible for enforcement.

Date: January 18, 2018

Time: 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Location: Calgary

Cost: \$23.75 + GST per person, includes lunch and snacks

Register by January 11, 2018: Call 1-800-387-6030 or register online at ... XXXXX

Getting Into Farmers' Markets

This one-day workshop looks at selling food products at Alberta approved farmers' markets. Farmers' markets are big business in Alberta with over \$900 million in annual sales. Entering this market channel with the right skills can shorten your learning curve and enhance your success. Discover what to look for in a market and what a market manager expects from a vendor. Hear seasoned vendors share their successful experiences at farmers' markets.

Date: Thursday, February 15, 2018

Time: 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Location: Camrose

Cost: \$23.75 + GST per person, includes lunch and snacks

Register by February 8, 2018: Call 1-800-387-6030 or register online at ... XXXXX

Using *Shopify* to Build Your Own Online Store

Leverage your existing webpage into an online marketplace, using *Shopify*. In this hands-on one-day workshop, you will create your online store, learn how to manage and sell your products, adjust inventory and work within search engines. You'll learn how to set-up online store visuals such as logos and themes. We'll show you how to add products and categories, maintain inventory, create pages and navigation links, understand search engine optimization and increase traffic to your store and much, much more!

Date: Tuesday, January 16, 2018

Time: 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Location: Red Deer

Cost: \$23.75 + GST per person, includes lunch and snacks

Register by January 9, 2018: Call 1-800-387-6030 or register online at ... XXXXX



A federal-provincial-territorial initiative





Wage Funding For Environmental Professionals

Since inception, creating employment for young professionals has been a core objective for ECO Canada. We support industry and government commitment to help young people get the information, skills, work experience and abilities they need to make a successful transition into the environmental labour market.

Our wage funding programs provide environmental employers with up to \$15,000. Eligible full-time interns must be young professionals in the fields of science, technology, engineering, mathematics (STEM) or Natural Resources and eligible to work in Canada. The programs, funded by Environment and Climate Change Canada's Science Horizons Program and Natural Resources Canada, pay up to 50% of an intern's salary and give them a start in a competitive market.

Our co-op program provides up to \$5,000 to employers hiring STEM students on 12-16 week work terms, allowing them to gain valuable hands-on experience. By creating 250 placements per year, we're helping to prepare graduates with the skills required to enter the environmental workforce.

6,000 JOBS CREATED FOR YOUTH

1,000 JOBS PER YEAR 2017-2019

OVER \$30M IN FUNDING DISTRIBUTED
TO ENVIRONMENTAL EMPLOYERS SINCE 2002



GET FUNDING IN 5 EASY STEPS

1. TAKE THE QUIZ

Take our quick online assessment to determine your eligibility



2. APPLY ONLINE

Fill out our automated, online application



3. FIND AN INTERN

Use our Job Board to find a qualified new hire and have them apply online



4. IT'S A MATCH!

Once you and your hire are in the system we match the applications



5. GET PAID

Once all contracts are received we'll begin your funding installments



Apply Today
ECO.CA



Creative Recognition

Motivational speaker and time management guru Hyrum Smith said "You have four powerful, driving human needs. Whether you think you've got them or not, you've got them. Psychologists have done all kinds of studies. They all say we have these four powerful human needs: 1) To live. 2) To love and be loved. 3) **To feel important, to have value and significance.** 4) To have variety."

Recognition is defined as "acknowledgment of something's existence, validity, or legality". It is also "appreciation or acclaim for an achievement, service, or ability". However you define it, recognition is a big part of our modern society. It has been postulated that humans of different generations (e.g. Baby Boomers, Gen X, Gen Y, Millennials) require different levels of recognition to feel fulfilled, validated, valued and/or motivated in life. Some suggest that there may even be variations between different individuals, with some preferring THIS type of recognition, whereas others prefer THAT form of recognition. Some prefer verbal recognition, some a physical interaction (like a pat on the back), while others prefer some sort of object (plaque, gift, cash). Some would rather be coated in honey and staked out on an anthill before being the recipient of public (or even private) recognition.

