



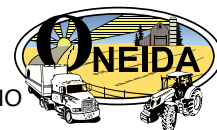
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STIHL HONDA

Humans helping humans: Sunflower festival continues to support Ukraine

By Luke Edwards

With a blue cloudless sky over top a sea of 40,000 blooming yellow sunflowers, the scene at London Born Wines' event space last month resembled the flag of the country attendees were supporting.

The fifth annual Niagara Sunflower Festival for Ukraine Relief took place last month in Beamsville. Begun by Joe Hube and Bill Emslie following the latest Russian invasion of the eastern European country back in 2022, it has since raised more than \$110,000 to support relief efforts in Ukraine.

"We're humans trying to help humans," said Hube as visitors took part in a sunflower painting course as others toured the field or visited with some of the roughly 15 vendors in attendance.

Though he has no Ukrainian heritage, Hube said the scenes of the Russian invasion nearly five years ago moved him. He and his neighbour Emslie came up with the festival idea, and have continued it each year since.

Having London Born Wines come on board has been a help, Hube said. So too has the support from Larry and Ben Dyck at

Campden Grain. The local farm family has planted, maintained and harvested the sunflower crop each year, a huge help for the organizers, Hube said.

During the opening weekend of the two-week festival, Nancy Haines and Sherri Hipwell made the trek out from St. Catharines, coming for the music, some food, and a few sunflowers to take home.

"It's a beautiful way to raise money," said Hipwell.

Haines agreed, saying sunflowers can brighten anyone's day.

"They just make you happy, don't they?" she said.

Meanwhile, Emma Young came down from Hamilton with her mom Van. As they snipped a few flowers to take home with them, young Emma discovered just how much the flowers can grow.

"They're really big and pretty," she said.

All told, Hube said they've organized 16 events to support Ukraine. And while it's somewhat disheartening knowing the war rages on, Hube said it's amazing that people in Niagara continue to support humanitarian efforts in Ukraine. And though their focus remains on Ukraine, Hube acknowledged the



Emma Young came down to Beamsville from Hamilton with her mom to take in the sunflower festival. ~ Luke Edwards photos

many other regions of the world struck by war, poverty and famine. In fact, one of the booths at the festival was for a group collecting to support the people of Cuba.

"I look around and I'm happy," Hube said, appreciating the support they've received.

Having the experience of several years running the event ensures they can send the proceeds to groups where they're confident the money will be dispersed in the best way to help the people of Ukraine.

Fortunately Mother Nature cooperated - something that hasn't been a given this year. The flowers withstood the storms in the days and weeks leading up to the festival, and the plants began blooming just as the festival was set to get underway.

Hube said it's always a crapshoot, and a bit of a nailbiting time as the festival approaches each year.

The sunflower is the national flower of Ukraine. 🌻



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Joe Hube, pictured here, and Bill Emslie began organizing the sunflower festival to support Ukraine after the latest Russian invasion of the country back in 2022.



Attendees to the sunflower festival were able to take part in a sunflower painting class.

Front page photo: Nancy Haines and Sherri Hipwell took a few sunflowers home with them at last month's Niagara Sunflower Festival for Ukraine Relief. ~ Luke Edwards photo

Diodati Farms a labour of love

By Luke Edwards

First came the love of horses, then the idea of having a couple on their own property.

It seemed a simple enough dream for Becky and Samantha Diodati. However, soon after achieving that dream the goats arrived. And the ponies. And the dogs, rabbits, chickens and even a young raccoon.

“First it was just to be able to have horses on our farm,” said Samantha, who last year moved to a Highway 20 farm on the border of Hamilton and Niagara with wife Becky. While they’d had horses they dreamed of a little patch of land to keep the equines instead of boarding them.

The Smithville property offered that, and so much more.

“We’ve always just loved animals, we’ve been obsessed,” Samantha said.

As they began fixing up an old barn and cleaning up the property, the rescues also started arriving. A couple old racing horses, a rabbit who was going to be used for meat, a young goat and a couple older ponies. On the back deck are a few rescue dogs.

“Even if they’re not here for long, they can at least enjoy the rest of their lives,” said Samantha. Some of the rescues were in pretty rough situations before arriving at Diodati Farm.

As if that weren’t enough, earlier this year they bought an old office trailer, gutted it, and refurbished it into a small store area, what Samantha describes as a “little western shop.”

In it, they’ve stocked the shelves with as much local Hamilton-Niagara region stuff as possible,

including honey, jams, and home-made glasses and mugs. They also sell eggs from the home free range chickens and on weekends Samantha bakes bread to sell.

Some clothes and a few children’s toys round out the offerings.

The shop opened at the end of July and Samantha said they’ve been happy with business the first few weeks.

But already they’re eyeing bigger dreams, creating an event space and destination where vendor shows can take place or families can spend the day on the farm, meeting with the animals or taking in a musical performance.

It’s a lot of work for a couple who still work off the farm, driving truck. The past few months have given Samantha an appreciation for what farmers do.

“I give props to all the heavy farmers out there,” she said. “You really don’t realize how much work is involved (in farming).”

With all the animals on the farm needing regular attention, Samantha said there’s no such thing as holidays or sick days. It doesn’t matter if the weather’s poor or they’re tired after a long day. The chores still need doing.

Fortunately they’ve received support from friends and family, in addition to the book and video research they’ve done.

“There’s been a village behind us,” Samantha said.

The store is located on their farm, 730 Regional Road 20. They’re open 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday to Friday, and 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday. They’re also active on social media, through Facebook, Instagram and YouTube under the handle Tales from Sunset Farms. 🌿



Samantha and Becky Diodati opened a farm shop Samantha likens to a “little western store” on their Highway 20 farm, where they’ve also rescued a collection of horses, ponies, goats and other animals. ~ Luke Edwards photo



While they’re tons of fun, the goats can also be a handful.



The animals on Diodati Farm have their own personalities. Some want constant attention, while others are fine with the occasional pat.



Their home shop includes a collection of items produced locally.



Several rescued animals will now live out their days on Diodati Farm with Samantha and Becky Diodati.

Study seeks to spin new use for stone wool substrate

By Luke Edwards

Used substrate in Ontario's greenhouses may offer value for farmers and outdoor growers.

With the help of a grant from the Greenbelt Foundation, researchers at Vineland Research and Innovation Centre are conducting a study to see how valuable used stone wool is as a soil amendment. And while Mother Nature's whims during this year's trials may not yield as much information on one of the main proposed benefits as researchers hoped, Jason Henry is nonetheless optimistic for a future benefit.

"The industry is moving to waste recovery because landfilling these types of materials is becoming more costly. It's becoming a lot more costly," said Henry, a research scientist for plant responses and the environment at VRIC.

Finding creative reuse of greenhouse waste is nothing new for Vineland researchers. Much work has gone into finding ways to divert the vines, leaves and unusable fruit away from landfills. However, Henry's project takes that research underground, in a sense.

Substrate makes up a small but still significant amount of the overall greenhouse waste, something in the neighbourhood of 15 per cent, Henry said.

Reuse of other greenhouse material has helped add nutrients back into the soil. While previous research found stone wool doesn't offer the same kind of nutrient infusion, Henry said it does show significant promise when it comes to water retention.

"It acts like a sponge," he said.

That water retention could be valuable during summer droughts when plants are thirsty. Adding

used stone wool into the soil could keep water available to plants when it's really needed.

