
Agroforestry Update

News and Information from the British Columbia Agroforestry Industry Development Initiative

December 2004

Welcome

Agroforestry – blending agriculture and forestry using environmentally sustainable and economically beneficial practices. Agroforestry systems provide opportunities for economic diversification in every region of British Columbia, enhancing our rural economies and increasing community stability. Whether you are starting a new venture or adapting your existing production, agroforestry systems offer a wealth of solutions for local opportunities, including:

- Growing field or vegetable crops between tree rows (alley cropping);
- Integrating livestock production and silviculture (silvopastures);
- Using sustainable practices to farm the forest for mushrooms, floral greens, sap or other non-timber forest products in conjunction with management of your woodlot or other timber management; and,
- Establishing conservation plantings of trees or shrubs (integrated riparian plantings, shelter or timber belts) that can also provide diversification for your production.

This update is designed to keep you informed about developments in the agroforestry industry in British Columbia. Agroforestry Update will provide you with the latest information on the Agroforestry Initiative, websites and publications of interest, as well as news and upcoming events. The Agroforestry Industry Development Initiative is now in its second year with the implementation of the Agroforestry Strategic Plan underway.

Workshops were held throughout the province in 2003 and operational demonstrations of agroforestry practices have begun. One of these demonstrations, "Tapping Bigleaf Maple", is highlighted on page 2. Funding for projects is still available and new applications are welcome. See page 4 for more information on the Initiative and how you can apply for funding an innovative agroforestry demonstration or other agroforestry related project.

Please Contact Us

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If you have suggestions for future editions of the Update or know of an event that should be included, please let us know.

George Powell
Agroforestry Update Editor

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Tapping Bigleaf Maple: Planning for Sweet Success with Vancouver Island Syrup

Gary Backlund and a group of Vancouver Islanders have been working to lay the foundations for a commercial West Coast maple sap & syrup industry.

Bigleaf maple is North America's second most abundant hardwood with a wide range of uses. There are well over 2 million m³ of bigleaf maple growing in B.C., concentrated in the Cowichan, Alberni, Comox and Sayward Valleys of Vancouver Island. Saw logs can be produced in 25 - 30 years on a good site, and the wood is used for lumber, veneer, firewood, wood turning and other artisan uses, as well as wood chips for smoking meat and fish.



For 16 years, Gary and his family have specialized in the manufacture of bigleaf maple lumber and other value-added small-scale forestry activities on their Managed Forest on the north side of Ladysmith Harbour. After an introduction to bigleaf tapping by Harold Macy (formerly with UBC's Oyster River Farm), Gary has been making maple syrup on a hobby basis and actively sharing information with others interested in tapping and sugaring.

The Backlunds have now increased to a commercial volume to work through the details of the maple tapping business.

Tapping our western maple was thought not to be economically viable due to lower sugar content compared to eastern maples. This is probably true if the only market was bulk wholesale syrup. But sold direct to the public as a speciality product, bigleaf syrup can gross \$15 per 250-ml bottle. The syrup's

taste makes it exceptional in cooking and it is desired by high-end restaurants wanting a unique, West Coast flavour. Although syrup is the traditional use, maple water (sap) also has many uses. As a substitute for water in most recipes it imparts a slight sweetness and hint of maple flavour. Maple water contains essential minerals and vitamins with potential as a health food product, and Maple wine is being produced from the sap with the intent to create a commercial industry.

Currently there is little information on bigleaf maple sugaring. Although making syrup from sap is similar to the process used in Eastern Canada, tapping a different maple species in a very different climate has created some learning opportunities. Working with a network of tappers at different elevations and microclimates within the Cowichan Valley, this project is also researching what size, configuration and location of bigleaf trees are the best candidates for tapping.

Sap handling and processing can also be difficult, and evaporation is slow without the proper equipment. For those already successful in tapping large quantities of Bigleaf sap, this project also provides the opportunity to use an evaporator to help them decide whether to invest in building or purchasing one.

