

BREEDING VARIETY: SEED PRODUCTION FOR THE SMALL FARMER

Summary of the Summertime Workshop at Cloud Mountain Farm Center

Eleven farmers and farm interns gathered at Cloud Mountain Farm Center's incubator farm site near Everson, WA, to learn about plant breeding and seed production. The all-day workshop on July 9 played host to three fantastic experts in the field. Louisa Winkler (PhD graduate student, Washington State University) spoke about the basics of plant breeding and her work with breeding oats for the Pacific Northwest. Tom Wagner (independent plant breeder) shared his immense knowledge of breeding thousands of varieties of potato and tomato. Finally, Jessica Babcock (Greenbank Farm Training Center) spoke about the basic process of growing vegetable seed and the use of different seed cleaning equipment.

Louisa started the day by explaining common plant breeding terms and techniques. Though she works with oat breeding (she has a variety trial at the Cloud Mountain site), the principles of working with plant genetics to create new plant varieties with desirable traits are translatable across all cultivated crops. Tom then lent his experience as a private or "free breeder," of which he is in his 62nd year of plant breeding. Tom showed attendees the dozens of potato varieties he had growing on site, all of which are varieties that he has developed himself. He explained the process of collecting potato seed, whether from the tuber or from the potato berry (though 85% of potatoes don't set a seed berry). It was fascinating to see different morphologies of the humble

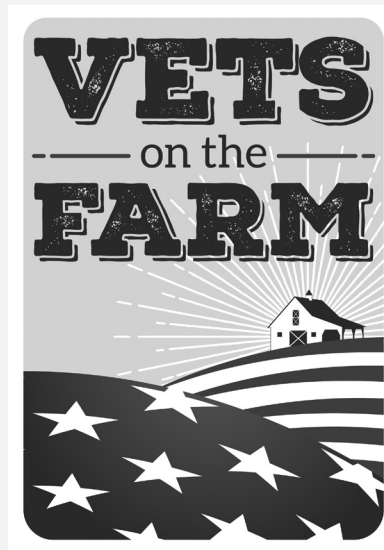
potato plant and to have an expert describe the breeding process right in the field.

Later in the day, Tom shared his experience with tomato breeding. He gave attendees seeds to plant themselves; Tom believes in holding on to and creating plant diversity as a means to acquire a variety of desirable characteristics. He also works to ensure diversity to promote sustainable production systems. Tom is currently working with growers in Bhutan to help them breed plants for a 100% organic production system. Jessica presented on the different variety trials and seed growing contracts that Greenbank Farm completes. She spoke to the basics of growing vegetable plants for seed and the various tools and resources available to growers interested in this avenue.

At the end of the day, attendees went back into the field to learn from a current farmer at Cloud Mountain's incubator on methods for pollinating heirloom corn. It was great to end the day—in the field, in a hands-on way.

Summary by Angela Anegon, Tilth Producers Education Coordinator.

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TILTH PRODUCERS 2015 CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHT: VETS ON THE FARM

It's a special year for the Spokane Conservation District (SCD) not only to be hosting *Farm-a-Palouse-a* in conjunction with the Tilth Producers conference, but to proudly present ag education specifically for returning veterans as part of its newest program: Vets on the Farm.

As an answer to post-9/11 veteran unemployment and an increasing need for more farmers, SCD created Vets on the Farm to provide year-round education, networking and mentoring for veterans who seek a career in agriculture.

The goal of *Farm-a-Palouse-a* on Friday, November 13, 2015, is to empower returning veterans, as well as new and beginning small farmers, to begin the journey toward a career in agriculture through classes like "I Have Property, Now What?," "Planning for Pollinators," "Plastics and Season Extension" and more.

There is also a specific track of classes designed for Veterans including "Agrability: Adapting Farm Equipment and Tasks," "Ask the Experts: Incentives for Veterans and New Farmers," and a screening and director's discussion of the film *Ground Operations: From Battlefield to Farmfield* at the historic Magic Lantern.

The cost to register for *Farm-a-Palouse-a* is \$75 and includes lunch and a light breakfast at the SCD Annual Meeting.

The SCD has a limited number of scholarships for veterans to attend *Farm-a-Palouse-a*.

For questions about Vets on the Farm or to apply for scholarships, contact SCD Director Vicki Carter at vicki-carter@scdd.org.