American author Ryan Holiday put it nicely when he said "We all have goals: We want to matter. We want to be important. We want to have freedom and power to pursue our creative work. We want respect from our peers and recognition for our accomplishments. Not out of vanity or selfishness, but of an earnest desire to fulfill our personal potential."

Regardless of where you fall in your personal preferences, it is important to recognize (sorry, no pun intended) that recognition is important, if not to us, then to those around us. In my experience, recognition (subtle and sincere) is one of those things that tips people towards engagement, wanting to come to work day after day and lifts us up and carries us over the potholes and bumps of our day-to-day existence.

Recognition is extremely personal. Fact – Everyone is different in how they like to be recognized. This is both awful and awesome at the same time. Why is it awful? What resonates with one person won't necessarily work for another. So, one size WON'T fit all. Why is it awesome? Because you have license to be creative in how you recognize others. You have the freedom (and requirement) to find out what peoples' preferences are, and then act on it.

If there isn't a set formula for recognition, please allow me to offer some suggestions that I think should be a part of every recognition activity, regardless of your (or their) preference. They are based on my own preferences and experiences, if that helps establish the bias.

1. **Sincere / Genuine** – People can smell insincerity from a mile away. Even if all of the words are correct and even if you are the smoothest talking slick out there, people will know that something is off and it will taint the recognition you are giving. If you are going to give recognition, make sure that you mean it. So, even if you are awkward and silly and you stumble over the delivery, people will see that you truly feel that they deserve the recognition and the value of it will increase accordingly.

Here's an example. Have you ever had a little kid smile up at you after you've done something for them, and in their little voice, say "Thanks. You great"? Or you get a sticky hug, accompanied by a limp, wilted dandelion flower? No matter the delivery, they meant it and you knew it. Try and capture that childlike sincerity.

2. **Timely** – When someone deserves recognition, give it right away. Fresher is better. Don't wait until the "right time". It might be forgotten, or diminished in the delaying. Try to give recognition for the little meaningful things as close to the event as possible. For bigger, more cumulative recognition, maybe a more formal time is appropriate, but be careful
3. **Specific** – Be sure to note what it is that the person did and why it mattered. If you were hoping that good behavior will be repeated, this is the way to increase the chances of that happening. Saying "You are appreciated" is less meaningful than saying "I really appreciate how you helped me with #### the other day. I was struggling and you really came through for me. Thanks."
4. **Keep it focused on the recipient** – Sometimes, it seems like the people GIVING recognition seem to want us to focus more on them (and the fact that they are giving recognition) than on the recipient of the recognition. Don't get caught in the spotlight.

Be creative in recognizing others. Giving recognition doesn't hurt anyone (I think) but not giving recognition is a wasted opportunity. So, get out there and do it. And, if you find yourself the recipient of recognition (and it doesn't fit all that well with your personal preferences and style) bite your tongue, smile and accept it. And cherish it. You are special.

"Don't work for recognition, but do work worthy of recognition." – H. Jackson Brown, Jr.

Entrance and Gateway Signage – Making the direct market entrance an effective marketing tool

Contributions from Karen Goad & Kathy Bosse

If you've ever been out looking for a business that you know is near where you are, but you just don't know **QUITE** where it is (like that elusive Booster Juice in one of those monstrous box store strip mall complexes), you have probably used the same technique that I have. It involves frantically scanning the skyline, looking for a fleeting glimpse of the distinctive sign bearing the appropriate logo, and then proceeding from there. Sometimes your farm direct customers find themselves in a similar situation, but rather than scores of signs surrounding them in the urban jungle, they are in the "wilds", looking for a sign showing them that they have arrived at your farm. This is assuming that they had good directions to get them from home, down the various highways and byways, to your farm.

When it comes to your entrance or gateway and associated entrance sign(s), there are a number of key elements and points that should be included and considered when trying to make it an effective marketing tool.