VRIC's study is looking at sweet corn and broccoli, utilizing self-contained growing boxes at the Vineland campus. Four different treatments see researchers comparing plants grown in basic soil, plants grown with different rates of stone wool applied, plants grown with composted hen manure, and finally, plants grown with a mix of manure and stone wool applied.

While it's too early to know the results, Henry said he's optimistic.

In addition to water retention, Henry said they think the stone wool can similarly act as a sponge for the nutrients in the hen manure, holding them for later use by the plants.

Unfortunately, the wet spring and summer means they'll gain limited insight on water retention. However, Henry said one of the concerns is the possibility the used stone wool could introduce disease into fields where it's applied. The project will help researchers gain insight into that potential issue.

To conduct the study, VRIC partnered with Grodan, a company that produces soilless growing media such as stone wool. If they're able to scale up the success they've found in the lab to real life scenarios, Henry said the industry can begin looking at processes to make it viable.

Yianni Monahan, product manager, lifecycle North America at Groden, called the project foundational.

"This project will provide important foundational research to evaluate the potential of this material as a soil amendment," Monahan said.



A joint project between researchers at Vineland Research and Innovation Centre and soilless growing media provider Grodan is seeking to find ways to reuse stone wool substrate to reduce waste produced by greenhouse production. ~ Farmphotos.ca photo

One of the side issues Henry said they face is confusion over regulatory standards. Henry said they want to provide more information to farmers and greenhouse growers on the rules to help make things easier as well.

Public and industry events are planned for the future, as well, to help inform growers about the project and its results.

The project began in April and is scheduled to last nine months. Henry said he'd love another chance to conduct the trials when

there's less rain. In a future trial they could install covers in the self-contained boxes to control how much water the plants, giving them a better idea of the water retention qualities.

As tipping fees rise dramatically and landfill space in Ontario dwindles, finding creative ways to reuse greenhouse waste is becoming more and more important.

Henry said they're grateful for the Greenbelt Foundation's funding, calling it a "huge honour" to be selected. 🌱

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Meet the Bartels Family of Chippewa Creek Farms

By Ann Marie Chechalk

When the opportunity to become a multigenerational farm family happened, Christine and Scott Bartels together with parents Tim and Karen Parker, began renovations to the farmhouse on Smithville Road.

"When I moved away from home to go to university, I always planned to live in the city. Then kids came along and I started to think about being self-sustainable. (My) husband Scott grew up on a dairy farm in the area, so coming back to the farm was an idea he could embrace. He loves the cows," said Christine.

One day Scott hopes to farm full time. Perhaps their young son has similar plans.

"Henry, our son, was like a little farmer without a farm until we moved here. He is very interested in the farm and loves working along with his grandfather."

Several goals are planned for the farm: Agritourism, a baking business, custom beef orders and baking and canning workshops.

"As we renovated we built an inspected kitchen and things have evolved from there," said Christine. "Eight years ago, I began teaching myself about sourdough breads and I actually still have the same starter. I really enjoyed learning about all different wheats and using whole grains, natural ingredients with no preservatives. I just love breads. Drinking the milk from our goats - it is so creamy - making soap from our goat's milk, and lotions and cheese is one of my goals. Presently I make bread, scones, granola, cookies and bagels and these can be ordered by calling before Saturday and picked up fresh."

Homesteading classes are also offered, where everyone learns how

to make bread and gets to take some home, or how to use a pressure canner and take home brown beans. This fall Chippewa Creek Farm will be offering beginner and advanced bread making workshops.

To find the products that Bartels bakes, Christine attends various vendor markets and events.

Dad/Grandpa Tim Parker, helps out by picking up feed and hay for the farm.

"I enjoy them being here," he says, "I used to raise sheep and I like the farm being operational."

Currently they have 15 beef cattle, with the preference being speckle park, which are a Canadian breed of cattle that gain weight quickly, are easy to calve and really delicious. They're hoping to expand to 50 head and have a regular supply of beef for their customers.

"We know the cuts we want, we raise them well and have a top quality processor that will do the custom cuts that our people like," he said.

Meeting people and sharing their love of animals is another goal of the family. They offer small tours of up to eight people to come and meet the animals, goats, chickens and cows and take a walk in the peaceful forest.

"All of our children love the farm" said Christine, "and we hope one day Nellie, or Heidi or Henry will take it over, for now the kids like raising chickens and playing with the baby goats, and Henry loves cutting the grass and keeping the farm ready for friends that want to come visit."

To find out how to enrol for a class or order baked goods, or take a walk in the forest contact Christine at chippewacreekfarm@gmail.com information is also on social media.



Christine Bartels loves being on a multigenerational farm with her parents, her family and her goats. Join her for a walk in the forest, meet her animals or take a bread making class. ~ Contributed photo



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Tawse on top: Bench winery named best in Canada at WineAlign awards

By Luke Edwards

Staff at Tawse Winery took their Winery of the Year drought - though certain sports fans would hardly call a decade a drought - not as a problem, but as a positive sign.

There was a time in the early 2010s when winning the top award at WineAlign almost became the expectation. Judges awarded Tawse the Winery of the Year award three years in a row, beginning in 2010. The winery won its fourth national title in 2016. The following year Tawse's sister winery Redstone won, giving the team another win. But then the top spot eluded them until this year.

But for Jennifer Otting and Augusta Van Muyen, that's a good thing, because it shows how much their fellow wineries have elevated their respective games.

"It's just a testament to how far the industry has come. There are so many other great wineries that have won over the last few years. Everybody has moved up together," said Van Muyen, vineyard manager at Tawse.

"Anyone on the Bench winning has been really exciting for all of us," added winemaker Otting.

And this year there was plenty to be excited about on the Bench, as Beamsville wineries took home each of the top three spots. Finishing second behind Tawse was Fielding Estate and in third was Black Bank Hill.

Two other Lincoln wineries made the top 10, including: Bachelder at fifth and Organized Crime at sixth.

Malivoire, Queenston Mile, Hidden Bench, Palatine Hills, Peller, Domaine Queylus and Stratus



The team at Tawse Winery is celebrating this year after being named the top winery in Canada at the 2026 WineAlign award. ~ Tawse Winery photo

rounded out the top 25 that had Niagara connections.

For Tawse, Otting said their 2023 chardonnays helped power their victory. The estate chardonnay won them a platinum award, while the Robyn's Block and Quarry Road chardonnays from that year netted them golds. Their 25th Anniversary Spark and 2024 Quarry Road Riesling also won golds.

"I guess 2023 was a good year for chardonnay," said Otting.

It was a bit of a roller coaster ride for the team as the results started coming in. A library wines

category is relatively new for the organization, honouring older wines from past vintages. While individual awards are handed out, they don't count towards the winery of the year tally.

As emails started flying about the awards they were unsure if they had actually won the overall award or not. Eventually owner Moray Tawse got the word that yes, they had won.

Overall, it's been quite the year for Tawse. Van Muyen was named grape king last year, and this year marked their 25th anniversary, leading to the WineAlign title. 🍇

Registration opens for Canadian Greenhouse Conference

By Niagara Farms Staff

Greenhouse growers are invited to register for the annual Canadian Greenhouse Conference, returning to Niagara Falls this October.

Featuring two days of presentations from more than 50 speakers, alongside a sold out trade show of more than 220 exhibitors, the conference promises something of interest for just about every greenhouse operator. It takes place at the Niagara Falls Convention Centre, running Wednesday, Oct. 7 and Thursday, Oct. 8.