The knowledge gained from this project is being distributed through workshops, publications and will also be made available on the internet. The Backlunds have already hosted three maple tapping workshops with plans for several more in 2005. An information sheet on Bigleaf sugaring is available on their website: www.island.net/~maple. An open house will be held on January 8, 2005 at the Backlund's Backwoods, 12685 South Doole Road in Ladysmith. Anyone interested in the development of this new industry is welcome to attend.

Gary Backlund is the author of five books, including "Bigleaf Sugaring: Tapping the Western Maple" co-authored with his daughter Katherine. For more information on the tapping bigleaf maple project contact Gary at: maple@island.net or phone 250 245-4939

InfoBasket

Your Portal to Agroforestry Information on the Internet

Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries - www.infobasket.gov.bc.ca

InfoBasket, an Internet information portal, is a collection of agri-food business information that can help B.C. producers and processors access a wide range of information to run their businesses.

Using the latest technology to “crawl” the internet, InfoBasket assembles thousands of articles and documents from sources locally and around the world. References are pre-screened by ministry specialists prior to being placed in InfoBasket ensuring pertinence to your business. This removes the frustration of the varied results that a direct search of the internet often produces. Also listed are Calendars of Events and related alerts.

InfoBasket organizes a wide range of documents for specific sectors on all aspects of the agri-food industry including: ► Production and Processing ► Business Management and Finance ► Marketing and Trade ► Regulations and Legislation ► Directories and Contacts ► Statistics and Market Data

Communities that are currently available on InfoBasket include: ► Agritourism ► **Agroforestry** ► Apiculture ► Beef ► Berries ► Bison ► Field Vegetables ► Forage ► Game Birds ► Goats ► Grains, Oilseeds, Pulses and Forage Seeds ► Greenhouse Vegetables ► Organics ► Ornamentals ► Range ► Ratites ► Sheep and Lamb ► Specialty Crops ► Tree Fruits ► Waterfowl ► 4-H Youth and Community Development

Communities currently being developed include: ► Aquaculture ► Grapes ► Horses ► Oysters

The Internet has changed the way people look for information, but the problem is that for every good article you find on the Internet, you have to wade through a lot of stuff that’s irrelevant. InfoBasket helps producers and processors find up-to-date information that applies specifically to their B.C. businesses. It’s one-stop shopping for information. InfoBasket is on the Internet at <http://infobasket.gov.bc.ca/>

Coming Events

Maple Tapping Goes West Coast

An agroforestry demonstration project on tapping bigleaf maple is holding a **public open house on January 8, 2005** during daylight hours at 12685 South Doole Road, Ladysmith BC. Join the hosts from Backlund's Backwoods in the sugar shack and learn about bigleaf maple sugaring while enjoying a cup of hot chocolate made from maple sap. Contact the Backlunds at maple@island.net. A map is posted at www.island.net/~backlund/map.jpg

Agroforestry Session at the 47th Annual Horticulture Growers' Short Course

Put on by the Lower Mainland Horticultural Improvement Association in co-operation with BCMAFF and held in conjunction with the Pacific Agriculture Show at the Tradex in Abbotsford, **February 17-19, 2005**. Learn about agroforestry opportunities, markets and needs. See www.agricultureshow.net and look for the Horticulture Growers' Short Course - Program link.

9th North American Agroforestry

Conference “Moving Agroforestry into the Mainstream” **June 12-15, 2005** in Rochester, Minnesota. Presented by the Association for Temperate Agroforestry. For more information visit: cinram.umn.edu/afta2005/

Peace Region Agroforestry Workshop

Dawson Creek, 2005. Watch for dates and location in the new year. For more information contact George Powell at agroforestry@uniserve.com.

Forest Farming /Maple Tapping Workshops

- **January 7, 2005**, evening, forest farming overview; **January 8th**, woods demonstration, Cortes Island.
- **January 15, 2005**, 9:30 am – noon, UBC Oyster River Farm (call 250-337-5332 to register)
- **January 29, 2005**, 1:30 - 3:00 pm at the Campbell River Museum.

For more information contact Harold Macy at hqcreek@axion.net.