This feature display draws the eye to the business – the sandwich board signs show feature product



Entrances or Gateways

Entrances have a simple function, which is to control how and when people enter your farm business operation. They also represent your customers' first impressions of you and your operation. Your entrance/gateway should be attractive, and well-maintained, as well as visible from all directions. It is one opportunity for you to represent who and what you are and should serve as a marketing tool for your farm.

Your entrance should be easily and safely accessed from whatever roadway you are located on. Thoroughly investigate the appropriate rules and regulations of both your municipality and the provincial government (www.signupalberta.ca). These rules and regulations can relate to size, positioning, traffic flow, encroachment, mowing requirements, etc.



Vergier Denis Charboneau –
Mont Saint Grégoire, Québec

Your entrance should be clearly visible and obvious. Some operations have their entrance in a wide open space, which (in theory) makes it easier for people to see the farm; however, in these cases you should consider the value of a constructed gateway framing the entrance to your operation. In operations where the entrance is more enclosed (e.g. by trees, etc.), it is even more important to "frame" the entrance so that your customers can clearly see where to turn. Entrances should direct your customers to where they need to go, whether parking, sales or production areas.



The Saskatoon Farm – Dewinton, AB

Kayben Farms – Okotoks, AB

Unless you want people on your farm at all hours every day of the week, your entrance should also be a gateway, with a locking gate to serve as a barrier to access. If you have a gateway, you should also have an open/closed sign and your hours of operation.



Signage

Your entrance or gate sign represents one of the first of several chances that you have to greet your customers and create a first impression. Entrance signs should be designed to catch both the eye and the attention (the difference between noticing and actually seeing / comprehending).

Marketing Tool

Use your sign to tell your story. Entrance signs are, in their most basic sense, on-farm marketing tools. Your sign(s) should creatively represent and support you and your farm business image and must be consistent with all other imagery or marketing tools that you are using. Your sign should clearly market your uniqueness and the key benefits of your business, whether it is a particular feature product (e.g. immediately available fresh fruit for picking) or some other product or service you offer (agritourism activities, etc.).



Knutson's Country Harvest – Newark, Illinois

Placement

A sign is meant to catch and draw the attention of the viewer. As such, it should be clearly visible from BOTH directions, in ALL seasons. Make sure that your sign is unobstructed and visible from a good distance away, so people don't have to slam on the brakes when they finally see it. Keep the trees trimmed back and keep the grass mowed. If you are open during winter and snow banks are an issue make sure signs are still visible.



Tom's Farm Market & Greenhouse – Huntley, Illinois

Size

Entrance signs should be simple, clear and easy to read. Make sure that signs are big enough, while still meeting appropriate regulations (check with your local municipality and provincial government body for requirements). Sign size is typically directly proportionate with approach speed (faster = bigger).

Farm Name / Logo

The name of your farm should be clearly stated and highly visible. If you have a logo, use it. It is a logical and recognizable connection between all of your marketing efforts, such as your business cards, website, signage and any advertising you do.

Lettering

Use as few words as possible on a sign. Ensure that there is lots of white space (a.k.a. blank space). Lettering should be large enough to be readable (not just visible) from approximately 45-70m (50-75 yards). Avoid using stylized or script lettering and use block letters as much as possible; however, the use of upper and lower case letters can improve readability.



Johnson's Farm Produce – Hobart, Indiana

Colours

Select sign colours carefully. Colours should enhance the visibility of the sign content and tie into your logo, but should not detract from readability. Carefully select colour combinations that hold up well over time and remain visible over a good distance. Some colours or colour combinations can appear to blur or blend over a longer distance. Some colours will be harder to read in bright light or lower light conditions (orange, violet and green can be tough to read in low light). In general, sticking with bold, solid colours (blue, black or red) on a lighter background or vice versa (white on dark) will be reasonably visible. Give consideration to the orientation of the sign, as the reflection of the sun at certain times of day can render a sign less effective.

