

Northern Co-Hort

Farmer to Farmer Local Food to You

The Northern Co-Hort

The Northern Co-hort is a farmer led, family farm support program with the goal of helping local farmers explore soil health and work towards regional food security by working together to establish a robust, diverse regional food system in the Peace Region of BC.



NEAT Northern Co-Hort Staff



Program Coordinator Eco Farm Skills Research and Development
Coordinator

Bess Legault Rhys Chapman Keira Nichol

Story of the Northern Co-Hort

- PRRD hired Consulting firm Eco Tactix to conduct research and publish the North Peace Horticulture Business Case and Marketing Strategy in 2018
- Founded in Fall of 2018 with intent to increase food sustainability and security among producers in Peace Region
- Survey farms to discover needs
- Through provincial partnerships and local industry funding we have held numerous workshops throughout the Peace on Northern Farmer Connections, grant writing, Farm Financials, Northern Greenhouse Production Series, Intensive Grazing workshops, Food Cooperatives, Climate change and agriculture
- Piloted the Eco Farm Skills program in 2019 to provided producers with additional labour
- In 2021 began conducting R&D with participating producers
- Member driven and committed to sustainable farming practices and regional food security for the Peace.

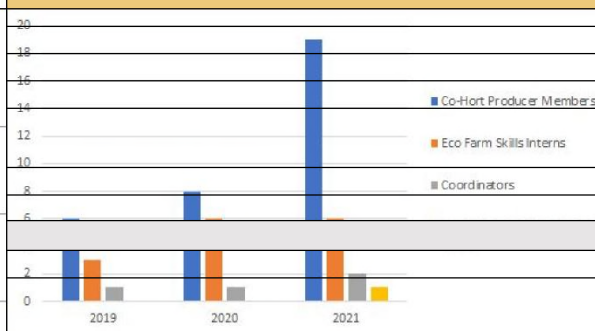


North Peace
Horticulture Business Case
and Marketing Strategy

EcoTactix

Northern Co-Hort Growth

	2019	2020	2021
Co-Hort Producer Members	6	8	19+
Eco Farm Skills Interns	3	6	6
Coordinators	1	1	2
Research and Development Intern	0	0	1



Eco Farm and General Farm Memberships

2021 Current Members

- * Canadian Acres - Katy Peck
- * Fourth Sister Farm - Tiffany Traverse
 - * Regen Ag Management and Pure Pastured Products - Rob Larson and Bobbi-Jo Alexander
- * Moon Dog Ranch - Jody Watson
- * Rose Prairie Milling - Trevor Gowman
- * Linford Family Farm - Darwin Linford
- * Squiggly Things - Nadia Mori
- * Hanna Acres - Hope Hanna
- * Exceptional Equine/IB Farm & Performance Horses - Samantha Dilworth
- * Theresa Cusack

Members Pending Renewal for 2021

- * Whisky Creek Ranch - Michelle and Gas Schaeffer
- * The Rustic Market Garden - Cait Vince and Ange Watson
- * Boreal Gardens - Paulette Flamond and Garry Oker
- * The Nourished Homestead - Paul and Tatiana Melling
- * Beaton Hills Orchard - Robyn Gerber and Doug Whitmer
- * Running Acres Farm - Sonya and Colin Runacres
- * The Boreal Center for Sustainability - Reg Whitton

