



# Haliburton Farm

## Organic farming for our community

Spring 2006

### Seed Saving Savvy

*By Brenda Laliberte*

My experience with gardening started in a basement apartment in East Vancouver when I decided that I was going to grow tomatoes. I started with some seeds from a friend, but they were so few and so little, that I bought some more, and then I planted some of every variety in flats on a north-facing windowsill. To my amazement and delight, all of the seeds germinated and grew into little plants (a bit pale and leggy). I now had over 30 tomato seedlings— for my five large pots and one window box. There was only one thing to do – the tomato plants and I gave notice and went looking for a house with a yard to rent – I was hooked on growing things, all because I was thrilled by my success at germinating a few seeds.

Since then, I have had many years of growing – always starting from seed – often with seeds I saved from previous years' harvests. I have learned a lot about growing, like not starting my seedlings in north-facing windows, and that chickens really like lettuce seedlings, but I still experience the same delight and amazement that I felt when my first seeds germinated in that basement apartment. There are lots of reasons to save your own seeds, not the least of which is the cost. By saving your own seeds – collected from plants that do particularly well – you are practising the age-old tradition of selective breeding. You are selecting for plants that grow well in your micro-climate. The offspring from these saved seeds will, over the years, consistently produce the best crops for you.

This practice is being threatened as corporations move to patent seeds, and governments pass on the responsibility for plant breeding to the private sector. Monsanto and other seed companies are now trying to make it illegal for



farmers to save and swap seeds, forcing them to buy the corporate seeds.

There are many reasons to be concerned about this – the loss of diversity, corporate control of the world's farmers, maybe even control of the backyard gardener. Imagine that right now there are over 300 varieties of tomatoes in the world – how many varieties do you see in the supermarket. For more information, see [www.seedsanctuary.com](http://www.seedsanctuary.com), the website of the Seed and Plant Sanctuary for Canada, or check out Dan Jason's latest book *Saving Seeds As If Our Lives Depended On It*.

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### Visit our Farm Stand

The Haliburton Farm Stand will be open again for business in late June. The stand regularly opens every Thursday.

### Get Your Hands Dirty!

Help out at our monthly work parties held every 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of the month. See page 4 for our 2006 schedule.

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## The Honored Soil Amendment—Okara

By Tina Baynes

The word 'okara', in Japanese, consists of the prefix honourific 'o' (honoured one) before the word 'kara', which means shell, husk or hull. Okara is the mash of soybean husks leftover from the tofu-making process. In this process, the soybeans are cooked and drained, the liquid is used for tofu and the mash is called okara. It is a traditional Japanese food, eaten as an addition to stir fries, and used in cookies and cakes. Okara is 84% moisture, high in nitrogen with trace amounts of ash, calcium, sodium and phosphorous.

Organic farmers in the Victoria area use tonnes of this material every year. They sheet compost it by spreading it thinly on the soil and then turning – often turning it several times to create aerobic activity. The okara is also used in composts – it helps heat up the compost, as it is high in nitrogen. If composting okara, use a carbon/nitrogen ration of at least 30:1, adding straw, hay or another dry material as you build up the compost. If there is too much okara, you will know by the strong, gassy smell – an indication that the nitrogen is escaping as a nitrogenous gas. When using okara, let your compost mature to ensure that the nitrogen has been transformed to a nitrate state, so that plants can more easily absorb nutrients.

Okara is a beneficial amendment to sandy soils, creating humus for fertility and water retention. Many organic farmers have reported increased fertility and robust crops, particularly with brassica and cole transplants. It is best not to direct-seed into a bed or area where okara has recently been sheet-composted.

Eat it when it is very fresh, and spread it or compost it within a week, before the 'dead deer' odour starts.

Okara is available from two of the local tofu makers: Dayspring and Sooke Soy Foods. Certified organic growers and other concerned growers need to personally ensure that the soybeans used in the process are certified organic and not genetically modified. Loading it into your vehicle is known as a vigorous workout and requires a strong back, as the bags are very heavy.

When all is said and done, okara is a wonderful amendment for our gardens and fields.