Number of Signs

There is a fine line between overloading your customer and not providing enough information. You may be tempted to put a lot of information on a single sign or replace a single cluttered sign with lots of little ones. It is best to keep both the amount of information and the number of signs to a minimum and to stick with introductory information. It is generally recommended to restrict the maximum number of signs to two (2). Remember the core purposes of the entrance sign:

- Announce your presence
- Visually represent your “brand”
- Communicate your contact information
- Provide key information that customers need *right now*

Gateway signage

Your gate should have a clearly visible open and closed sign, as well as your hours of operation. Nothing is more frustrating than seeing that something is closed but having no idea if you are just a few minutes early, late or worse. This information should be clearly visible from a vehicle. Your closed gateway should also have a phone number for people to call if they have questions.

Cluttering up the entrance way with multiple signs just adds to the confusion. As much as we like to think we can multi-task, the reality is that when we divide our (limited) attention between multiple items, we aren't necessarily giving any particular item enough focus. If you feel you need to provide more information (such as rules, supplementary features or offerings), do it in a location where the customer has the time to read and absorb whatever it is you are telling them. An appropriate location might be the parking area or your admissions booth.

If you are a member of an association (e.g. Alberta Farm Fresh Producers Association) or if you have undergone some sort of certification program (e.g. Environmental Farm Plan, On-Farm Food Safety, etc.), you might consider having a sign acknowledging that on your fence or gate. Alternatively, that sort of information can be in the parking area and/or in your sales area.

Other Information

Splitting your signs into two focus areas can be effective if done properly. Make the main sign the one that catches the eye and sells your brand. A secondary sign can provide the other basic information, such as:

- ***Contact information***

People should be able to get in touch with you, particularly if they want to come back. Provide a **name** (minimum = farm name), **telephone number** (including area code) and **website** address.

- **Hours of operation**

This information should be large enough to be seen from a vehicle. If you are only open certain days or over a period of time each season, include that information (e.g. Open Monday to Saturday, June 15 – September 15, 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.).

- Any **special features** or in-season offerings (possibly limited time items)



Entrance sign that gives hours of operation, open or closed, etc.
– Solstice Berry Farms – Crossfield, AB

Sign Maintenance or Replacement

Keep signs in good repair. Regular maintenance of signage is as important as that of any other tools or piece of equipment that you use on the farm. Eliminate faded, chipped or peeling paint. Keep surroundings or associated materials neat, tidy and well maintained (e.g. weed the flower beds, paint feature material, paint and maintain the fence, etc.)

The longer you keep a sign, the more cost effective it is (provided it still delivers that same marketing value). However, as every sign has a finite lifespan, you should have a replacement plan in place for your signs.

If you have information that changes throughout the season, you should think about having a space on the permanent sign where you can post a smaller or interchangeable sign. Alternatively, install smaller, non-permanent signs as they are required. This type of information includes seasonal availability or featured product, festivals or special events, or other basic information.

In Conclusion

Not every gate or entrance sign is going to have everything on it, but you need to consider what should be on a sign and what might make the entrance way a more effective tool for your business. Consider asking your customers for feedback on your signage, as that will give you a good indication on their effectiveness.

While almost everyone has a creative bone in their body and most farm direct producers are passionate about their business, not everyone can design and build an effective sign. Once you've done your homework, consider contracting a professional to help you.

[Farm Direct Marketing for Rural Producers](#) – signage checklist at the end

Effective On-Farm Signage

Contributions from Kathy Bosse and Karen Goad

Signs are a critical tool in any on-farm or direct market operation. Signs, found literally anywhere on a farm, have many purposes and functions, just like any piece of equipment or employee. Unless you have been blessed with an unusually large number of children or an abnormal number of willing (and able) extended family members, you will need signs on your farm.

Signs are used to:

- welcome customers
- draw attention to or highlight specific things, such as events or featured items
- direct customers to where they need to go (parking, washrooms, sales areas, etc.)
- stop customers from entering restricted or dangerous areas
- provide information or instructions on procedures, processes and pricing
- provide information on rules, regulations and restrictions
- serve as a type of marketing or promotional tool



Welcome & information sign –
Knutson Country Harvest – Newark, Illinois

General rules for signage

Regardless of their purpose and function, signs should be clear and simple, conveying their message as quickly as possible. While there is a fine line between enough signs and too many, if your signage is clearly thought out, quality will be more important than quantity. Signs should be maintained regularly and should be updated and replaced as necessary, just like any type of equipment.

