



**Canadian Organic Growers
Cultivons Biologique Canada**
Perth–Waterloo–Wellington



2009 Annual Report

About COG PWW

Canadian Organic Growers (COG) is a national charitable organization (13014 0494 RR0001) with members in all regions of Canada. COG's membership is diverse and includes farmers, gardeners, processors, retailers, educators, policy-makers, and consumers. Not all COG members run certified organic operations, but they share a vision for a sustainable bioregionally-based organic food system. Our members believe that organic food production is the best choice for the health of consumers and producers, for the protection and enhancement of the environment, and for the sustainability of the food production system.

Established in the early 1980s, COG Perth-Waterloo-Wellington was one of the first chapters of the organization. We began as a small volunteer based organization participating in outreach events. Today our activities include:

Grow Organic – increasing certified organic acres

- workshops
- demonstration gardens
- resources
- internships and apprenticeships

Eat Organic - increasing local and organic food skills

- local and organic farm and CSA directory
- local and organic farm profiles
- local and organic news, facts and resources
- local and organic events

Bee Organic – building the local and organic food system

- linking institutions with local, organic products through the *Growing Up Organic* project
- organizing producers around local distribution models
- conducting analysis of economic benefits of local and organic production
- coordinating local and organic food systems events



COG PWW 2009 Volunteer Steering Committee

- Theresa Schumilas, chair • Christine Sloboda • Jennifer Osborn • Linda Dimock

Diversity Garden Volunteers

- Theresa Schumilas, farm manager • Christine Sloboda • Pirapa and JanTharmalingham • Linda Dimock • Andrea Bazler • Amy King and Paula McGill

Supporters of COG PWW's work



Ontario Market Investment Fund





2009 at a glance

2009 has been an exciting and busy year from receiving Trillium and OMIF funding, to recruiting new and wonderful volunteers and helping establish another local organic farmers collective.

The following report outlines these and our many other accomplishments toward helping create a local, organic food system in the PWW region.

Grow, Eat, Bee Organic!
Krista Long
Admin and Marketing Coordinator
COG PWW



Workshops

- Offered a workshop series called *Back to the Future Gardening* focusing on seed saving and heritage varieties at Diversity Gardens.
- Hosted a workshop on season extension for interns in the Ontario CRAFT alliance at Diversity Gardens.
- Participated in three CRAFT workshops as a farmer-mentor.
- Delivered three *Organic Backyard* workshops for community gardeners.
- Piloted a new *Transitioning the Small Produce Farm* workshop.
- Offered a new *Shared Learnings* workshop to pair certified organic peer mentors with farmers interested in transitioning.
- Hosted an *Understanding the Canada Organic Regime* workshop with COG national.

Demonstration Gardens

- Developed an organic fruit demonstration plot.
- Supported the development of a new year round organic processing business, *Garden Party*.
- Ran an on-site produce stand with products from Diversity as well as organic producers in the region.

Resources

- Prepared two new information sheets, *What is Certification* and *Thinking About Organic*.
- Completed research and a report on *Taking Back the Middle: Local and Organic Producer-Controlled Distribution Systems*.

Internships and Apprenticeships

- Participated in the CRAFT alliance.





Eat Organic

Local and organic directories

- Developed a series of local, organic directories to help consumers source from farm gate, farm stores, CSAs and cooperatives, and certified organic farmers at farmers markets.

Local and organic farm profiles

- Participated as one of the local farms in the Buy Local, Buy Fresh map.
- Profiled four local, organic farms on our website, and working on more.

Local and organic news, facts and resources

- Produced and distributed 3 chapter newsletters, *Bee Organic*, to over 80 members.
- Produced a new *Why Organic, Where Organic* display and presentation to help profile LOFT, the Commons Market and Diversity Gardens.
- Developed a Diversity Gardens blog to help consumers stay up to date on what's in season and where to get it.
- Advertised in the Fresh and Flavourful feature in the Record to promote LOFT, the Commons Market and Diversity Gardens.
- Participated in the Waterloo Region Food System Roundtable forum, providing articles and commentary on local, organic food and food system issues.

Local and organic events

- Participated in Taste Local Taste Fresh, Savour Stratford, Guelph Local Food Fest, Community Garden Fest, 100 mile diet challenge in Waterloo region, Stratford Local food forum, London Local Food XX, Huron Perth Field to Table, Cultivating Markets Event, reThink Waterloo, and the Guelph Organic Conference.
- Hosted the first annual *Come taste the Future* event at Diversity Gardens featuring local, organic food sourced from Diversity and organic farmers in the region.
- Hosted a spring open house event, Earth Day seed starting and spring plant sale at Diversity Gardens.
- Maintained an online events listing for local producers and consumers.



Bee Organic

Growing Up Organic

- Growing Up Organic as a working project has been completed, however the work of building the local, organic food system continues as one of COG PWW's priorities. The full project report can be found at www.cog.ca.

Organizing producers and institutions around local distribution models

- Contracted a local, organic farmer to outreach to farmers in the region over the winter.
- Worked with a consultant to help organize a group of a dozen, local organic producers around a collective that sells into an online market – The Commons Market at the Working Centre.





Key Directions for COG PWW in 2010

Heading into 2010, COG PWW will continue to focus on increasing certified organic acres in the PWW area through outreach, support and training; as well as facilitating the distribution of local, organic products to institutions through outreach and promotion.

Specific activities will include:

- Delivering a series of promotional market and food skills events to promote local, organic food, farms and farmers collectives.
- Delivering a series of presentations and support to local institutions to organize around local buying clubs.
- Develop a peer mentor program to provide support for farmers interested in organic production and certification.
- Partnering with local, organic farms throughout the region to serve as demonstration and peer mentor sites.
- Partnering with Garden Party to prepare the costs and value of a winter CSA model to share with area producers.
- Participating in the CRAFT network to support the cultivation of new organic producers.
- Continuing to work with local organizations to achieve a common voice in the local, organic food systems movement, including the Organic Council of Ontario (OCO), the Ecological Farmers Association of Ontario (EFAO), Foodlink, the Waterloo Region Food Systems Roundtable, Stratford Tourism, Huron Perth Farm to Table, Everdale Organic Farm and Environmental Learning Centre, Waterloo Stewardship Council, Waterloo Region Community Gardening Network, National Farmers Union (NFU), and FarmStart.

