

## **GROW LOCAL PROGRAM: Final Public Survey Results, October 2018**

The Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District's (ACRD) 'Grow Local Program' was delivered thanks to a \$25,000 grant from the Province of BC. Funding was delivered over a two year period. The program aimed to increase local food security and strengthen the agricultural sector by providing residential growers with support and gardening education.

### **Overview of Program Surveys**

An initial public survey was delivered in May 2017 to establish a baseline for program measurement and evaluation. 89 people responded.

A final program survey, identical but with an additional question related to program feedback, was delivered in October 2018. 81 people responded, of which only about 17% had also completed the initial survey.

Both surveys were published on the online Survey Monkey platform and were promoted through social media, email lists, and the Alberni Valley News.

### **Final Survey Results, General and Comparative:**

- The number of seniors who responded jumped from 8% to 33%
- The number of respondents under the age of 36 also increased, if slightly
- Responses indicated an **increase in the sense of personal and regional food security** since 2017.
- In commentary, **23% of respondents offered positive comments about food security-related work currently underway**, compared with only 5% in 2017.
- Poverty, the cost of healthy food, the need for more producers, and the vulnerability of road access to the region continue to be public concerns
- In all categories of 'Horticultural Knowledge and Skills', **the percentage of people reporting 'poor knowledge' decreased, and those reporting 'good knowledge' increased.**
- Interestingly, **the percentage of people reporting 'excellent knowledge' also decreased across the board.** Could this be due to an expanded awareness of the potential knowledge base?
- Respondents' **3 favourite Grow Local Program components** were: 1) Free garden workshops, 2) emails with garden tips, and 3) backyard garden design consultations
- Interest in learning about 'Garden Maintenance' and 'Soil Fertility' increased (10% and 8% respectively)
- Interest in 'Planting Seeds' and 'Seed Saving' both decreased by 12%
- 50% of commentary about 'Horticultural Knowledge and Skills' related to a desire to learn more

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- Number of respondents who indicated spending at least 2 hours in their food garden per week increased from 63% to 74%
- Top **public suggestions for further supporting regional food security** were:
  1. More workshops and gardening support,
  2. More community gardens, and
  3. A tie between:
    - A. Improvements to Farmers' Markets,
    - B. Water rebates and rainwater harvesting support,
    - C. More 'sharing' of resources (seeds/plants/food/tools etc)

### Recommendations

Provincial funding for the ACRD's Grow Local Program has expired. However, indicators from this survey and from the overall program response and feedback results lead to the following recommendations to the ACRD.

4. Continue to offer:
  - b. A series of free gardening workshops,
  - c. A series of backyard garden consultations,
  - d. An email platform for sending out gardening tips and event notifications
5. Offer consultation opportunities to small commercial producers (they indicated interest but were excluded due to Grow Local Program restrictions)
6. Continue with other regional programs which support agricultural enterprise and public access to related resources and information
7. Implement water and/or rainwater harvesting rebate or incentive programs
8. Continue to monitor and evaluate Grow-Local Type programming through formal channels such as this public survey.



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## Summary of Questions and Responses

### 1. Food security comes from having reliable access to enough affordable and nutritious food. How would you rate your personal sense of food security?

May 2017	Oct 2018
Poor - 19%	Poor - 9%
Good - 62%	Good - 70%
Excellent - 19%	Excellent - 21%

### 2. How would you rate the food security of the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District in general?

May 2017	Oct 2018
Poor - 40%	Poor - 38%
Good - 55%	Good - 59%
Excellent - 5%	Excellent - 4%

There were 25 comments (Appendix 1), with the following general themes:

- Positive comments about work currently underway - 6 responses (#1, 4, 6, 9, 13, 22)
- High cost of healthy food and high regional poverty - 5 responses (#5, 12, 17, 19, 24)
- Need more farmers and production - 3 responses (#16, 18, 20)
- Concerns about vulnerable road access to the region - 3 responses (#2, 3, 25)
- Food with poor nutritional content is too easy to access - 3 responses (#8, 10, 19)
- Concerns about food waste - 2 responses (#11, 21)

