



Diane Bernard, a.k.a. the Seaweed Lady, in her "garden" near Sooke.

a shore thing

BY ROB BHATT

as a regional director and economic development consultant on Vancouver Island, Diane Bernard spent much of the 90s preaching about the need to diversify the local industrial base. After losing a re-election bid in 1999, the time had come for her to follow her own advice. As she pondered her future on a beach outside Victoria, she realized that she was surrounded by one of British Columbia's most abundant, nutrient-rich and underused renewable resources. Soon, she was harvesting seaweed and selling it to restaurants. Before long, Bernard's company, Outer Coast Seaweeds, had developed a line of seaweed-based bath and beauty products. Today, her company's Sea Flora products are available in spas across Canada and the United States. Each summer, Outer Coast Seaweeds also provides wild seaweed tours, sometimes led by Bernard (a.k.a. the Seaweed Lady) herself, along the shore near its headquarters in Sooke, about 25 miles southwest of Victoria. www.sea-flora.com. 