

Just Farmers: [an informal agricultural newsletter](#)

Vol. 8, No. 10

Consider: Sometimes you need to spend a dollar or two to improve things. Other times you can scavenge, save, scrimp, and used your head instead of your wallet. This issue has some comments on the latter: saving in the garden, and—on the last page—saving by top-seeding rather than replanting an entire field of forage.

News and Views:

- Forewarned is forearmed: While working in the soil I've found some cutworm larvae. If you *had* them last year, you know that they can do a lot of damage. So stock up on diatomaceous earth, just in case. Please remember that the cutworms that did the damage last year were not limited to cutting off plants at the ground level. They also climbed and defoliated the plants. You may remember that Norm Dueck sent us photos of cutworm damaging crops of timothy hay last year.
- From the last newsletter's **What Is It?** Migon guessed it. She sent this note: "Like to wager a guess at the picture being a piece of bark from a tree that has had a wee woodpecker doing what Mother Nature intended it to do--make holes. 😊👍 [Close enough: it was the work of a red-breasted sapsucker. The title of the sapsucker's artwork was "Meditation on Willow Bark".]"



Here's a photo of the "artist."
→



- Here's a message from Leslie Crane, living in Grand Forks, B.C.: "I am eating fresh kale leaves in salad (which came back from kale left in the ground over winter) & plantain, dandelion greens, and sorrel. "That is buckwheat in between them."



- Sarah Henekens of B.C. Eco-seeds (Aldergrove) informed us that sales were sales up 600% this year.
- Seed sales across the continent (and maybe the rest of the world) are up, up, up, as people—concerned about the covid virus and with more time available—are growing vegetables. It makes one wonder if there is really not enough time to grow vegetables when the world is not "shut down," or if we all need to reconsider our lifestyles.

- This photo of a steer makes a point in a rather horrifying way. See the whole study about how animals try to correct their own mineral deficiencies by checking out onpasture.com. Please consider subscribing to this excellent publication.



“This steer. . . was part of a trial to see the effects of grazing on phosphorous deficient soils. The herd decided to solve the problem by eating dead rabbits found in the pasture for the phosphorous in their bones.”

OK. Here’s a young early cabbage plant that I put in the ground just two days ago. When I was planting it, I found one cutworm which I squished. Now I see a leaf being chewed. So I dug around it—couldn’t find any more—and sprinkled some d.e. below and above ground. None of the other 19 cabbages showed any damage.



What is diatomaceous earth?
D.E. (diatomaceous earth) is a talc-like powder made from the ground up fossilized bodies of *diatoms*, tiny algae with shells made of glass. They accumulate in sediments and are mined. They act as little knives on soft-bodied insects like cutworms, some caterpillars, aphids, etc. The pest must come in contact with the d.e. in order for it to be pierced and die of dehydration.

For control of cutworms in a garden, I followed this advice: at the first sign of damage, holes in leaves, etc., I dig around the roots of the plant with my fingers and grab the beasties which usually curl up when disturbed. Chickens love them, by the way. So do robins when they find cutworms after you cultivate your garden.

After inspecting the area around the damaged plant, I mix some d.e. in the soil, hoping that the worm—not known for their intelligence—will crawl over it and “juice” themselves to death. If they do, I won’t cry.

D.E. is approved for organic farming and gardening. It is not a poison and doesn’t hurt earthworms, robins, or you, although I’d discourage putting d.e. on ice cream.



Keeping the little plants warm and comfortable:

Cloches, hotcaps, and shelters made from scraps

If you dream of having a high-hoop or low-hoop house, but either don't know how to build one or don't have the money to buy the parts, here are a few ideas that either cost nothing at all or only a little bit.

1. Wind- and/or sun-shelters. I tack these little inverted-V things to give shade to mid-summer seedlings, but also a bit of a windbreak for early seedlings, especially if I have brassicas with fairly large leaves to set out. These leaves are like little sails, so they can use a windbreak. After a couple days, plants should be able to make it on their own. Photos: you can see little cabbages unprotected and ones with windbreaks. I should be able to tell in a week or two how the little plantlets feel about things.



2. These little waxed paper domes are called hotcaps. They are cheap and reusable. I just use them for a short time and check to make sure things don't get too hot under them every so often.