Signs should be appropriately sized (for the location and purpose) and clearly visible. Place signs in open locations, within the natural line of sight of your customers. This means putting signs at or slightly above eye level (depending on whether people are on foot or in a vehicle), rather than up high or on the ground as people rarely look up or down. Avoid placing signs in places that are or will become overshadowed, obscured or blocked during the season, whether by foliage (trees or grass), snow drifts, vehicles, and equipment or temporary structures. Any signage that faces or might affect traffic on a highway or road should meet any municipal or provincial regulations.

On-farm Directional Signage

Some of the simplest signs consist of one or two words and an arrow. Directional signage on the farm helps to ensure that people and traffic flows smoothly onto and off of the farm, as well as between different areas on the farm. This is especially critical if your sales area(s) and your picking/production area(s) are not adjacent. Directional signage can also increase picking efficiency, limit or control access through certain areas and generally reduce confusion.



On-farm directional signage –
Serviceberry Farms – Strathmore, AB



On-farm directional signage –
Riverbend Gardens – Edmonton, AB

In-field Signage

Signs that are found in the field might include directions on what is ready to pick, where to find it, how to pick it and information on what has been going on in the field (e.g. pesticide application if a field is off limits).



In-field directional signage – Thompson's Strawberry Farm – Bristol, Wisconsin



On-farm directional signage – Hidden Valley Gardens – Red Deer, AB



In-field information / directional signage – Kayben Farms – Okotoks, AB



Picking information sign – Kayben Farms – Okotoks, AB

Row or picking markers or flags are used in some operations to indicate where picking should start and where it finished. They improve efficiency and show your employees and customers where to start picking. Row markers have the potential to reduce the amount of fruit that is left in the field and can reduce customer management labour somewhat. Markers or signs that indicate a particular variety (in fruit orchards) might also be included.



Row marker & picking marker flag – Stevens Strawberries – Wetaskiwin, AB



Variety marker sign – Peace Cherries – Berwyn, AB

Pricing

Carefully thought out and clearly marked prices are essential in any operation. It is a good idea to have prices visible to customers before they start picking. Post prices in the field and at the checkout. Pricing information should include whether the products are sold by weight or by volume, as well as any associated pricing rules. This should head off any potential confusion before it gets started. It isn't a bad idea to post your current prices on your website.



On-farm market displays & pricing signage –
Johnson's Farm Market – Hobart, Indiana

Education

You have an opportunity to educate the people and customers that come to your farm. You might provide information on your production practices, the history of your farm and the products you sell, as well as information on your industry. You could include fun facts about the farm and your produce. The purpose of education is to create connections with your customers, which is one of the main reasons that customers like direct market channels. It also serves as a memory link to your advertising, "branding" and the on-farm experience.



Pricing sign –
The Garden – Calgary, AB



Apple variety information –
Verger Denis Charbonneau – Mont Saint Grégoire, Québec



Pet restriction –
E.L.K.S. Vegetable & Berry Farm –
St Albert, AB

Safety and Rules

Some signs should outline to your customers the different rules that are in place, to make their on-farm experience a safe and enjoyable one, without unnecessary damage/injury to them or to the crop. Warning signs should be placed in advance of danger areas, with the risk clearly stated. If other restrictions apply that might affect them, they should be notified (e.g. prohibition of pets, etc.).

Promotional Signage

All signage associated with your farm should have firm ties to current advertising and promotions. Signage should include your logo or your brand and might follow the theme or style of other marketing that you are doing. Consider the use of consistent colour schemes (provided they are visible and easy to read) in your signs and advertising. Feature your website address in appropriately strategic locations (at the sales area or next to your business cards or brochures, rather than out in the field).

