

Home > Community >



Heavenly Roots plot at the Burgoyne community farm site on Salt Spring. Courtesy Heavenly Roots

COMMUNITY

Heavenly Roots Folks Part Of Seedy Saturday Fervour

 By Contributed Article Last updated Feb 7, 2018

By MICHAEL MARRAPESE

Special to the Driftwood

As soon as days begin to get longer and the winter cold starts to fade, gardeners, like the overwintering plants, get restless.

Leafing through seed catalogues and flipping through seed racks is an annual rite of passage. This time of year gardeners and small farmers alike look forward to Seedy Saturday.

Seedy Saturday serves as a re-opening of the gardening season on Salt Spring Island and a way for farmers and gardeners to reconnect after a winter's rest. This year the event features a seed sale, local food vendors, agricultural information from non-profit organizations and garden-related ventures and three days of workshops.

Don't miss it on Saturday, Feb. 10 at the Farmers' institute.

Seedy Saturday organizers Kaleigh Barton and her partner Ben Corno of Heavenly Roots Farm took on the challenge of organizing the event three years ago. The process put them in touch with other seed growers and seed resources. In 2016 Barton signed up for FarmFolk CityFolk's Seed Mentorship Program and worked with local seed grower Rupert Adams to get her seed production up and running.

"We wanted to supply our own seed needs," she says. "One reason is that it's nice to have a big huge bag of seed in case something goes wrong – you can just re-seed right away. I'm just loving that."

Barton has honed her skills by participating in the BC Seed Trials project, a collaboration between the Bauta Family Initiative on Canadian Seed Security, UBC Farm and FarmFolk CityFolk. The project has growers throughout the province conducting vegetable variety trials to identify which perform best in each region as well as those which can be scaled up for bulk seed production. A central part of the seed trials project is observation and evaluation.

Barton explains: "I count the number of seeds I start with and then count the seedlings that sprout so we get a germination count. We also evaluate the seedlings based on what they look like – are they tall, are they wimpy. With the beets, we're looking at insect and disease damage. We'll be looking at other qualities – can they withstand frost, do they store well."

Even though the project can be a bit daunting at times, Barton has gained confidence in her seed-growing ability. The skills she gained in crop observation and record keeping are extremely valuable. Good records can make all the difference when the season gets hectic.

"It really makes a difference when you've got good records to help you remember what you did," she says. "Crop rotations can be a bit of an organizational nightmare at the best of times. It was a big challenge to get the trial crops planted on the right dates, to get the isolations done properly, and ensuring our market crops aren't going to flower and cross with the seed crops. It's good to have the experience of doing observations and record keeping in a more regimented way. This process has really helped."

This year they're kicking their seed production up a notch. "We're in our third year and we've been doing a little bit more every year," Barton said. "We have designs on starting our own small seed company in the next few years, and are working out how to fit seed growing into our growing market farm business."

Go to www.bcseedtrials.ca for more information about the BC Seed Trials project.

Information about Seedy Saturday workshops is available at: www.facebook.com/saltspring.seedysaturday. For further information about Seedy Saturday or to register for workshops, please email ssiseedysaturday@gmail.com.



FarmFolk CityFolk

Heavenly Roots Farm

mentorship

seed trials

seeds



Contributed Article