With a theme of "cultivating opportunity" topics for this year's presentations include integrated pest management, organic vegetable production, discussions on the economics of greenhouse

production during uncertain times, AI and more.

In addition to the presentations and trade show, there will also be several opportunities to network and enjoy the Niagara region. There are two bus tours planned, both a Leamington tour and an overnight Niagara tour. There's also a happy hour from 4 to 6 p.m. on the trade show floor, and a Wednesday evening dinner called The Gathering at Table Rock House Restaurant overlooking the Horseshoe Falls.

Early bird registration runs until the end of September, with single and two-day passes, alongside student rates and packages that include The Gathering and bus tours.

For more information visit canadiangreenhouseconference.com. 🌱



October's Canadian Greenhouse Conference will offer visitors a chance to tour the trade show, and sit in on several interesting topics of relevance. ~ File photo

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Charity seeks community support as it continues to grow

By Luke Edwards

The organization that runs Horse Sense For Kids is asking the public to help them build a strong foundation.

As demand grows for the registered charity that provides horse lessons and equine therapy to Niagara kids facing challenges, HSFK is looking to expand. Earlier this summer they launched the Strong Foundations campaign, and are planning a country night fundraiser on Saturday, Oct. 3 to help raise funds.

Last year, more than 250 children and youth participated in HSFK programming, completing more than 3,000 hours. This year those numbers have increased by about 25 per cent. It's run by Brenda and Rob Langendoen, and operates out of the couple's BnR Stables.

"As more children come through the gates, HSFK needs more horses to safely

and effectively deliver its programs. The herd has grown alongside the organization, creating an increased need for the shelter, footing and feeding areas required to support the horses who make these experiences possible," they said in an announcement about the campaign and upcoming fundraiser.

Funds raised through the campaign will help build those expanded spaces.

To help raise funds, HSFK is holding a Horse Sense Country Night on Saturday, Oct. 3 at the Fonthill Legion. It'll feature an evening of food, line dancing and prizes, along with a cash bar. Organizers promise a fun and relaxing evening. Line dancing lessons will be provided for those who've never done it before, giving people of any experience level a chance to try it out.

Early bird tickets for the event are available until Sept. 6, at \$30 each. After that, prices go up to \$35. Tickets will be available at the door, as well.

For more information on the event, or to buy tickets, visit HSFK.ca. The charity is also seeking more prizes from local businesses.

The phase 1 goal of the campaign is to raise \$20,000, which will help them build a 30-foot by 12-foot run-in shelter along with improving drainage and stabilizing footings. Ultimately, the goal is to build a second run-in shelter, and a covered loafing area.

Support for the project can be offered through financial donations, supplying materials, or offering their time. 🌱

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Brenda and Rob Langendoen run Horse Sense for Kids, a charity that provides horse lessons and equine therapy to children. HSFK is running a campaign to help fund upgrades as demands for their services grow. ~ File photo

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Agricultural drones take flight after Health Canada pesticide approval

By Amanda Nelson

A Health Canada approval allowing pesticide application by remotely piloted aircraft systems (RPAS), commonly known as drones, was granted in June, allowing farmers and small businesses across Southwestern Ontario to spray pesticides in accordance with the Pest Control Products Act and the Pest Control Products Regulations.

While Canadian farmers have been able to use drones for mapping, scouting and crop monitoring, the major regulatory hurdle has been using them to apply pesticides.

Now that new approvals have opened the door for drone-based pesticide applications, small business owners, such as Justin Shieck, owner and operator of Norfolk Drone Services, say they believe farmers can now utilize the technology for greater efficiency.

Shieck was initially taken off guard when he read the report stating that pesticide spraying via drone technology was approved back in June, something he thought he wouldn't see until next year.

"There weren't even signs that this was going to happen by the fall... we were taken completely off guard about the approval."

Shieck says countries like China, the United States and Australia have been using drone technology in the agricultural sector for around 15 years, and yet Canada is just starting to see the value after getting feedback from competing countries.

"In the states, drones are treated as another aircraft," he said. "What got me into this business was really watching how fast it expanded across the states and seeing YouTube video after YouTube video and news article after news article showing small businesses booming, with young 20-year-olds and different age groups of farmers enjoying what they're doing and bringing a cheaper solution for farming."

Shieck says he believes farmers throughout Canada will soon own and operate drones, similar to the way they own tractors, combines or other farming equipment. He says in farming, timing is everything when it comes to spraying pesticides or fertilizers.

"Do I see every farmer owning one, like a Swiss Army knife in their toolbox? One hundred per cent, because farming comes down to timing," said Shieck. "Especially if you're deploying it out of the back



Justin Shieck, owner and operator of Norfolk Drone Services, demonstrates agricultural drone technology. The June Health Canada approval allowing pesticide applications by remotely piloted aircraft systems opens new opportunities for farmers and agricultural businesses. ~ Amanda Nelson photo

of your barn, you can hit timing windows when you really need to."

Compared to small conventional tractors, drones can cover more ground in less time, at about 40 acres per hour. However, large self-propelled sprayers can cover more than 80 acres per hour. These large sprayers are often hard on fields and don't allow for the same mobility as a drone.

The Health Canada report noted that drone application is often the most practical option when fields are soft, wet or too difficult for ground application equipment; when pest outbreaks occur late in crop growth; or for areas that are either too large or inaccessible for ground application.

"If it's been raining a lot, I don't think anyone's pulling a rig through a field," said Shieck. "Then once a canopy gets high, you can't really spray beans or corn because it's too tall. In the fall, I really see drones tackling the heavy canopies where you're not getting that 25 per cent loss from driving over your beans."

Although Canada is behind in its approval, Shieck says it's not all bad news, and being able to track and assess what's happening in other countries before the Health Canada approval has benefited the budget.

"Canada is cautious," he said. "We take a more science-based

regulatory approach than most places, and they do it for safety reasons. I would say it's not a horrible thing that we were behind. Watching and allowing other countries to spend a lot of money on research while we sat back and collected data was valuable. Now we have some brands approved, and we're not wasting that time or money on the trial and error they've already gone through."

The report notes that the approval also aligns Canada with other countries like the United States and Australia, helping Canadian agriculture stay competitive internationally during times when competitive prices are key.

"Using RPAS to apply pesticides can make farming more efficient by helping farmers protect crops while using fewer inputs - such as pesticides and other resources needed for crop production, including labour, fuel and equipment use," reads the report. "This will support food security and help keep food affordable."

Drone operation is regulated by Transport Canada, whereas the regulation of pesticides is under the jurisdiction of Health Canada. Transport Canada considers aerial drones to be aircraft, and all pilots must understand and follow Canadian Aviation Regulations.

The data show that the risks of applying pesticides by RPAS are generally similar to those of conventional aerial application. However, drones also have the potential to apply pesticides very precisely, similar to some ground-based spot treatments.

Health Canada also concluded that pesticide residues on food crops resulting from RPAS applications are not higher than those resulting from conventional application methods, making foods as safe as with conventional applications.

Shieck's company, Norfolk Drone Services, offers agricultural drone services focused on precision spraying, spreading and mapping. Its main agriculture-related services include aerial spraying, granular spreading, mapping and aerial imagery, as well as drone sales, support and training.

The cost of a drone package varies, but Shieck says it is generally around \$40,000 to \$50,000 and includes multiple batteries and packages, including spray equipment that can be used for pesticides, fertilizers, herbicides and biological products.