The use of cross-promotional signage (i.e. signage that promotes other products or services that you sell or provide) can create linkages within your operation) (and potentially improve revenue streams). For example, putting out signage in the field advertising ice cream and shortcake at your farm store/café can spike interest (and appetite). When promoting specific or featured products, it is recommended that you outline product benefits by providing information in groups of three. For example, for a fruit crop, you might outline a use and/or value added suggestion (enjoy it fresh or year round in a delicious jam/jelly), as well as the price.

Staff = Promotional Signage

While signs can replace some staff, staff can also serve a promotional signage in a number of ways. Uniforms or some other sort of distinguishing clothing will help your customers recognize someone who can help them. Having your staff easily recognizable will go a little further to putting your customers at ease and increase the likelihood that they will come back. You can get extra mileage from this same clothing, using it to share a message, promote your brand and build that vital memory link in your customers' minds. Using your staff can also add an element of fun to your signage.



Parking attendant –
Saunders Farm – Munster, ON
Photo by Kerry Engel

Just as all signs should be clean, visible and provide a clear message, your staff should understand that they can impart a message to your customers. It is critical to recognize that staff behaviour and how they conduct themselves (how customers see them) is equally important to what they say and do (what customers hear and understand). Proper selection and placement of staff is just as important as the time and money you invest in planning and placing the physical signage on your farm.

In Conclusion

It is important to understand that the on-farm direct market experience can be new and somewhat disorienting for your customers, particularly if they are only familiar with regular retail. You must make sure that your customers feel comfortable and at ease. Place good signs throughout your operation and have helpers and customer service staff in the field, in the sales area or wherever else they are needed. Never let a customer walk away unsatisfied or unhappy simply because they didn't know what to do or were limited in some other way.

INSECT OF THE MONTH

Cherry Shoot Borer

Argyresthia oreasella

Crops Affected: Saskatoon berry, chokecherry, hawthorn,

Life Cycle:

- Adults are active from June to until August
 - Small, silver moth with dark gold markings
- Eggs are laid on new shoots (likely in fall)
- Young larvae tunnel into the tips of tender green shoots, causing symptomatic damage
- Mature larvae (approx. 7mm long) emerge from the shoot, change to pupae in late June to early July

Symptoms:

- New, green shoots wither and die in late-May & early June
 - Small holes at the base of withered shoots
- Flower clusters may be killed
- Larvae may be found in the stems of affected shoots

Monitoring:

- Monitor new shoots in spring for signs of damage

Management:

- Prune out dying shoots as they are observed



Cherry Shoot Borer – adult

Photo by www.bugguide.net

Q&A

Q: What are some of your favorite ways of recognizing the contributions of others?

A: I would give them a compliment.

A: A handwritten thank you note

A: Positive verbal response

A: Each day during busy season we write down name/what the person did. In the winter/slow season, we appreciate them!

A: One on one acknowledging of the individual's contribution, plus pointing the contribution out to others.

A: Praising them in person, creating a favourable post on Facebook if this is a business serving the public, sharing with others in my sphere of influence about these contributors.

A: Saying Thank you. Having them over for dinner.

A: We are taking entire (Canadian) field credit to a minor hockey game. In season we give out Tim Horton gift cards with \$10, \$20 or \$100 dollars; Give more \$10s than 100s.

A: Set up a scholarship for students through a college or university. It's easy to get creative with what you want the award to be given for, and it's a gift that can be given year after year.