British Columbia's Agroforestry Industry Development Initiative

The **Agroforestry Industry Development Initiative** was developed by industry and government representatives to enhance and promote agroforestry in BC. The Initiative has a 5-year strategic plan and \$500,000 of funding will be allocated by the Investment Agriculture Foundation to implement agroforestry projects.

The Agroforestry Management Committee (AMC) is working with producers, environmental and community groups, government agencies, educators and researchers to achieve its vision of a dynamic, self-sustaining agroforestry industry. The Federation of BC Woodlot Associations is administering the Initiative on behalf of the AMC.

The participation of individuals and groups of industry stakeholders is welcomed in this Initiative through their submission of project proposals that meet the strategies and goals of the Initiative to facilitate a more self-reliant and innovative agroforestry sector. The four major goals of the Initiative are as follows:

Goal 1: Develop partnerships

Objectives:

1. Demonstrate the economic viability and environmental stewardship of agroforestry systems; and,
2. Foster partnerships among agroforestry practitioners and environmental, government, educational and other interested groups.

Applications are welcomed for projects that involve establishment, evaluation and use of demonstration farms and agroforests. Examples include (but are not limited to):

- On-farm or in-forest operational demonstrations of agroforestry practices.
- Investigations of specific economic and environmental effects of agroforestry systems.
- Development of information notes from the demonstration projects.

Goal 2: Increase awareness

Objective: Increase extension, training and access to agroforestry information.

Applications are welcomed for projects that involve development and transfer of technical information. Examples include (but are not limited to):

- Tours of demonstration areas.
- Workshops, meetings or conferences.

Goal 3: Link producers and buyers

Objective: Improve the connection between producers, and buyers and consumers.

This funding envelope accepts and reviews applications for projects that link the various market groups. Examples include (but are not limited to):

- Producer and product guides.
- Regional, national and international buyer directories.

Goal 4: Develop a BC Agroforestry brand

Objective: To establish a marketing strategy for an Agroforestry brand identity, synonymous with economically sustainable and environmentally beneficial systems.

Creation of a 'brand' identity will promote higher price points for products produced in Agroforestry systems.

For further project ideas please see the action items identified in the strategic plan at the link below. For 2005, proposals will be accepted on an ongoing basis for projects related to Goals 1, 2, and 3. Funding is on a 50:50 cost-share basis. A portion of the industry sector contribution may be in-kind. There may be a cap on funds available for individual projects. Full guidelines and application forms are available from www.woodlot.bc.ca.

Do You Want to Contact Us?

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Agroforestry Management Committee

A volunteer committee oversees the Agroforestry Initiative and reviews funding proposals.

Committee - Industry members:

- Douglas Justice - Vancouver, UBC botanist, Native Plant Society of BC
- Lee Hesketh – Lumby, rancher, riparian restoration expert
- Charlie Willis - Cranbrook, Kootenay Christmas Tree Association
- Harold Macy - Courtenay, private agroforestry systems advisor, woodlot owner
- Jennifer Cunningham - Kamloops, BC Sheep Federation, woodlot owner
- Detmar Schwichtenberg - Fraser Valley, private land stewardship advocate

Committee - Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries members:

- Dave Trotter, Abbotsford, Agroforestry Specialist (604) 556-3148
david.trotter@gems2.gov.bc.ca
- Lisa Zabeck, Abbotsford, Agroforestry Industry Development (604) 556-3001
lisa.zabek@gems8.gov.bc.ca
- Chris Zabeck, Abbotsford, Regional Agrologist (604) 556-3045
chris.zabek@gems5.gov.bc.ca

Committee - Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC members:

- Jens Larsen, Merritt rancher, IAF representative
- Al Oliver, Vancouver, IAF Manager program delivery

Committee - Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada members:

- Phil Bergen, Burnaby , Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada
- Allen Eagle, Dawson Creek , PFRA, Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada

The Federation of BC Woodlot Associations administers the Agroforestry Initiative

Agroforestry Funding Agreement Administrator:

Carmen Wheatley, Prince George,
Federation of BC Woodlot Associations



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