

Living

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COMMUNITY



Foster Richardson and Natasha Tymo on Hilldown Farm in the Cowichan Valley. (SUBMITTED)

Row by row: BC Seed Trials and Seedy Sunday

BY MICHAEL MARRAPESE

As soon as days begin to get longer and the winter cold starts to fade gardeners, like over-wintering plants, get restless. Leafing through seed catalogues and flipping through seed racks is an annual rite of passage into the new year. This time of year gardeners and small farmers alike also look forward to Seedy Saturday and Sunday events across B.C.

Foster Richardson of Hilldown Farm gets pretty excited about seed. He's working with Cowichan Green Community to organize the 2018 Seedy Sun-

day in Duncan. Richardson has been incorporating seed production into his farming operation in Cobble Hill for the last five years. Towards that end, he's participating in the BC Seed Trials, a project of FarmFolk CityFolk. The project receives funding from the Bauta Family Initiative on Canadian Seed Security. For Richardson, the funding was timely.

"It caught me at a perfect time," he says, "I was suddenly open to this whole world of seed production which I hadn't really contemplated being part of. We were able to pursue several things that wouldn't have

otherwise been economical. Through the Bauta Initiative we're involved with a participatory plant breeding project — growing out and selecting potato varieties — and I'm pursuing a seed mentorship with Cedar Isle Farm in Agassiz which is helping me take my grain production to the next level."

BC Seed Trials introduces farmers to a detailed and rigorous process for identifying beneficial traits throughout the entire crop cycle and then selecting those for either seed saving or replanting the following year. Bringing this level of scientific rigour to his work is

extremely valuable. Richardson reflects that, "farmers are always out there trialling — we're always planting things and seeing how they do — but we rarely have the luxury in the field to do as good a job as we'd like. Having a little bit of support and having some organizational help has allowed me to do what I knew I wanted to do, which was a better job at the trials. I think it's something that farmers are so close to doing anyway. A little bit of support makes it happen."

Making observations and keep-

ing records throughout the season sharpens the skills needed to be a successful seed-saver.

"It provides that next step in developing that eye that will make us better seed growers and potentially breeders."

The Duncan Seedy Sunday Event takes place on Sunday, March 18 from 10 a.m.-2 p.m., at the Si'em Lelum Gymnasium. Contact info@cowichangreencommunity.ca.

For more information about the BC Seed Trials Project, go to www.bcseedtrials.ca.


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Duncan Seedy Sunday turns 10

CITIZEN

Celebrate a decade of Duncan's annual Seedy Sundays on March 18.

For those who are waiting in anticipation to start your veggie garden, Cowichan Green Community invites you to celebrate the growing season at the 10th annual Duncan Seedy Sunday, taking place at the Cowichan Tribes Si'em Lelum Gymnasium at 5574 River Rd. in Duncan.

This is an event for gardeners of all ages and experiences to source locally grown and ecologically sound seeds, garden

starts, and perennials. It will feature over 35 vendors, activities for children, door prizes, a raffle for a \$500 gift basket from Buckerfields, and four free gardening workshops. Admission is \$2 per person. CGC members and children under 13 get in free.

As well, four vendors will be offering food, including Zed Squared Korean Food, Taco Revolution, Bite Me Cookie Company, and Depot Dawgs.

Guest speakers have a wealth of information so be sure to sit in on one or more of these talks: 10:15 a.m.-11 a.m. — Mason Bees with Eu-

gene Fleck (House of the Blue Bee); 11:15 a.m.-12 p.m. — Awesome Ancient Grain Seeds with Dan Jason (Salt Spring Seeds); 12:15 p.m.-1 p.m. — Permaculture: Skimming the Surface with Joan Wynden (Garden Lore); 1:15 p.m.-2 p.m. — Seed Cleaning with Deb Cebula and Kat Brust (CGC Seed Farm).

For more information about the speakers and event visit <https://cowichangreencommunity.org/workshop-events/duncan-seedy-sunday-2018/> or contact Jennifer Dorby at 250-748-8506 or jennifer@cowichangreencommunity.org