3. Here's a little cloche that I made with 2 X 4's (some ripped in half). I will cover it with plastic or superfine netting. This one is not tall enough for my carrots, but I use it for temporary shelter and for things like radishes or hakurei turnips that are plagued by nasty flea beetles and other beasties. It is wider at the base so—although it is light-weight—it won't blow over unless a hurricane or tornado strikes us. I buy the eight foot 1 X 4's the locally and they are cheap and of high quality. The plywood ends are just scavenged from a builder's trash pile and cut to shape.



4. This cloche had sides made of Suntuf which I saved from going to the dump when a local greenhouse was being renovated. It will have a fabric top to protect carrots from the carrot rust fly (it's the fabric Wm. Dam that lasts longer and lets more light and moisture in). This one is tall enough to let carrots grow their natural height. It is heavier than the one just above, however.



5. I made this fancier cloche quite a few years ago when I was learning how to make gambrel barn roof joints. So this was the practice model/prototype. (I never did build the barn.) It was also made from scrap wood and used plastic. More work, but I found it good to use for shelter in my frost-pocket garden when starting squash. It has enough air space that it doesn't overheat and give the squash a little room. It can be tipped up for fresh air, but wind will catch it, so beware.



6. These are small, portable cold frames that use old windows for the roof. They should be angled to catch more sun, but do let brassicas get off to an early start without frost damage.



7. This is very easy if you have some Suntuf that you scavenged. Just bend it into a hoop form and put some sticks alongside to keep it in place and block the ends if you expect cold, wind, or cats looking for dry places to eliminate waste.



8. This cross between a cold frame and greenhouse is modelled on the growing shelters designed by Mr. Dave Havard, author of *Gardening Between Frosts*, and one of the most savvy gardeners ever to grow things in the Bulkley Valley. I leave it in place permanently but could move it with the help of a strong set of arms (not mine). This one is accessed from the back where weighted plastic makes an easy-to-open flap door.



9. The easiest portable cloche in the world is also maybe the cheapest: an old tire.



Just plop it down where you want to grow something and—if possible—fill the insight rim with water for more thermal heat savings.

Then cover it with a frame of plastic, an old window, etc. (Put a weight on the cover so it doesn't blow away.) The first time we used these we grew pickling cukes in our very cold garden and kept adding tires—I think we ended up with three—and had a quite large micro-climate.



10. This is a handy little thing: a small, light-weight cover for a flat that you think needs protecting in the early-season greenhouse or outside while hardening off. Get some 1 x 6's or shiplap barn boards from an old shed and put plastic on top. Here, Betsey is giving sweet peas a more gradual introduction to the big world of weather.



News Release from BC Gov News

Buy BC e-commerce brings local foods, beverages online

New Buy BC e-commerce funding is available to help the province's farmers and food and beverage processors overcome some lost sales during the COVID-19 pandemic by moving their products online.

The B.C. government is providing \$300,000 to support industry-led Buy BC e-commerce activities. The funding is under the Ministry of Agriculture's Buy BC Partnership Program. It helps farmers, ranchers and food and beverage processors market their products as locally grown, raised, harvested or produced, making it easy for British Columbians to Buy BC.

"British Columbians have come together during these difficult times and continue to show their strength and support for each other. With the new Buy BC e-commerce funding, farmers and food and beverage processors can create a new avenue to sell their products directly to consumers all over the province, while maintaining physical distancing and safe practices," said Lana Popham, Minister of Agriculture. "Moving to online sales gives customers the opportunity to continue to Buy BC and enjoy fresh food, while supporting families in our communities."

The program provides financial support to access and develop websites that accommodate online sales and helps cover the costs of marketing and shipping products to consumers throughout the province.

"As a farmer, I've felt the impact of these uncertain times," said Cammy Lockwood, Lockwood Farms. "The need to transition to online sales is necessary as farmers can't rely on traditional methods to get their products to customers, and customers need a way to be able to access the local goods they depend on to feed their families. The support the Buy BC e-commerce funding is providing to help move online, market and get products to consumers is greatly appreciated, especially since this is a very busy season for farmers."

Online applications are accepted on a first-come, first-served basis, from May 15 to May 29, or when the funding is fully subscribed. The provincial government's Buy BC Partnership Program is delivered by the Investment Agriculture Foundation of British Columbia. For Buy BC application details, visit: <https://iafbc.ca/buy-bc/>



Quick Facts:

- The funding is available to B.C. farmers, and food and beverage processors of all sizes.
- To be eligible, an applicant must have at least two years of business revenues, be licensed to do business in B.C. and be growing or processing one or more products in the province.
- Each successful applicant is eligible to receive up to \$5,000.