### 3. How would you rate your knowledge and skills in the following horticultural areas:

Percentage of Respondents	May 2017			Oct 2018		
	Poor	Good	Excellent	Poor	Good	Excellent
<b>Planting Seeds</b>	18%	64%	18%	16%	69%	15%
<b>What to Plant, When, and Where</b>	34%	50%	16%	27%	63%	10%
<b>Garden Design</b>	47%	40%	13%	36%	59%	5%
<b>Garden Maintenance</b>	29%	56%	15%	24%	63%	14%
<b>Creating Soil Fertility</b>	43%	41%	16%	36%	50%	14%
<b>Seed Saving</b>	58%	29%	13%	58%	37%	5%

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There were 18 Comments (Appendix 2), with the following general themes:

- Interest noted in learning more about seed saving, soil fertility, keeping out deer
- Challenges include accessing garden space, physical limitations, time limitations
- I want to learn more - 9 responses (#5, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18)
- I have significant experience / training - 3 responses (#2, 3, 7)

### 4. What percentage of your own food do you produce (take a guess!)

Answer Choices	Responses	
	May 2017	Oct 2018
None	13%	14%
Less than 5%	46%	43%
Between 5-25%	31%	37%
Over 25%	9%	6%

### 5. Help us visualize the total size of the planting area in your food garden:

Answer Choices	Responses	
	May 2017	Oct 2018
I don't have a food garden	14%	14%
About as big as a couch or less (about 20 square feet)	16%	16%
About as big as a bathroom (about 50 square feet)	14%	20%
About as big as a bedroom (about 150 square feet)	28%	20%
The size of a cabin (about 750 square feet)	17%	19%
The size of a house or greater (1500 square feet)	11%	12%

### 6. On average, how many hours per week in the growing season do you spend in your food garden?

Answer Choice	Responses	
	May 2017	Oct 2018
None	15%	12%
Less than one	22%	14%
2-3	29%	42%
4-5	16%	11%
over 5	18%	21%

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### 7. Which of the following areas are you most interested in learning about? Please choose all that apply.

Answer Choice	Responses	
	May 2017	Oct 2018
Planting seeds	38%	26%
What to plant, when, and where	69%	64%
Garden design	57%	55%
Garden Maintenance	41%	51%
Creating soil fertility	58%	66%
Seed saving	57%	45%

There were 14 comments (Appendix 3), with the following general themes:

- Interest in Biodynamic and organic land care/resources - 3 responses (#2, 3, 10)
- Design, especially small-space intensive production - 4 responses (#6, 7, 9, 14)
- Disease and pest control - 2 responses (#12, 13)

### 8. Which of the Grow Local program components do you feel was most valuable? Pick 3. (Not included in the May 2017 Survey)

Answer Choice	Responses
1 Free gardening workshops	77%
2 Receiving emails with garden tips and upcoming events	55%
3 Individual backyard garden consultations	44%
4 The Grow Local Gardening Booklet	31%
5 Showcasing an edible garden during Family Farms Day	29%
6 Event display booths and community engagements	26%
7 Reading gardening tips in the newspaper	25%
8 Hearing gardening tips on the radio	14%
9 Video recordings of workshops and Shaw TV gardening clips	10%

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### 9. *What else you would like to see in the community in order to support our local food security?*

There were 47 comments (Appendix 4) with the following general themes:

- More workshops and gardening support - 11 responses (#17, 21, 22, 26, 28, 31, 32, 35, 39, 40, 43)
- More community and public gardens - 9 responses (#6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 18, 31, 38, 46)
- Improvements to the Farmers' Markets - 5 responses (#8, 10, 30, 33, 41)
- Water rebates and rain water harvesting support - 5 responses (#14, 19, 23, 24, 47)
- More seed/plant/land/food sharing resources - 5 responses (#4, 13, 17, 25, 27)
- More market gardeners - 4 responses (#5, 29, 31, 42)
- Education for kids/in schools - 3 responses (#35,37, 44)
- Zoning and by-law support - 3 responses (#2, 30, 45)
- Compost resources and education - 3 responses (#14, 15, 20)
- Support for 'Gleaning' projects- 2 responses (#12, 36)

### 10. *Lastly, please tell us about yourself.*

Residency	May 2017	Oct 2018
City of Port Alberni	63%	53%
Alberni Valley	25%	27%
Tofino	6%	3%
Ucluelet	4%	7%
Bamfield	0	1%
Offshore Community (boat access)	0	0
Other	1	8%