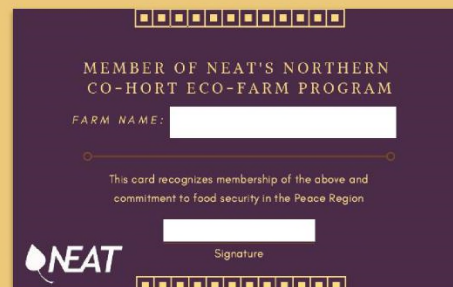
What Northern Co-Hort Membership Offers

General Producer - \$45 annual membership fee

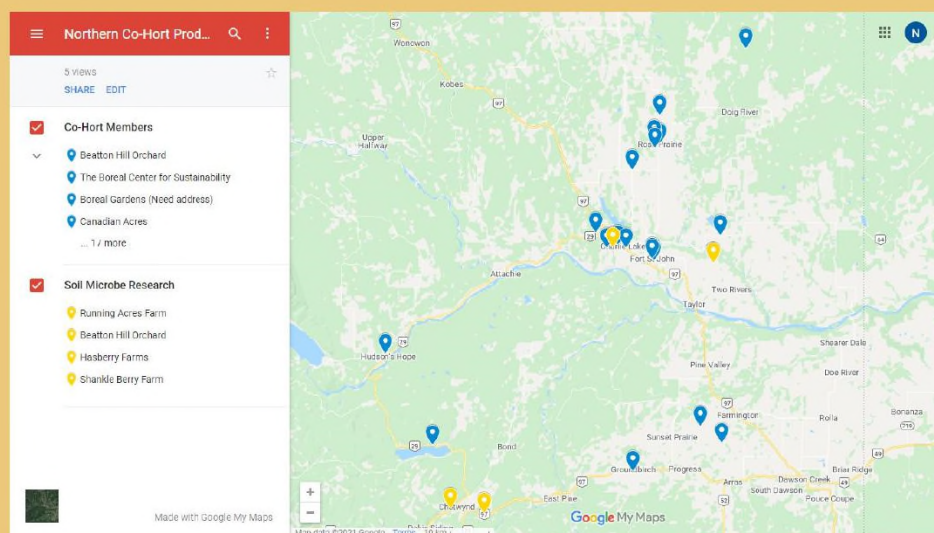
- Advanced registration and discounted rates to events
- Northern Co-Hort Newsletters
- Hands-off sales up to \$500 through Food Hub Network

Eco-Farm Producer - \$200 annual membership fee

- All of the above
- Farm listing on Northern Co-Hort and NEAT pages (Farm name, location, principals/certifications and product available)
- Access to Eco-Farm Skills students to work on the farm at a subsidized rate
- Hands-off sales through Northern Co-Hort Food Hub Network including Fireweed Market (FSJ), Rustic Pantry (Hudson's Hope) and Pop-ups at Regional Markets



Members Map



Current Programs

- Eco Farm Skills Program
- Peace Food Hub Network
- Research and Development for Peace Region Horticulture (Soil Microbes)
- Soil Health Matters Program
- Market Garden Extension Program
- Doig River First Nations Food Security Planning
- Peace Region Horticulture Pest Monitoring



Eco Farm Skills Program



- Access to students when needed throughout the growing season to ensure labour intensive tasks are completed
- Students are eager to learn about sustainable agriculture
- Hands-off market access
- NEAT hires and covers WCB and all HR related duties to employment

Student Pricing - Minimal Charge Increase to Sustain our Program

\$70/half day per student pair or \$140/full day per student pair

Includes hiring, reference checks, WCB coverage, MERCs (income tax, EI, CPP and Vacation Pay) and benefit of casual scheduling to meet your farm needs,

Calculated \$17,000 to recover program costs after partial student funding received.

Per Student		Total - 6 Students	
\$175.00	3.5 days/week	\$1,050.00	3.5 days/wk at \$50/day x 6 students
\$2,100.00	for 12 weeks	\$12,600.00	3.5 days/wk over 12 weeks
\$245.00	3.5 days/week	\$1,470.00	3.5 days/wk at \$70/day x 6 students
\$2,940.00	for 12 weeks	\$17,640.00	3.5 days/wk over 12 weeks

Eco Farm Skills Student Support Workers 2021

Carlos Yu Social researcher (agri-foods), bed at community garden

Eli Hennessey Keen interest in regenerative permaculture farming

Michaela Dechaine (Coming June 25th): Pursuing regenerative ag degree

Teja Reid (Coming June 25th): Organic vegetable gardener, orchard, beekeeping

Jayden Wied (Coming July): Returning Farm Skill student, Boreal Gardens

6th Student will be hired for July through September



Peace Region Farmers Markets

Market Name	Fort St John	Co-hort pop-up	Charlie Lake	Hudson's Hope	Chetwynd	Tumbler Ridge - Future	Dawson Creek - Closed	Dawson Creek Downtown Market
Market Day	Sat	Wed	Sun	Tues	Fri	Sat	Sat	Sat
Market Time	9-3 pm	3-6 pm	11-4 pm	3-6 pm	3-6 pm	12-4 pm	9-2 pm	9:30-2pm
Frequency	Weekly	Weekly	Weekly	Weekly	Weekly	Monthly	Monthly	Weekly
Travel Distance	10 km	10 km	15 km	180 km	270 km	340 km	150 km	150 km
Travel Time	15 mins	15 mins	30 mins	2.25 hours	3.5 hours	4 hours	2 hours	2 hours