Next Month's ? → [What do you do to kick off a new year? When does the new year start for you?](#)

[Pest Management Regulatory Agency \(PMRA\) – Electronic Label Search Engine](#)

Search the database for electronic labels

DISEASE OF THE MONTH

Pink Rot

Phytophthora erythroseptica

Crops Affected: potato

Disease Cycle:

- Soil borne fungal pathogen that affects tubers
- Pathogen is suggested to be resistant to drought and cold temperatures
- Infections occur before or at harvest
- Pathogen penetrates tubers through stolons (most often), but may also infect through eyes, lenticels or through wounds made during harvest or post-harvest handling
- Infection by late blight can open door to infection with pink rot
 - Infection with both diseases increases amount of rot in tubers
- May spread slowly in storage, however, the pink rot pathogen is more aggressive in tubers than the late blight pathogen

Symptoms:

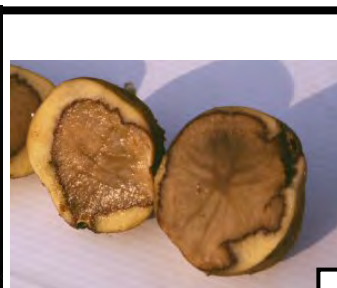
- Causes a spongy, soft rot in harvested tubers
- Wilt symptoms may occur in plants in the field
- External surfaces may have a purplish-black appearance
 - The edge of the rot is delineated by a dark line
- Infected skin rubs off easily
- Internally, infected tissues are cream coloured or light brown, but turn salmon pink when exposed to air (within 20 minutes) and then turn black (within 1 hour)
- Internal rots progress in a nearly straight line between healthy and diseased tissues
 - Rots often start from the stolon end
- Rotted tissues give off an ammonia smell
- Infected tubers exude a clear liquid when squeezed
- Tubers remain intact but have a rubbery texture

Conditions Favouring Disease Development:

- High / excessive soil moisture
 - Low areas in fields, over-irrigation, poor drainage
- Disease susceptibility of different varieties is variable
 - Red-skinned > Russet-types > white-skinned

Management:

- Use healthy seed tubers
- Plant / grow potatoes only in well-drained soils
- Remove diseased plants
- Cull diseased tubers before storage
- Protective fungicides can be used at specific stages (in furrow or at tuberization) to reduce pink rot infection



LEFT – Pink rot – internal & external tuber symptoms
(Photo by Gerald Holmes, California Polytechnic State University at San Luis Obispo, Bugwood.org)

Pythium Leak in Potatoes; Shell rot

Causal Organism(s): *Pythium spp.* (2 main species)

Crops Affected: potatoes

Disease Cycle:

- Fungal pathogen
- Lives as a saprophyte (organism that lives on dead or decaying organic matter) or as long-lived oospores in the soil for indefinite periods of time
- Doesn't attack healthy tubers directly, but penetrates through cuts, bruises and other wounds that typically occur at harvest
 - Very rapid development leads to serious losses in storage, during shipping and in the market
- May also affect cut seed and emerging plants

Symptoms:

- Extensive, grey to brown-coloured, water-soaked lesions occur on the surface around wounded areas on tubers
 - Often occur near the stem end
- Infected tissues may be cream coloured, but turn brown when exposed to air
- The rot will have a dark line at the margin
- Rotted tissues will turn black over time and is granular in texture
- Clear, brownish liquid will release from rotted tissues when squeezed
- Water may drip or run from diseased tissues
 - More obvious in tubers in plastic in high temperature retail storage conditions
- The entire inside of a tuber may rot, leaving a thin shell surrounding the rotted areas
- Infected tubers may exhibit a sweet odor

Conditions Favouring Disease Development

- Immature tubers (incomplete skin set) harvested under warm, moist soil conditions
- Harvesting during hot weather or exposure of tubers to heat after harvest

Management:

- Allow the crop to mature fully in the field prior to harvest
 - Encourage complete skin set
- Minimize mechanical injury during the post-harvest process (harvest, grading, storage)
- Harvest during cool conditions (cooler part of day)
- For tubers harvested during warm conditions
 - Cool immediately
 - Increase air ventilation
- Keep tubers out of sun after harvest
- Ship and store tubers properly (including retail stages), avoiding high humidity and high temperatures
- Avoid planting in poorly drained areas
- Space plants to encourage good air ventilation
- Avoid over fertilization which leads to lush, succulent growth
- Overhead irrigate with care or avoid when risk of *Pythium* is high

RIGHT – Pythium leak in potato tubers

(Photo by OMAFRA)