Age	May 2017	Oct 2018
Under 18 years	0	0
19-25 years	0	2%
26-35 years	9%	11%
36-50 years	41%	26%
51-65 years	42%	28%
Over 65 years	8%	33%

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## Appendix 1: Comments about the food security of the Alberni Valley

9. Many are working to make it better. There is always room for improvement as long as there is one person who has #FoodInsecurity
10. Out in Ukee we can never be sure of the highway to be open to the trucks!
11. Limited supply in possible emergencies, and hungry children in our schools.
12. Lots of possibility in this area
13. No super affordable on a lower income for many who want to eat healthy.
14. We have the potential with the outstanding group working via ACRD to have not just excellent food security but to be a food centre/destination.
15. Never experienced anything negative
16. Too many fast food restaurants.
17. There are some excellent sources of locally sourced produce, mostly vegetables
18. Sales are mostly on junk food.
19. There's fruit wasted everywhere and not donated.
20. Many residents depend on food bank, Salvation Army, The Bread of Life...
21. We are very fortunate to have so many committed farmers and local artisans providing such diverse food sources
22. used to do alot of growong and canning taught my kids how to can everything.but not as much now yhat they are adults
23. Don't have any idea.
24. I feel we need more local farms. Many of the local farmlands aren't being utilized for farming purposes.
25. I am fortunate to have the funds and knowledge to allow me eat a healthy diet. I know this is not as accessible to some others in the valley.
26. Our community needs to produce more food, both on a household level and commercially.
27. I may be OK for food security, but many people, including women and children, are not. Fortunately, there is quite a bit of food sharing happening but I'm not sure about the nutritional value of the shared food. Also, for people who do not have adequate housing, having a kitchen is a luxury for them, and that limits their ability to cook healthy meals.
28. We need more farmers growing food locally
29. Food that is recovered from grocery stores needs to be distributed more efficiently
30. Commendations on the great work you are doing!! We need more attention and assistance from city council and regional district to promote better use of our agricultural land.
31. If you are not able to get out to a Farmer's Market once a week, there is really no other place to get fresh local food. Why are local grocery stores not taking advantage of local sources and not having to truck food into town?
32. Unless all in the community can access affordable, nutritious food, I can't rate this anything other than poor.
33. it isn't a huge concern in my mind, but sometimes wonder what would happen in the case of an emergency that blocked road access... Also, being in a smaller town I find that groceries, especially fresh things like fruits and vegetables, tend to be pricier here than more urban centres on the Island.

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## Appendix 2: Comments about gardening skills

1. Physically not capable of maintaining a garden any longer.. sadly
2. I arranged for and attended an Organic Master Gardener course in Ucluelet 2017.
3. 5 years in, always learning
4. working full time so rely on farm market
5. Need some work I guess
6. Promote the VIRL seeds bank
7. I have a background in horticulture
8. Too many deer to grow anything these days.
9. Could use help in the maintenance department. Weeds always seem to win.
10. I would love to continue to learn more in all these areas!
11. I haven't had access to my garden for 3 summers but hope to next year.
12. Would love to learn
13. Building soil fertility is my biggest frustration.
14. Thing of the past, easier to buy new and you have better yields
15. I'm just relearning from my childhood.. I will feel more confident when it becomes a routine again
16. Haven't advanced to Seed Saving 101 yet
17. I have been striving to practice these points this year in a brand new garden
18. We are from Alberta and are learning the season planting in BC

## Appendix 3: Comments about educational interests

1. How to do more of everything in the garden with limited time.
2. accessible (legible, affordable) resources for biodynamic gardening
3. Organic land care, compost and compost tea brewing, sustainable soil management
4. Greenhouse growing.
5. I have a container garden on my patio and grow various veges. Big problem is keeping the deer and rabbits from eating my food! Can't fence my patio.
6. Since I will have to be starting my garden again I will want to make changes in design etc.
7. How to make the best use of a small garden area. Succession planting.
8. Place-based growing since I'm relatively new here
9. Intensive market garden systems
10. Product selection and pesticide knowlege. Just to know what to avoid.
11. Food preservation: drying, canning, freezing, root cellaring etc.
12. Knowledge of insect, Beneficial & otherwise. How to improve irrigation without using 'tap' water.
13. disease and pest control
14. Growing in small spaces (maximizing production)

