

COMMUNITY FOCUSES ON RESILIENCE AT TILTH CONFERENCE

Liza Burke, Communications Director

The seeds of the Tilth movement were planted at an ecological agriculture conference in Ellensburg in November 1974, and conferences have been a mainstay ever since. Fast forward to November 2016, when 450 producers, researchers, educators, students, advocates and allies gathered for the annual Tilth Conference. Attendees represented 28 counties in Washington State, six other U.S. states and Canada. They filled meeting rooms, hallways and dining rooms throughout the Wenatchee Convention Center, somewhat like an large family reunion, socializing, exchanging ideas, sharing information and networking, longstanding friends and new acquaintances alike.

“Change and Resiliency” was the theme, which speaks to farmers’ inherent need and ability to respond to the changing environment, whether that be changes of the seasons, climate change, natural disasters, the marketplace, economy, government or society. The theme seemed especially appropriate just days after the U.S. presidential election took nearly everyone by surprise.

Michael Phillips came from Lost Nation Farm in New Hampshire to give his keynote speech, “Biological Resiliency: Finding Community in all the Right Places.” He described the highly important, and underappreciated, function of fungal relationships in the soil. His presentation brought the audience on a journey from a big picture philosophy of seeing the natural world as a teacher, with its complexity, beauty, function and interconnectedness, to the microscopic scale of life in the soil. He concluded in good cheer by leading everyone in the Apple Wassail song, and described the old English orchard tradition practiced by community members

at his farm in the autumn. You can read an excerpt from his book on page 16.

While we can’t recreate the excitement of the conference, you can read pages 9 - 15 to learn about other aspects of the weekend and also gain valuable knowledge through audio recordings of the keynote and some select workshops at tilthproducers.org/library/conference-audio.

The conference is no small feat, and without the generosity of our sponsors, trade show vendors, presenters and the engaged Tilth community, the conference would not be possible. Thank you all!

Thank you to the wonderful Tilth Conference sponsors, including our Presenting Sponsor, HumanLinks Foundation, and Contributing Sponsors: Organically Grown Company, United Natural Foods and WSDA Organic Program.



Crystal and John Allen, from C&J Legacy Farm in Oak Harbor, socialize with their daughter during the Friday night mixer at the Tilth Conference in November.

CONFERENCE AUDIO RECORDINGS

Listen online to the keynote and select workshops!
tilthproducers.org/library/conference-audio



Tilth Conference attendees gathered outside the Wenatchee Convention Center for a photo.

WHAT DID YOU LEARN AT THE CONFERENCE?

Liza Burke, Communications Director

At the Tilth Conference in November, twenty-seven workshops were presented by farmers, researchers and agriculture system professionals. Below you'll find what some folks answered when asked, "What was the most interesting or useful thing you learned during the workshops?"

"I just learned about **trap crops**. Using a single species is as good as using none. But using multiple and diverse trap crops significantly reduces pests."

~Tamara Hala, Cloudview Ecofarms, Royal City, WA



Adel Almesmari

"About the FDA, the rules and **food safety**, I learned how farmers produce food so it's safe. In my country, Libya, on an organic farm, we have to learn to certify organic."

~Adel Almesmari, WSU and professor of horticulture at Omar Al-Mukhtar University, El-Bayda, Libya

"Building **beetle banks** will potentially reduce pests. It's an elevated mounded row of native grasses interspersed among row crops."

~Amy Rosen, Mason Conservation District Farm Planner, Shelton, WA

"The hedgerow workshop was great. As an entomologist, it's interesting to see how **hedgerows** can be used for multiple purposes: pollinators for a main crop, habitat for other beneficial insects in other parts of the season."

~Adekunle Adesanya, a WSU graduate student

"**Fire Blight control** was fantastic. We'll be trying neem directly on our kiwi berry crop and utilizing the calcium recipe with humic acid we just saw. That should really help promoting biological health."

~Brian Keogh, Organically Grown, Des Moines, WA



Mary Kay Razez

"The most valuable thing for me was learning about **alternative energies** because we have to learn to be more self-sufficient. And you can connect with resources through grants—it's attainable."

~Mary Kay Razez, Razez Orchard, Naches, WA

"The Verticillium Wilt workshop was exceptional. **Grafting vegetables** is good for Verticillium Wilt control. I got the full download. It's common in other parts of the world. The root stock is resistant and it's not as complicated as it sounds... You don't have to use fumigants."

~Glen Johnson, Mother Flight Farm, Mount Vernon, WA

"I learned about orchard composting to utilize waste from trees and increase fungal spikes. I learned the importance of root structures and the **importance of the fungal environment**. Clean cut grass is for aesthetics only. You want to have diverse plants around apple trees."

~John Allen, C & J Legacy Farm, Oak Harbor, WA

"At King Conservation District, we have regional food systems grants so it was great to hear what Viva and Sage are doing and about the successes **incubator farms** have had increasing new farmers. For our farm, I'm thinking about ramping up our pig operation."

~Melissa Tatro, King Conservation District, Renton, WA and Over the Hills Farm in Kent, WA

"For me I learned about **transitioning from conventional to organic**. It's worth it. Organic food prices are much higher. I'm inspired that farmers are so educated and ask really good questions."

~Likun Wang, WSU, Pullman, WA



Likun Wang

“The **climate change** workshop... Looking at processes to see how pathogens change in time and space, so we can prepare for the future.”

~David Wheeler, WSU, Pullman, WA

“I learned we should not raise hogs. We don’t have the time and attention, so busy with other processes. You gotta focus on what you’re good at. You’ve got to **focus on what’s profitable**. If you’re not profiting you’re going to lose interest.”

~Jesse Berger, Sauk Farm, Concrete, WA

“I’m retired now! Still, I am thinking about marketing in a small way. The **direct marketing** workshop talked



David Wheeler

about your audience – who are you selling to? Consumers have so many more choices. But “local” is still the most important thing.

~Terry Carkner, Terry’s Berries, Tacoma, WA

“It will be easier to know how to go about organic certification. **Talking to people** is super helpful and they’ll support you going through it.”

~Reingard Reiger, Beta Hatch