Shieck encourages anyone interested to visit his website or reach out to him directly at www.norfolkdroneservices.ca 🌱

A year full of highlights for the outgoing Grape King

By Luke Edwards

From start to finish, August Van Muyen's reign as Grape King has been a whirlwind of excitement.

A year ago as the Grape Growers of Ontario bestowed on her the new honorific, the grape and wine sector celebrated at Tawse Winery, where she's vineyard manager. As several former Grape Kings came up and offered their congratulations, it dawned on Van Muyen that she'd just joined an exclusive club. In the year following she got to participate in all kinds of events and visit with some of Canada's top winemakers.

In fact, those visits were some of Van Muyen's favourite days as Grape King.

"I walked in so many vineyards," she said. "I got to do so many things, the whole time has been a highlight."

Van Muyen was only the fourth woman to be named Grape King since the title was created in 1956. It came during a year the United Nations dubbed as Year of the Woman Farmer.

She said one of the best parts of becoming Grape King was the camaraderie with others who have worn the chains. Like those before her, she was immediately welcomed with open arms by her colleagues.

The next Grape King will be installed as the Grape and Wine Festival - in its 75th year - kicks off in September. The GGO holds its annual celebrity luncheon, with Michael "Pinball" Clemons as this year's guest speaker, on Wednesday, Sept. 16. It'll be at that time that the new Grape King is announced.

Even as the current king, Van Muyen said she has no idea who's been selected. She even



Augusta Van Muyen is wrapping up her one-year reign as Grape King. The new king will be installed later this month. ~ File photo

tried to sneakily get some inside information. Last month she had to relinquish her chains so they could be updated with the new king's name. However, she realized she needed them for another event. When she got them back, the new name had been covered up.

"I'm really excited to find out who the next person is," she said.

Whoever it is, Van Muyen encouraged them to take full advantage of the position and the opportunities it offers.

"Say yes to everything. Just go for it," she said. 🍷

'It's the camaraderie': New GGO chair reflects on first few months in role

By Luke Edwards

Running out of a product or having a piece of equipment breakdown on a Friday evening could be a huge problem for a business owner. But for farmers like Kevin Watson, there's often an alternative solution when the shops are closed for the weekend: his neighbours.

"I think it's the camaraderie," Watson said when asked about his favourite part of farming.

The Niagara-on-the-Lake farmer took over as the new chair for the Grape Growers of Ontario earlier this year, replacing Matthias Oppenlaender, who had held it for several years. Watson is a second-generation grape grower currently in the process of transitioning the operation to his own son. Leadership roles with GGO aren't new for Watson, who has been on the board since 2008, and spent time as vice chair under Oppenlaender.

Watson said he's enjoyed his first few months as chair. It's helped that the industry is in a good place, he said, though they're still working hard on a few priorities, including getting a five-year VQA support program renewed to allow wineries to reinvest in their business. That would, in turn, lead growers to reinvest, benefiting everyone, Watson said.

Growers in Niagara have also had to contend with a wild weather year. Two massive rain storms in the span of a week put a strain on vineyards, though Watson remained hopeful that many of the growers will come out the other

side in decent shape. Better leveling of fields, and extensive use of drainage systems helped growers, he said. However, in some cases - especially where fields were lower than the roadside ditches or where creeks and drainage routes overflowed - vines suffered.

In light of the storms, GGO, the Ontario Tender Fruit Growers, and Flowers Canada Ontario issued a joint statement. The groups thanked local and provincial support following the storms, but also issued a call for help in a few areas.

One area is to expand fungicide labels to permit drone application. Canada has in recent months progressed in allowing farmers to use unmanned drones to apply sprays on crops - trailing several other countries who had already approved the method - but Watson said labels need to be updated.

Regardless, Watson said farmers will have to continue to respond to weather events, whatever they may be in the future.

"As farmers, we need to be prepared for everything Mother Nature may throw at us," he said.

The joint statement contained other requests, including: provincial support for changes to the vine and tree mortality coverage with crop insurance, increased flexibility on deadlines for temporary foreign worker housing inspections, and support the use of AgriRecovery to further help farmers. 🌱



New Grape Growers of Ontario chair Kevin Watson said he's enjoyed the first few months in the role, and said the industry is in a pretty good place right now. ~ Submitted photo

What's in store for the kids at the West Niagara Fair 2026

By Ann Marie Chechalk

What if it rains on the West Niagara Fair? The Kid Zone has been changing every year, so even if it rains come on out!

There will be kid-sized barns and animals where they can slide into the straw and take a family photo at the new photo op. The theme is going to be a surprise. The double sand/grain filled boxes will be out with the toy tractors, always a favourite, and it's a good thing there are straw bales for parents to sit as they wait.

There might be mini doors to find and definitely crafts to make on the Saturday and Sunday.

Thor will be visiting, and there's doughnut eating on Saturday. The retriever dogs return to the pond at the front of the grounds and the Niagara Antique Power Association will be there with their train. Be sure to stop and see the farm dioramas in the Richardson build-

ing. Calvin the Magician is coming, and there's teddy bear storytime and fun bingo. The ever popular demo derby is adding a school bus demo, let's cheer them on.

Sunday will bring Bex in Motion, she is a one-of-a-kind performer who incorporates fire, comedy, acrobatics, juggling and mesmerizing hula hoop tricks into her show. Hands on Exotics, and more crafts are in the Kid Zone.

There is still time to make a craft, bake some cookies or enter the baby show at the West Niagara Fair. To get your entries in and to enter your finished creations, you must register online via the website: www.westniagarafair.ca or in-person at the office. The deadline for entry registration is noon on Tuesday, Sept. 8. Entry tags are available for pick-up at the fair office. Entries must be registered prior to pick up.

See you at the Fair! 🌿



The photo op at the West Niagara Fair is being kept under wraps, to surprise visitors when they arrive. But here's a glimpse to offer a hint of what it will be. The photo op is just one of several family friendly activities that will be held at the fair, rain or shine. ~ Ann Marie Chechalk photo

Women's ag conference set to return to Niagara Falls

By Niagara Farms Staff

A three-day event for the many women in Canada who work in the agriculture industry returns this November.

The Advancing Women Conference will hold its eastern Canada event in Niagara Falls from Sunday, Nov. 22 to Tuesday, Nov. 24. It'll take place at the Sheraton Fallsview.

Created by Iris Meck, who runs a communications business that focuses on the agricultural industry, AWC has been taking place each year for more than a decade. She now runs two such conferences, one for western Canada and the Niagara Falls conference for eastern Canada.

While the focus is on women, anyone can attend the conference.

This year's agenda is still being determined, but visitors can expect presentations on a mix of topics, from communications to career building, financial management to mental and physical health.

The November event will help wrap up a 2026 that has been deemed the International Year of the Woman Farmer.

For more details on the event, as well as for registration info, visit advancingwomenconference.ca.



The Advancing Women Conference returns to Niagara Falls this November. ~ File photo



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🌿 AT THE MARKET 🌿

Booth buddies at the Welland Farmers Market

By Luke Edwards

As much as Sheri Cherriere and Geraldine Edwards love interacting with the friendly customers who greet them each week at the Welland Farmers Market, they enjoy each other's company just as much.

The pair are regulars at the weekly Saturday market, setting up next to each other. Cherriere operates Cherry Suds, where she sells her homemade soaps and body products, naturally scented with essential oils. Edwards, meanwhile, creates hot sauces, jellies and other products through her Sunshine Gardeners Small Batch Canning business.

They've developed a close friendship over the years at the market.