Northern Co-hort Pop-Up Market

- Hands-Off sales for Co-Hort Eco Farm Producer Members every Wednesday evening from July to October at the FSJ Community Gardens
 - Co-Hort organizes, collects sales, finances
 - ~20% commission
- All members may attend for a \$10 table fee and keep their own sales
- Opportunity for new to direct marketing producers to see experienced producers in action
- Support with tent and table access
- Potential to pop-up with us at other markets and events throughout the season



Peace Region Food Hub Network and Box Program

- Food Hub Feasibility Study completed March 2021
- Food Hub Business Plan implementation is currently in its beginning stages
- Hands-off sales at markets
- Market van available to transport market tents and items between farms, aggregation space, store fronts and markets throughout the Peace this summer.



Producer Contributions to the Food Hub Business Plan

2021 Northern Co-Hort Producer Membership Application

NORTHERN CO-HORT PRODUCER MEMBERSHIP APPLICATIONS

Welcome to the 2021 Growing Season

Applications are being accepted until May 14, 2021.

The Membership Committee will review your application and make a recommendation to the Board who will make a final vote. Applicants will be notified of the status of their application no later than May 24, 2021.

Membership category applying for:

☐ General Producer - \$25 annual membership fee

- Annual registration and discount rates to Co-Hort events
- Northern Co-Hort Newsletter
- Hands-off sales up to 500 lbs through Food Hub network

☐ Eco-Farm Producer - \$225 annual membership fee

- All of the above
- Farm listing on Northern Co-Hort and NSAT pages (farm name, location, principles/commitments and contact details)
- Access to Eco-Farm Skills students to work on the farm at a subsidized rate
- Hands-off sales through Northern Co-Hort Food Hub Network including Protected Market (PMS), Public Market (Hudson's Food) and Pop-ups at Regional Markets

CONTACT INFORMATION

Business Name: _____

Contact Name: _____

Other Farm Family Member Name: _____

Working Address: _____

City: _____ Province: _____ Postal Code: _____

Farm Address, if different: _____

City: _____ Province: _____ Postal Code: _____

Primary Email: _____ Phone: _____

Secondary Email: _____ Alternate Phone: _____

Instagram: _____ Facebook: _____

Twitter: _____ Other Social Media: _____

FARM INFORMATION

Business Designation: ☐ Corp ☐ Sole Prop ☐ LLC ☐ Co-OP ☐ Partnership ☐ Other: _____

Start Date: _____ Business Start Date: _____

Number of acres in production: _____ Total acres in production: _____

Number of greenhouses and total square footage: _____

Gross Revenue: ☐ \$0-\$10,000 ☐ \$10,000 - \$25,000 ☐ \$25,000 - \$50,000 ☐ \$50,000 - \$100,000 ☐ \$100,000+

Sales Channels: ☐ Farmers Market ☐ CSA ☐ Produce Stand ☐ Direct to Restaurant ☐ Direct to Retail ☐ Wholesale ☐ Other: _____

- We will collect information about the products you produce and your capacity to distribute these through a food hub network and box program
- Producer membership is how we will collect info to implement plan
 - Market concept - sell community shares (\$25-\$300)
- Local Line Integration
- We continue to offer support to our producers to help build this capacity
- Regular feedback to let us know what you need!

Northern Co-Hort Culture

- We have an opportunity to do business differently as a collective
- We are trying to change our food system by decentralizing it and making regional food accessible to Peace Region residents, though direct sales and eventually to restaurants, grocery stores, and institutions.
- Many producers in our collective have a focus on soil health, regenerative agriculture and permaculture principles.
- These principals can be applied in many ways:
 - Initiatives of fair share, reciprocity, access, security and empathy.
 - Supporting other members in the NCH can take many forms, including: volunteering, attending events, tool and machinery sharing, mentoring members to teach unique skills, advertising for the NHC and fellow producer members at markets, and participating in group wholesale purchases, among many others.