### **TOASTED COCONUT OKARA**

This recipe makes is great as a sprinkle on many things: I have a couple of tablespoonfuls over my cereal in the morning, and incorporate it into cookies and brownies and things. This coconutty variation opens up a world of possibilities: if you give your own imagination a chance, you'll find no shortage of ideas for using either the original or this recipe.

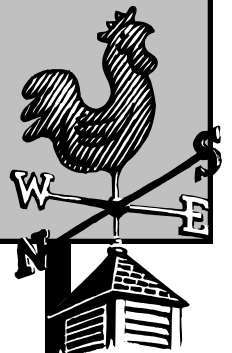
2 cups okara  
 ¼ cup honey  
 2 tbsp. grapeseed oil  
 1 1/2 tbsp. coconut essence (extract)  
 pinch of salt

1. Preheat oven to 180C. Combine all ingredients, and place in a large baking pan. Cook for 1 ¼ hours, stirring occasionally, until golden. The house will smell beautiful! Cool, and store in an airtight container until needed.

Recipe retrieved from: <http://home.iprimus.com.au/vileletters/okara/basics.html#TOASTED%20COCONUT%20>

### **Nutrition Tip!**

**Okara is high in fibre. A healthy diet high in fibre can help prevent disease, regulate bowel function and control weight.**





## What's going on at the farm...

### Apprenticeship Program

We have been making great strides in developing an exciting new apprenticeship program at the Farm. The Farm has even received a \$4,000 grant from the Vancouver Island Health Authority to get it off the ground!

This part-time program is scheduled to start in April, and will accept approximately three apprentices for a six-month period.

Application information will also be posted on our website as soon as it is available. In the meantime, potential apprentices interested in applying for the program should contact the Farm for more details.



### Volunteer News

We are pleased to introduce you to some new volunteers that have joined the Farm in the past few months. Mike Shepard, Cammie Harbottle, Elietha Bocskei, and Beth Cougler Blom have all joined us in various capacities. Mike has taken on the role of Membership Coordinator, Beth is now the Farm's Volunteer Coordinator.

We are still looking for some volunteers to fill specific committee and other positions as listed on our website and, as always, we will be looking for work party volunteers as we prepare the Farm for the spring.

## Become a Friend of Haliburton Farm

We are working hard to get the Farm growing again, and need your support. Please consider becoming a member of the Haliburton Farm, and you will receive our newsletter, regular announcements about activities, and discounts at farm events.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Payment: Cash  Cheque  *Please make cheques payable to Haliburton Community Organic Farm Society*



***Pattypan Squash\****  
(General Membership)  
\$10 one year / \$18 for two years

***Delicata Squash***  
(Family Membership)  
\$50 one year / \$95 for two years



***Rouge Vif d'Etampes***  
(Supporter Membership)  
\$30 one year / \$55 for two years

***Prizewinner Pumpkin***  
(Corporate Membership)  
\$175 one year / \$345 for two years



(\*The Pattypan Squash category is intended for students, seniors and low-income earners)

**Please indicate your membership category**  
Haliburton Community Organic Farm Society 768 Westbury Rd.,  
Victoria, BC, V8Y 1G7  
info@haliburtonfarm.org (250) 658-0758



The Haliburton Community Organic Farm Society is a non-profit organization composed of farmers, neighbours of Haliburton Farm, educators, and community members interested in sustainable, organic agriculture. The current members of our volunteer Board of Directors are Tina Fraser Baynes, Elmarie Roberts, Karen Hurley, Trevor Walker, Kevin Weir, Daniela Antlova, Beth Cougler Blom, Michael Shepard and Elietha Bocskei.

### **Haliburton Community Organic Farm Society**

Email: [info@haliburtonfarm.org](mailto:info@haliburtonfarm.org)

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### ***Work Party Dates for the 2006 Season***

Join us for the following work party dates this growing season. All volunteers are asked to bring work gloves and clippers if possible.

<b>May 11<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>July 8<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>September 9<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>November 4<sup>th</sup></b>
<b>May 13<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>July 13<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>September 14<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>November 9<sup>th</sup></b>
<b>June 8<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>August 10<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>October 12<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>December 7<sup>th</sup></b>
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