"When she's not here I'm just not as animated," Edwards said. "We definitely feed off each other, joking, or going back and forth quite a bit."

Whether it's enjoying each other's company or interacting with the public, it's that friendly atmosphere the Cherriere and Edwards enjoy most about the market.

Cherriere got started through a business program she was taking at Niagara College. One of her

classes required students to develop a business and generate at least \$500 in revenue. She'd dealt with skin issues and began developing her own natural products.

"Making my own products helped me to be able to have something more natural for my skin and I love sharing that with other folks as well," she said. Cherriere is also part of the CAA Niagara Community Retail program, where she sells her product at the agency's Pen Centre location in St. Catharines.

Edwards, meanwhile, is a trained chef who turned her passion for gardening into the canning business. Wanting to waste as little as possible in her garden, she began looking for options to use everything up.

An elderly lady heard about her conundrum and suggested canning, something that was new to Edwards.

"She was like, 'okay, stay here.' She went home and got her home cookbook, brought it back to me and she said 'copy whatever recipe you want,' and I've been canning ever since," Edwards said.

She creates a wide variety of products, often following a theme, much like Cherriere. And Edwards



Sheri Cherriere (left) and Geraldine Edwards have been booth neighbours at the Welland Farmers Market for several years. Cherriere sells homemade soaps and body products, while Edwards sells her own hot sauces, jams, jellies and other canned items. ~ Luke Edwards photo

sources her product locally, as much as possible.

Her personal favourite currently is a hot sauce called Burning Bush, that has habaneros and orange.

"Its flavour profile is very bright, so once you've had it, there's no turning back," she said.

The Welland Market, which operates every Saturday from 7

a.m. to noon at Market Square, is the main market for both Cherriere and Edwards. For more information on Cherry Suds follow them on Instagram, @cherry_suds, or email cherrysudshandcraftedsoaps@gmail.com. For more information on Sunshine Gardeners Small Batch Canning, email sunshinegardenerslocal@gmail.com. 🌿

To nominate a local vender for our monthly "AT THE MARKET" feature, contact Luke Edwards at luke@granthaven.com

The season of plenty at your local farmers markets

By Michelle Seaborn

The dog days of summer are coming to an end, with it the first cool evening, a peek at the forthcoming autumn.

For many this is a favourite time of year, cooler mornings and evenings, with warm sunny afternoons. It is a great time to be outdoors, witness the changing colours of the landscape: trees, farm fields, flower gardens and produce at farmers markets.

We have now cycled through our early crops and we enter the time of plenty. Imagine tables full of colourful peppers, crazy shaped eggplants, bright orange carrots, purple and yellow plums, brilliant red everbearing strawberries and raspberries, purple blueberries and deep blackberries. We are seeing peaches shaped like doughnuts, delicious field tomatoes, cabbage, onions, cucumbers and corn and even some early apples. Fruit and vegetables are abundant, but many farmers' markets are much more.

At markets you can also buy a prepared meal of pizza, perogies, empanadas, tamales, smoked

meats and sausage on a bun, even beef brisket or pulled pork on a bun. But it doesn't stop there!

The smell of fresh baked breads will attract many shoppers, with rows of buns, loaves, bagels, baguettes, and pretzels. There are also croissants fashioned into pastries topped with fruit preserves and creams or filled with chocolate. Or warm scones that beg to be taken home and enjoyed with morning coffee, accompanied by strawberry jam from vendors displaying a multitude of colourful jars of preserves. Doughnuts and cookies and pies – oh my. Where to begin? Ice cream to top off almost anything.

And when your shopping basket is almost full, pick up some dog treats for your faithful companion and a bouquet of fresh cut flowers for yourself or a friend. Head home knowing that you have bought fresh, shopped local, and kept a farm family in business. Now enjoy that special treat and we'll see you next week! 🌿

- Michelle Seaborn is the Grimsby Farmers Market manager



Produce of every shape and colour, like the items found here at Rita's Market in Grimsby, along with tasty prepared foods and so much more are all currently available at local farmers markets ~ Submitted photo

Canadian grape and wine industry on a ‘good path right now’

By Luke Edwards

Now that they’ve got a taste for it, Niagara wine will continue to be a major player in Ontario and Canada even if the U.S. booze bans end, Grape Growers of Ontario chair Kevin Watson said.

With trade tensions continuing to flare in August, Watson said the past year and a half has been a great opportunity to showcase the high quality products local wineries produce. And with the American trade “shenanigans” continuing, Watson believes Canadians will continue to look to their compatriots in the agricultural sector to stock their wine cellars, fridges and pantries.

“I believe we will hold onto a large portion (of the market),” Watson said.

“We’re still proud Canadians.”

Canadian trade negotiators spent a lot of time in August talking with their American counterparts as potential new tariffs imposed by U.S. President Donald Trump loomed. Much of the discussion included having provinces remove bans on American wine and spirits. However, the proposed deal fell apart at the last minute, leaving the ban in place for the time being.

Watson said the bans helped open the eyes of wine drinkers, and while some may eventually go back to their old American favourites, he expects many will stay loyal to Canadian wines thanks to a combination of patriotism and discovering just how good local wines are.

However, while moves such as the booze ban have been a boon to the grape and wine sector, Watson acknowledged the balancing



Grape Growers of Ontario chair Kevin Watson believes Canadian produced wines will continue to be a favourite among local consumers, even if the ban on American wines and spirits is lifted. ~ VQA photo

act. Farmers understand other industries haven’t been so lucky with the trade war.

“We have to be aware of our fellow business owners,” he said.

Still, Watson said farmers of all stripes are grateful to Canadian consumers who have supported local products in the past year and a half.

“Growers are very thankful for that,” he said, encouraging Canadians to “keep doing what you’ve been doing.”

It might seem like a small thing to buy an Ontario bottle of wine or some Canadian vegetables, but Watson said every little bit makes a tangible difference.

“We’re very grateful to the community for their support of Canadian produce,” he said. 🌱

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Delicious Recipes

Enjoy the magic of the mushroom world

Existing in their own fungi world, mushrooms can sometimes be a polarizing ingredient.

But while some may crinkle their noses when they see a mushroom on their plate, others love the texture and taste they add.

There are a few places locally that sell their own mushrooms, and some can be found at area farmers markets. And they offer all kinds of crazy shapes and sizes.

Here are a few recipes for the mushroom lovers out there, or perhaps for those trying to learn to become a fungi fan.



Warm Mushroom and Spinach Salad

- Ingredients**
- 1 tsp (5 mL) vegetable oil
 - 1 lb (500 g) Ontario mushrooms, sliced
 - 1/4 cup (50 mL) raspberry vinaigrette salad dressing
 - 1 tbsp (15 mL) balsamic vinegar
 - Salt and pepper to taste

- Salad:**
- 8 cups (2 L) torn spinach leaves
 - 1 cup (250 mL) raspberries
 - 1/2 cup (125 mL) toasted pecan halves
 - 1/4 cup (50 mL) crumbled blue cheese

Instructions

In large nonstick skillet, heat oil over medium heat. Add mushrooms; cook, stirring often, for 5 minutes or until softened. Add raspberry dressing and vinegar; boil for 1 minute. Season with salt and pepper.

Salad:

Place spinach, raspberries and pecans in salad bowl or arrange on individual salad plates. Toss with warm dressing or spoon over salad. Sprinkle blue cheese on top. Serve immediately.