Northern Co-Hort volunteer initiative project - In-kind

Ashala Yardley - Introduction

- If our community is interested Rhys Chapman will support Ashala's initiative through the coordination of extra support for large projects that needs lots of hands on your farm this summer - let us know if you have plans.
- Weekly volunteer connections for non-farm folks to connect to the land and food production through your farm.
- Feeding volunteers is a great way to be reciprocal for the effort offered on your farm.

Research and Development

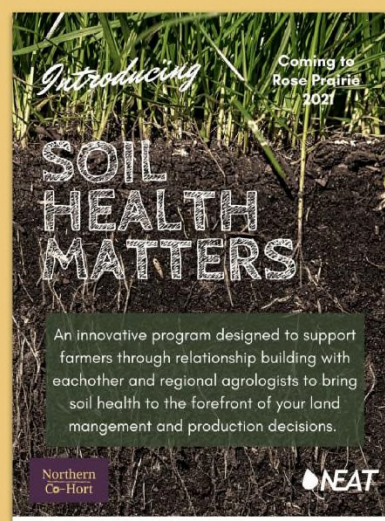


- 2021/2022 Research project in partnership with Fixed Earth Innovations, Aaron Mackay and Blackbird Environmental.
- Research taking place at Beaton Hills Orchard, Hasberry Farm, Running Acres Farm and Treehouse Haskap.
- Testing local plant beneficial microbes to improve soil health in haskap and sour cherry orchards, potentially reducing the need for synthetic fertilizer.
- Project funded by the Canadian Agricultural Partnership and the Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC.

Research and Development

Soil Health Matters Program 2021

- Soil health research project in collaboration with four cross-commodity producers in Rose Prairie funded by the Vancouver Foundation Systems Change development grant
- Research team: Julie Robinson, Sandra Burton, and Matthias Loeseken, with support from Bess Legault and Keira Nichol at the Northern Co-Hort.
- One-on-one sessions with soil health experts to discuss producer concerns related to soil health, conduct soil sampling and on-site testing.
- Identify the present role of soil health and the potential for systems change to support soil health-focussed production.
- Field tour to provide an opportunity for knowledge transfer between producers and enrich the understanding of soil health as it applies to the farm as an ecosystem.



Workshops

- A seed exchange at the Fort St. John Community Garden on May 22nd
- On July 11th the Northern Greenhouse Production Series concludes with a greenhouse tour at the Rustic Market Garden (Still time to sign up!)
- August 15th will bring a field day for the soil microbe research project
- Soil health matters field day August (TBD)



Collaborative Partnership with ACL Community Farm

- Partnership with Fort St. John Association for Community Living
- Currently developing a permaculture-based therapeutic farm for ACL clients to connect to the land and systems
- Two farm plots are being developed for programming with plans to build a greenhouse and animal shelter for sheep



Doig River First Nations Food Security Planning

- Began supporting food security programming in 2020
- Supported by the Eco Farm Skill program labour access
- 1 acre in ground garden was developed and planted in June of 2020
- A beautiful raised bed gathering area was also developed
- Safely gathered outdoors with elders and children to paint vegetables and fruits on river rocks and learned Beaver language as stories were shared about harvesting wild strawberries



Urban Edibles (Urban Garden Support)

- Proposed extension of the Eco Farm Skills student program offered to urban growers
- Student support during slower seasons for urban growers, gardens and food forests of all sizes
- This program will be rolled out as an additional offering to the community, pending student availability during the season
- 4 participating homes last year
- Precedence for access to students will be given to Co-Hort members
- Less likely to be running this summer, but it is an option if members want a lower rate
- Please let us know your expected down season

The Future of the Northern Co-Hort

- Regional Food Hub Network
- Living Labs project - BC and Peace Region
- R&D Projects for specialized equipment KPU
- Resource sharing amongst collective - Reciprocity
- Developing the culture of the Northern Co-Hort
- Regional co-branding/marketing



Questions for us?

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| ● Student labour? | ● Soil health knowledge? |
| ● Days of the week? | ● Equipment sourcing? |
| ● Hands-off market sales? | ● Research and development ideas? |
| ● Business planning? | ● Farm product traceability? |
| ● Safety plans? | ● Market access? |
| ● Cost of production? | ● Product brokering? |
| ● Individual farm | ● Grant application support? |
| branding/marketing support? | ● Community connections? |
| ● Production planning support? | ● You tell us! |
| ● Financial planning? | |