



Building a happy planet



**Pamela
GROBERMAN**

GREEN LIVING

This little piggy goes to market

Where else can you buy looestrife honey if it's not at a farmer's market?

Or taste Paula's organic rhubarb relish that Lise Marin says is her grandmother's recipe and was always on the table when she was growing up in Quebec?

Farmer's markets run from June to October and I bet there's one near you.

There is nowhere I'd rather shop, and not just because the produce is local and organic and everything smells and tastes like it's supposed to.

To me, it's about the people you meet. They'll offer a sample, tell a story and, being farmers, they'll gripe about the weather.

It's more about conversation than commerce.

"Not a good year for honey," says Laila Axen, the Honey Lady of Trout Lake. "We lost most of the spring crop - too wet - and now we need rain to get the nectar from the flowers."

Every Saturday she sells honey from Arila Apiary - raspberry, blackberry, blueberry, mixed flowers - at the East Vancouver Farmer's Market at Trout Lake Community Centre, although on Sundays you'll find her at Ambleside.

A jar of looestrife honey costs \$4.50. It is the color of pale straw with a greenish tint. Green honey? How scary is that? The fright of the bumblebees.

Buying what's local is good for the environment because the average supermarket product travels thousands of kilometres to get here.

So pass the looestrife, honey. It's the bees' knees.

Pamela Groberman heads Pamela Groberman Media & Public Relations Inc.

little bits

Kudos

Congratulations! After a grueling week of studying, tests and presentations, five students from Templeton Secondary placed 15th in the Canon Envirothon, the largest environmental educational competition in North America. The competition involved more than 250 teens and covered knowledge on soil/land use, forestry, aquatic ecology, and wildlife and natural resources, under an overall theme of climate change.

Go green

Check out the Eco-Pallet Display at the Home Depot on Terminal Avenue to help a small Canadian company do its best to incorporate the "reuse" part of reduce, reuse, recycle into daily life. Based in Toronto, TerraCycle Inc. is a plant-food company that makes fertilizer out of compost worm waste, and uses recycled plastic bottles to package their product.

Walk

Eco Walks in Stanley Park: Walk on the wild side of Stanley Park. Interpreter Noah O'hara leads this discovery tour. Walks take place every Sunday at 1 pm. Meet outside the Nature House located at the west foot of Alberni Street at Lagoon level. Cost: \$8 per person, \$5 per member. For more information contact (604) 718-6522.

Anything but a weed



"Love is like seaweed; even if you have pushed it away, you will not prevent it from coming back."

- Nigerian proverb

It's rare to find someone so passionate about seaweed, but Vancouver Island's self-proclaimed "Seaweed Lady" Diane Bernard has a special place in her heart for the ocean's lush, flourishing garden.

With her favourite pair of rubber boots and an emergency supply of Kleenex in hand ("the fresh sea air can really empty out your sinuses," she says, laughing), Bernard heads to the shoreline at Whiffen Spit near Sooke, B.C. nearly everyday, and like an excited child on Christmas morning, takes careful inventory of the day's specimens left behind by the changing tide.

Bernard grew up in Acadia, where historically seaweed has been used for everything from insulating walls during the cold winters to preserving fish, and is, of course, a supertime staple.

Now, Bernard is the mastermind behind Sooke-based Outer Coast Seaweeds, a unique and 100 per cent local business that not only provides seaweed eco-tours, but also enlightens chefs about how to create seaweed-inspired dishes and produces its own line of seaweed



- Outer Coast Seaweeds

"Seaweed Lady" Diane Bernard makes good use of the underwater garden's rich supply of seaweed for a multitude of purposes.

spa products.

But, while Bernard seems to be the only one in B.C. tapping into this sustainable resource, seaweed as a source for nutrition and medicine is anything but an original idea.

Algae have been floating around the earth for the about two billion years, and seaweed, a form of algae, has been a dietary staple in China and Japan since prehistoric times.

Seaweed was also used as a medicinal agent in Iceland reaching as far back as the 10th century,

and red algae have been used in the Mediterranean as a source of dyeing agents and health remedies since pre-Christian times.

Today, commercial harvesting of Nori seaweed, more commonly known as sushi seaweed, is a \$12 billion per year industry in Japan, but even with more than 700 varieties of seaweed along B.C.'s coast - many of which are edible - it's unlikely the industry will get anywhere close to that level here, says Bernard.

"B.C.'s coastline produces 100 billion tons of wet seaweed in one year," says Bernard, but "we just don't look at our wild resources the way the rest of the world does."

You can harvest seaweed anywhere in B.C. without a licence as long as it's for personal use and harvested by hand.

Just don't rip seaweeds clean off rocks or cut too far down the stipe so the seaweed can reproduce.

Also, don't harvest the stinky stuff on the beach, or what Bernard calls the "ocean's compost." And please, she adds, use a sharp knife and cut kindly.

Check out www.outercoastseaweeds.com to find out which local seaweeds to add to your recipe book.

- Robyn Stubbs, 24 hours