Mushroom and Smoked Beef Knishes

- Ingredients**
- Dough:**
- 2 cups (500 mL) all-purpose flour (approx.)
 - 1 tsp (5 mL) baking powder
 - 1/2 tsp (2 mL) salt
 - 1/2 cup (125 mL) each vegetable oil and water
 - 1 tsp (5 mL) white vinegar
 - 2 Ontario eggs, slightly beaten

- Filling:**
- 1 tbsp (15 mL) vegetable oil
 - 1-1/2 cups (375 mL) chopped Ontario onions, minced
 - 2 cloves Ontario garlic, finely minced
 - 1 pkg (227 g) Ontario white button or crimini mushrooms, chopped
 - 200 g thinly sliced Montreal smoked meat, finely chopped (1-1/2 cups/375 mL)
 - 1 tsp (5 mL) Montreal steak spice
 - 1 Ontario egg, lightly beaten

Instructions

Dough: In large bowl, combine flour, baking powder and salt. In medium bowl, combine oil, water, vinegar and eggs. Stir egg mixture into flour until dough sticks together. In bowl, knead for 5 to 8 minutes or until smooth, adding additional flour to keep it from sticking to the bowl. Form into ball, cover with clean tea towel; let rise for 1 hour at room temperature.

Filling: Meanwhile, in large skillet, heat oil over medium heat. Add onions and garlic, stirring occasionally until caramelized, about 10 minutes. Add mushrooms and cook, stirring occasionally, until juices are mostly evaporated. Add smoked meat and steak spice, stirring until heated through. Cool 5 minutes; mix in egg and set aside.

On lightly floured surface, roll dough very thinly into 14- x 20-inch (35 x 50 cm) rectangle. Add cooled filling along wide edge; roll into a rope shape to enclose filling. Press dough to mark off 8 portions, twist to enclose filling. Separate; pinch to seal and place without touching on, twisted end down on large parchment paper-lined baking sheet. Bake in 375°F (190 C) for 25 minutes or until golden. Serve warm.



Savoury Mushroom Crostini

- Ingredients**
- 12 oz (375 g) mixed Ontario mushrooms, such as crimini, portabella, oyster and/or white button
 - 1 tbsp (15 mL) olive oil
 - 1 Ontario onion, diced
 - 2 cloves Ontario garlic, minced
 - 1/2 tsp (2 mL) dried basil leaves
 - 1 tbsp (15 mL) each balsamic vinegar and water
 - 1/2 cup (125 mL) diced Ontario prosciutto or Ontario smoked ham (such as Black Forest)
 - 2 tbsp (25 mL) chopped fresh Ontario parsley
 - 1/2 cup (125 mL) shredded Ontario parmesan, aged gouda or aged cheddar cheese
 - Salt and pepper
 - 24 pieces store-bought baguette crisps or thick melba toast

Instructions

Slice small mushrooms and chop larger ones to make about 4 cups (1 L).

In large nonstick skillet, heat oil over medium-high heat. Cook onion, stirring, for about 1 minute, until lightly softened. Add mushrooms and garlic; cook, stirring, for 4 minutes, until softened. Add basil, vinegar and water; cook, stirring, for 1 to 2 minutes or until liquid has evaporated and mushrooms are lightly browned. Remove from heat.

Stir in prosciutto, parsley and half the cheese. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Spoon mixture onto baguette crisps; sprinkle with remaining cheese.

Make-ahead tip: Cool mushroom mixture, cover and refrigerate for up to 1 day. Before serving, warm briefly in microwave or a skillet over medium heat before assembling.





Corn and Mushroom Risotto

Ingredients

- 2 cobs Ontario sweet corn, husked
- 1 can (10 oz/284 mL) condensed chicken broth
- 4 tsp (20 mL) olive oil
- 1 cup (250 mL) sliced Ontario mushrooms
- 1 large Ontario onion, chopped
- 1/4 cup (50 mL) finely chopped prosciutto
- 1 cup (250 mL) arborio rice
- 3 tbsp (45 mL) chopped fresh Ontario parsley
- Pepper
- Freshly grated parmesan cheese

Instructions

With sharp knife, cut corn kernels from cobs to make 2 cups (500 mL); set aside. In large glass measure, combine broth and equal amount of water; set aside.

In nonstick Dutch oven, heat oil over medium heat. Add mushrooms, onion and prosciutto; cook, stirring for 3 minutes. Stir in rice and 1-3/4 cups (425 mL) of the broth; bring to boil. Reduce heat, cover and simmer 8 to 10 minutes, stirring occasionally or until most of the liquid is absorbed. Stir in corn and remaining broth; return to boil. Reduce heat, cover and simmer 10 to 12 minutes or until rice is creamy but still slightly firm in centre.

Stir in parsley and season with pepper to taste. Serve immediately sprinkled with Parmesan cheese.



Chicken and Mushroom Enchiladas

Ingredients

- 2 Ontario onions, chopped
- 2 cloves Ontario garlic, minced
- 2 cups (500 mL) sliced Ontario mushrooms
- 2 tbsp (25 mL) vegetable oil
- 2 tsp (10 mL) chili powder
- 1/2 tsp (2 mL) each dried oregano and salt
- 2 cups (500 mL) diced cooked Ontario chicken
- 2 cups (500 mL) shredded Ontario cheddar cheese
- 1/3 cup (75 mL) low-fat Ontario sour cream

- 2 cups (500 mL) mild or medium taco sauce
- 10 medium flour tortillas

Instructions

In large skillet, cook onions, garlic and mushrooms in oil over medium-high heat, stirring frequently, until softened, about 5 minutes. Add chili powder, oregano and salt; cook for 15 seconds. Remove from heat. Stir in chicken, 3/4 cup (175 mL) of cheese and sour cream; mix well.

Spread 3/4 cup (175 mL) of the taco sauce in 13 - x 9-inch (3 L) baking dish. Spread about 1/4 cup (50 mL) filling down centre of each tortilla; roll up, folding in ends. Place, seam side down, in dish. Spread remaining taco sauce over top; sprinkle with remaining cheese. (Recipe can be prepared to this point, covered and refrigerated for up to 8 hours. Let stand at room temperature for 30 minutes before baking.)

Cover and bake in 350°F (180°C) oven for 25 to 30 minutes or until heated through.

Garnish: Serve with additional sour cream, salsa and chopped fresh coriander, if desired.



Mushroom Veal Marsala

Ingredients

- 1-1/2 lbs (750 g) Ontario veal scaloppini
- Salt and pepper
- 1/4 cup (50 mL) all-purpose flour
- 1/4 cup (50 mL) olive oil
- 2 tbsp (25 mL) butter
- 2-1/2 cups (625 mL) sliced Ontario crimini mushrooms (about 8 oz/250 g)
- 1-1/2 cups (375 mL) sliced Ontario shiitake mushrooms, caps only (about 6 oz/175 g)

- 1 large clove Ontario garlic, chopped
- 1-1/2 tsp (7 mL) fresh Ontario thyme leaves (or 1/2 tsp/2 mL dried)
- 2/3 cup (150 mL) sweet Marsala wine
- 1 cup (250 mL) chicken broth
- 2 tbsp (25 mL) finely chopped fresh Ontario parsley

Instructions

Season veal with salt and pepper. Coat with flour; shaking off excess. Set aside.

In large skillet, heat 2 tbsp (25 mL) of the oil and 1 tbsp (15 mL) of the butter over medium heat. Add mushrooms, garlic and thyme. Cook for 3 minutes, stirring, until soft. Remove mushrooms to plate. Add remaining oil and butter to skillet. Add veal, in batches, cook for about 1-1/2 minutes per side or until done. Transfer to plate.