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## Appendix 4: Comments about what would support for local food security

1. As this community has such a high illiteracy issue there needs to be videos that draw persons interest AND teach with a sense of humour without belittling
2. Affordable land; zoning which allows for small houses on lots, leaving more room for food gardening.
3. Ucluelet Local Food society has been keeping the junction garden functioning. Would love to have more input and help from the First Nations. Each year gets better.
4. Garden Sharing (for those who have a garden and need help maintaining it and for people who don't have a garden and wish to grow) ... Share the work, share the food
5. More roadside food sales by locals.
6. More community gardens
7. More areas for the community to be able to grow in
8. A restaurant that highlights these foods. And a united farmer's market (why not at the marina which has a huge open space, less wind, centrally located for Valley, and highlights another cornerstone of local food, fishing.)
9. Maybe a bigger community garden or more
10. A larger localized market that is covered and year round. More community gardens
11. Community gardens for homeless people
12. More widespread gleaning projects
13. Using available spaces or available volunteers to fuel the industry. Community repurposing of old items (tires, fencing, manure, compost etc)
14. Water tax breaks, water storage system incentives, food scrap recycling program and sell dirt back to us in spring. See RDNs plan.
15. Depot for free compostable materials that could be used for mulch, so that locals can come and pick some up and spread it on their own garden.
16. Workshops on preserving produce. Drying, fermenting, freezing, canning.
17. More food sharing - have some get some trading products fruit and veg. And also tips on creating awesome patio type gardens so many small spaces and also seniors who have big yards but are unable to get to them that a patio/container garden would be awesome as seniors still love to garden
18. a network of allotments, well managed, minimal registration fee, rules, help from advisors. I have some local research on this.
19. Water rebate
20. Composting teachings and how to use for enriching soil.
21. Perhaps more tips on planting low maintenance food for people who may feel like they don't have the time to maintain a veggie garden?
22. Trying to encourage people to try gardening. Many have never gardened before.
23. A less scary water bill would be great. Lots of complaints today.
24. Reduced water rates for urban gardening. Help with setting up a rain barrel system. (I live alone and don't have the expertise.) Help with building fertility.
25. Outreach to people with room for food gardening and no interest in doing so - many places have programs where interested parties grow food in other people's yards on a sharing basis. See <https://grist.org/article/food-seattles-new-urban-ag-models-are-sprouting-in-friendly-soil/full/>
26. Gardening tutorials, in person or perhaps on YouTube to encourage the younger generation.
27. Seed swaps
28. a college course!
29. More Market Gardeners growing food on a large scale
30. For the city to follow through on its old promise to develop an agricultural centre and farmers market off Cherry Creek Road.

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31. Small scale victory gardens, permaculture, market gardening, food preservation classes
32. An online gardening guide or blog. With videos . Grow guides. Wild harvest tips. And maybe a growers banquet with 100% locally grown food items.
33. A combined farmers' market in which there could be temporary vendors during the times when gardens in full production so that the community could see and understand the wide range of people that do produce and have excess to sell.
34. Hopefully I can make some of the workshop this year
35. More school involvement, more articles in local papers about gardening and different gardening styles. e.g. permaculture, lasagne gardening, etc. use of burms.....
36. More details pertaining to fruit and how we can assist in collecting it for everyone's needs.
37. Regular/seasonal gardening education sessions in schools for all ages.
38. More community gardens!
39. In Cuba England they have professionals on staff (government sponsored?) who will come to your garden, yard etc and give on the ground advice.
40. Lunch and learns hosted at different key locations (like City Hall, Harbour Quay or a park) would be cool.
41. A centralized Farmers Market would also be great. Making your visit an experience, rather than an errand.
42. Produce bins for sale, weekly or monthly. I know there is one person who does that and sells through Alberni Garage Sale Online
43. An easier way to keep the deer out of my backyard lol
44. more gardens in schools
45. Encouraging front yard gardens; encouraging "farm gate" stands in city limits
46. More community and school gardens.
47. ability to purchase rain barrels from the city/ACRD at a reduced cost, discount on water bills if using to grow food, bylaw regarding CATS!!