Add wine to skillet and cook for 1 minute, scraping up any bits from the bottom. Stir in broth; cook for 3 minutes until sauce thickens. Return veal and any accumulated juices to skillet, coat with sauce on both sides. Add reserved mushrooms; cover and heat through. Sprinkle with parsley. 🌿



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Mixing practice with fun



The 4-H Wainfleet Dairy Club's fifth meeting was about trivia and showmanship! We started with getting our calves and walking around training for a real show and being lined up and judged before moving on to trivia. Thank you to Janette Van Wely for coming to play dairy trivia with us, and congrats to Team Chocolate Milk for being the top team of the night. - Submitted photo

Barking up the right tree



The Niagara 4-H Craft Club always has amazing crafts on display at the West Niagara Fair. Come out and see what will be filling this tree. - Submitted photo

Getting down and dirty



What an incredible first week! The 4-H Plowing Team officially kicked off, and we couldn't be prouder of the hard work and energy everyone brought to the field. The first meetings had the club getting organized, prepping the gear, and setting a strong foundation for the season ahead. Members did maintenance checks and learned about safety around tractors. Niagara 4-H Plowing is starting, let's hope for a bit less rain. ~ Submitted photo

Here's the beef



The Niagara 4-H Beef Club held a mock show at the WNAS going over conformation and showmanship with their calves. Thanks go out to Mike and Colette, the management of Foodland Smithville, for sponsoring the club's dinner. Special thanks to Laurie Clarkson and her crew for putting it all together for us. Thank you to the WNAS for allowing us to use the Richardson barn! Thanks to all the moms for all your help last night and a very massive thank you to Teena Smith. It was dinner and a show! ~ Submitted photo

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Judging Night for all members of Niagara 4-H

Submitted to Niagara Farms

Judging night was a great success! Practising judging is an essential skill for 4-H members, promoting critical thinking, decision-making, and public speaking. All members and leaders of all clubs in Niagara are invited, both livestock and lifeskill.

Thanks go out to Andrew and Deanna who made up the classes, prepared all the judging packages, set up and ordered the doughnuts and cleaned up. Thanks to all who participated, there are many clever people out there, who gave their best at the 10 classes, identifying

the objects, placing them in order from finest to not so great and giving reasons for placements of calves and soil.

There were a variety of classes: Calves, tropical plants, soybean plants, seed ID, kitchen ID, what time is it on an analog clock, what do these cursive words say, soil quality, fishing lures, craft projects.

Some members looked challenged by identifying what a doughnut maker was. And who could tell time on an analog clock?

Can you read these words? Showmanship, Pledge, Conformation? The members were up for the challenge. 🌱



Niagara 4-H members try to identify 10 items found in the kitchen. Niagara is lucky to have a lifeskills club that involves cooking and baking. - Submitted photo

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It's not easy getting the goats ready, it's peanuts

Submitted to Niagara Farms

How to get ready for the fair as a member of the Niagara 4-H Goat Club? Walk your goat! And touch her legs, give her lots of attention.

Our 4-H members show a doe born in the present year. They can be any breed. Goats, being naturally curious and a bit stubborn, need lots of attention. The best way to get your goat ready to be in a show is to spend time with them, walking them around, touching their legs and talking to them and occasionally giving them a treat.

"I give my goat peanuts as a treat," said Kneely Vooys. That would make any goat glad to see its handler, or maybe some crackers or bread, goats love bread.

At a 4-H meeting we don't always get to meet all the goats. Thursday, Aug. 20, all members brought their goats out to the Vooys farm for a little competition: the obstacle course! Members and goats were introduced, jumped over a small jump, walked and stood still for three seconds, walked up a plank, traversed a little river and trooped through a path of hula hoops. A trophy will be presented to the best pair at the upcoming awards night in November.

Members have only a bit of time to practice walking their goats, setting them up, clipping them and getting them prepared for showing at the West Niagara Fair. Get out those peanuts! 🌿



The Niagara 4-H Goat Club members brought all their goats out to the obstacle course meeting. They also practiced moving around for the judge and telling the judge the goat's name, breed and date of birth. ~ Submitted photos

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Kneely Vooys walks her goat Piper over a plank at the 4-H Goat Club obstacle course meeting. ~ Submitted photos

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Lincoln 4-H Dairy Calf Club enjoys busy and successful month

Submitted to Niagara Farms

The Lincoln Dairy Calf Club has had a very busy and successful month, with members travelling to two major junior dairy shows and taking part in a variety of educational activities.

On Aug. 18, club members attended the Niagara County Show at the Wainfleet Arena. Members shipped their calves in the day before the show, allowing the animals time to settle and prepare. The club enjoyed great success throughout the event.

With little downtime between shows, the junior members then travelled to Elora for the West Central Junior Show. The first day was packed with activities, including information sessions, fitting demonstrations and a scavenger hunt.

The show took place on the second day, giving members an opportunity to put their skills and preparation to work. Special congratulations goes to Kaylee Hart, who placed fifth in showmanship in a competitive class of 39. She also placed eighth in the winter calf

class, showing Royal Lynn Leyser P Hallelujah, in a class of 37. Adam Comfort also represented the club well, placing ninth with Extramile Lambda Brooklyn in a highly competitive class of 47.

The club's final meeting of the season will be held on Thursday, Sept. 3, in Listowel. Members will have the opportunity to tour the bull stud, warehouse and sorting lab at STgenetics Canada ULC, providing an educational and interesting conclusion to the club year.

The Lincoln Dairy Calf Club would also like to extend a huge thank you to all of its leaders for the countless hours, dedication and support they provide throughout the year. An extra-special thank you goes to leader Brad Eggink, who devoted his time and energy to chaperoning members at both events and ensuring they were prepared for success. The club emphasized that opportunities like these would not be possible without the commitment of its leaders. Their hard work helps club members learn, compete and build lasting experiences within the dairy industry. 🌱



Members of the Lincoln Dairy Calf Club participated in two shows in August, part of a busy and successful month. - Submitted photo

Prep night for poultry club

Submitted to Niagara Farms

When we have a poultry show we offer a show prep night to our Niagara 4-H members.

We aim to wash our birds seven days before any show in order for the bird to have time to naturally preen itself and allow natural oils to return to its feathers.

While some members are washing, we rotate inside and work on creating our fair 4-H project display boards.

How to wash a bird you might ask?

Step one: We look at our birds and trim any long nails and beaks. We also trim off any damaged foot feathers.

We then submerge our bird's body (not head) in soapy warm water and rub and dirty areas with our hands or a tooth brush. We make sure to get all feathers wet.

Step 2: Rinse in clear warm water.

Step 3: Then we move our bird to a tub of warm water with a few glugs of vinegar in it. This is to rinse any soap residue off the feathers.

Step 4: Drying. We wrap our bird in a nice absorbent towel to soak up any excess water for at least five to 10 minutes. And then we place the bird in a cage in the sun to dry naturally.

Our club will be showing in the livestock building at the West Niagara Fair on Friday, Sept. 11. Stop by and see our talented showmen. 🌱



Jerusha Kumar is a new member to Niagara 4-H. She is practising on how to show her bird for the upcoming fairs with Ties Smulders and Kristen Leppert. - Submitted photo

Submit your story ideas to:
Luke Edwards, Editor
luke@granthaven.com

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From fires to floods: Mother Nature throwing everything at Canadian growers

By Luke Edwards

The recent strong showing of Ontario and Niagara wineries at the WineAlign awards is surely something to celebrate. But for some, there's also a caveat worth considering as many of Niagara's grape growing colleagues on the west coast have been contending with wildfires and the destruction that goes with them.

"It's tough, too, because you feel a little bit of guilt when B.C. had some really cold winters and then issues of smoke," said Jennifer Otting, winemaker at Tawse, which this year took home the Winery of the Year award.

While the west coast has faced its weather related issues in recent years, this summer has been marked with wild weather in Niagara too, as multiple storms dropped large amounts of water on the region in a short period of time. It's left growers with a level of uncertainty as the harvest season is set to get underway.

"I think it's hard to know what's going to happen because it's been so consistently wet," said Augusta Van Muyen, Tawse vineyard manager and current Grape King.

Van Muyen said after the second storm the vines started putting their power into the fruit, and the fruit began to ripen.

"But then, as the fruits have dried out in the last week it started putting the power back into the shoots so the shoots have actually jumped quite a bit," she said, shortly after yet another storm dropped four inches of rain on the Beamsville Bench area.

Van Muyen said it's dragged out the ripening process.

At the same time, the fruits can only take so much moisture before they split.

On the bright side, should the weather cooperate this fall, they could still have a good crop. Warm, sunny days that cool off overnight would be ideal.

Growers could also see damage in the spring, especially if it's a hard winter, she said, though she cautioned uncertainty since she's never experienced a summer quite like this one.

The fortunate thing for many Bench growers is that the Escarpment meant there was limited standing water in vineyards, unlike what some in Niagara-on-the-Lake experienced.



After the huge rainstorms of this summer, it took some vineyard managers a few days before they could get back out in the fields to tend to the vines. ~ Tawse Winery photo

Kevin Watson, who manages 100 acres of vineyards in Niagara-on-the-Lake, said his vines were fairly fortunate but acknowledged some areas, especially in NOTL, weren't so lucky.

While grape vines don't like "wet feet" or having standing water in the fields, Watson said they do like to suck up a lot of moisture. So generally speaking, vineyards can handle a lot of rain from that perspective. However, extended periods of moisture in the leaves

and canopy can lead to fungal disease pressures.

That's why, following one of the storms, the GGO, the Ontario Tender Fruit Growers, and Flowers Canada Ontario issued a statement calling for support, including allowing fungicides to be applied by drone. Watson said it would give growers a more rapid response following a rain storm.

Applying product as soon as possible after a rain event is key. In

Continued to page A25 →



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→ Continued from page A24

some cases in Niagara, Watson said the fields remained too wet for farmers to get their tractors and sprayers into the fields. He heard of a few instances where it was four or five days before the fields were dry enough.

But with the ability to use drones, Watson said farmers could apply fungicides as soon as the skies cleared.

“That would just take the worry out of everything,” Watson said, adding safety would remain paramount.

The rains have been especially challenging for organic growers like Tawse, since the applications rely on contact, Van Muyen said.

“I hope this isn’t our future because it’s really hard to manage, especially organically because we don’t have a lot of systemic sprays. All of our stuff is contact and every time we get over an inch of rain - which we’ve had four times in the last four weeks - it washes everything off,” she said.

“So you have to restart.”

Despite the challenges Mother Nature has presented to grape growers, Van Muyen said her heart went out to many of the other farmers. The stormy summer wreaked havoc on cherry producers, and Van Muyen said she worried about other orchard growers, noting she’d seen the leaves on peach trees starting to turn yellow.

And in fact, that is a concern among experts. Last month Jayasankar (Jay) Subramanian, a professor of tree fruit breeding and biotechnology in the University of Guelph’s Department of Plant Agriculture, warned this summer’s storms could impact tender fruit crops next year, affecting both farmers and consumers.

“The widespread feeling is that due to the anticipated loss of trees, there will be a decline in production as soon as next year,” he said in a news release.

“Almost certainly, we will see prices higher in the next year.”

And not only next year, but Subramanian warned the effects could be felt for a while.

“One of my major worries is the availability of trees to plant from next year,” he said. “Some of the nurseries are flooded, and with the demands for fresh trees expected to rise, there will be a lack of grafts available.”

That means the effects of this year’s storms could be felt for the next several years. 🌱



Tawse Winery vineyard manager Augusta Van Muyen said after a couple of rainstorms in August vines started putting their energy into the fruit to ripen the grapes. However, a drier spell had the vines reverse course and start sending up shoots. This year’s crop could still be solid, but Van Muyen has some concerns about what the wild summer weather could mean for vines next year. ~ Farmphotos.ca photo



Long rows of peach orchards in blossom might be a rarer sight next year, as this summer’s rains could cause problems in orchards that extend for several years into the future. ~ Farmphotos.ca photo



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AG EVENTS ON THE HORIZON

A wet and wild August in Niagara is behind us, the return of school is here, and fall's not too far away. Hopefully everyone's dried out for the storms of last month, and Mother Nature has gentler plans for September. Either way, here are some ag-related things to do in the coming weeks.

SEPTEMBER 6 – 7

MARSHVILLE HERITAGE FESTIVAL
A long running Labour Day tradition returns this year, as Wainfleet turns back the clock for the Marshville Heritage Festival. Celebrating life like it once was in the region, Marshville is a tribute to the early families, most of them farmers, who settled in Niagara. With a wide range of old time music, food, volunteers in pioneer outfits and several historic buildings to tour, there's something for everyone. **The festival runs 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. from Saturday, Sept. 5 to Monday, Sept. 7.**

REGISTRATION OPEN EVENT SEPTEMBER 10

REGISTRATION OPEN FOR WHAT'S GROWING ON
Vineland Research and Innovation Centre's What's Growing On Here event is always a popular day for those interested in the work happening on the campus. And this year's open house promises inform visitors on a subject that's very timely and relevant.
Registration for the Sept. 10 event opens this month. It takes place **Thursday, Sept. 10 from 5:30 to 7 p.m.** and will cover how innovation for the commercial greenhouse sector is securing Canada's food supply. Visit vinelandresearch.com for more details.

**LUNCHEON SEPTEMBER 16
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GRAPE GROWERS LUNCHEON
The Grape Growers of Ontario luncheon kicks off the annual Niagara Grape and Wine Festival. This year's luncheon features a presentation from football great Michael "Pinball" Clemons, and will be followed by the installation of the new grape king, and then the grape and wine festival. The festival itself includes three weekends of the Discovery Pass where visitors can visit local wineries for special treats, as well as the main weekend festival at Montebello Park in St. Catharines. Canadian rockers Sloan perform on Thursday, Sept. 24 leading into the weekend. Visit grapegrowersofontario.com/events/luncheon-2026git for more information on the luncheon, and niagarawinefestival.com for more information on the festival.

OCTOBER 3

HORSE SENSE COUNTRY NIGHT
A fundraiser for the Horse Sense for Kids program everyone's invited out to the Fonthill Legion on **Saturday, Oct. 3** for a night of food, line dancing and prizes. No line dancing experience is needed, and lessons will be offered. Doors open at 5 p.m., with dinner starting at 6. All ages are welcome. **Early bird tickets are \$30 and available until Sept. 6.** Afterwards the prices goes up to \$35. Visit HSFK.ca for details.

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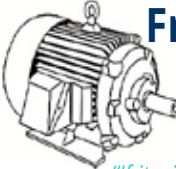
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