

WORKING WITH FARMERS,  
GROWERS AND CONSUMERS  
- IN ASSAM AND IN CANADA -  
TO PROMOTE LOCAL FOOD  
SECURITY & SUSTAINABLE  
AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES

# Fertile Ground:

## East/West Sustainability Network

UPDATE—FALL 2012

Congratulations to these emerging young leaders from Assam!



Pompy Ghosh, Coordinator,  
Adarsh Seuj Prakalpa, Digboi



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Tenzing Bodosa, Organic Tea-  
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## Assam launches its first centre for Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development!

A new program in sustainable farming practices will help students from families in rural Assam find work closer to home.

The 6-month program is one of several new courses being offered at Lahowal College. It's being developed with support from one of our partners, the NGO, Prakriti-Save Nature.

Fertile Ground will provide resource materials and assist with creation of a long-term operating plan for the program.



One of the key components of the course will be an outdoor "classroom" - a large garden where students will receive hands-on training in composting, seed-saving and cultivation of organic vegetables, fruits and tea.

Funds donated by Rotary Clubs in the Comox Valley and District 5020 will cover costs of books, videos and furnishings for a new library, as well as development of a water collection and irrigation system for the garden area.

According to college principal Jyoti Dutta, many young people from farming families are moving to the cities or leaving the state, and local food production is rapidly declining.

Dutta says the Assam state government's recent promotion of more environmentally-sound agricultural practices is going to open up new opportunities for entry-level management and skilled field-level staff. He's confident the program will help meet the region's need for more knowledgeable agricultural workers.

### "Planting Seeds of Self-Reliance"

Our 7th annual fundraising event, held at the beautiful Creekside Commons in Courtenay, attracted about 80 volunteers and supporters.








Keynote speaker was Dan Jason, founder of Salt Spring Seeds and the Canada Plant & Seed Sanctuary. His message about the need to encourage and support local agriculture and the threat posed by genetically-modified seeds was as relevant here on the west coast as it is in Assam.

Great food, good people and an inspiring and informative presentation! Funds raised will help support the work of our partners in Assam.





# Fall 2012 Update

<p><b>Adarsh Seuj Prakalpa – the demo garden and training centre in Assam</b></p>	<p>Pompy and Iqbal have been delivering hands-on workshops on use of compost and vermicompost at the demo garden site and at homes in Digboi</p> <p>The video Sarah made of Pompy preparing compost tea has now had 12,392 views!</p> <p>The old computer monitor that wasn't working has been replaced with a new LCD monitor – cost was about \$100.</p>	
	<p>Babu and his son, Bikki (the boy with hemophilia) visited Ambikapur to deliver school supplies – Bikki's first trip to that area, and probably his first time on a ferry!</p>	
<p><b>FG at home</b></p>	<p>Presentations at Lake Trail Community Garden</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compost tea</li> <li>• Compost</li> <li>• Creatures that live in the soil!</li> </ul> <p>Good turnouts – mostly experienced gardeners who want to learn more!</p>	
	<p>Following a presentation to Cumberland Centennial Rotary on Aug. 14<sup>th</sup>, president Rob Neal presented us with a cheque for \$1,000 to support projects in Assam!</p>	 <p>providing humanitarian service, encouraging high ethical standards in all vocations, and helping to build goodwill and peace in the world</p>
	<p>World Community's donation this year – was \$1,600 - \$500 from sales at Edible, the rest from tea profits.</p> <p>It's been 10 years since WCDES started selling tea in support of Fertile Ground!</p>	
	<p>Peggy celebrated her 60<sup>th</sup> birthday at our May board meeting. Thanks to LeighAnn for the fabulous cake from Cake Bread!</p> <p>Welcome to new member, Arzeena Hamir! Fertile Ground still needs a couple of new board members AND a bookkeeper. Lois and Niels – we're going to miss you!</p>	 

Strathcona Sunrise's World Community Service Committee set up an account to collect Aeroplan miles, and has offered to donate miles collected in October to Fertile Ground. Aeroplan members can transfer miles online at [beyondmiles.aeroplan.com/eng/partners/177](http://beyondmiles.aeroplan.com/eng/partners/177)

Return fare from Van. To Delhi requires 100,000 miles – and we're almost 1/4 the way there. The campaign is open to ANYONE who collects Aeroplan miles. Know anyone who could help out?



Crown Isle donated a couple of desktop computers and digital cameras. First computer and camera are here – maybe more to come! We may put out a call through the newspapers for used digital cameras again this fall.

Thanks to Elmer & Liz Phillipson for donating a small laptop for FG's use!



This summer, we received a donation from supporters Chip Ross and Keith Tatton. They're selling these large salmon lawn ornaments to raise funds for various good causes – including ours!

Stefan Pletcher from Cumberland Centennial Rotary also sent in a contribution earlier this year.

Thanks very much, guys!



**Upcoming Events**

Erin Harper, an organic grower and keen seed saver from Salt Spring Island, is planning to be in Assam for a couple of months early next year. She spent almost a year in Assam about 5 years ago, and is looking forward to hearing back!

She'll be meeting up with Peggy, who's heading back to Assam in December.



We'll celebrate 10 years of fair trade tea with World Community and Edible Island on Oct. 10<sup>th</sup> at Zocalo's.

In November, Fertile Ground & the small tea co-op will be at Courtenay & Campbell River's Fiesta events and at the VIDEA event in Victoria.





Over the past decade, training and information provided by Fertile Ground volunteers and our staff in Assam have reached thousands of growers, NGO's, students and farming families. By working together, we've

- conducted extensive research into sustainable, organic and traditional agricultural practices in the temperate tropics
- provided encouragement and support to small-scale tea growers, farmers and educators
- delivered over a hundred presentations to a range of audiences in Canada and India, and participated in several national and international conferences.
- conducted training and hands-on demonstrations on composting and production of botanical formulas for controlling insect pests
- provided funding, labour and technical assistance to help members of the Digboi Rotary Club develop an organic demonstration garden and training centre  
This project has created jobs for 4 people from the local community. With support from their partners in Assam and proceeds from the sale of organic vegetables, seedlings and compost produced onsite, it's now almost self-sustaining!
- organized an exposure visit for an agricultural extension officer and a small-scale tea grower, both from Assam, to attend conferences, visit schools and meet with organic farmers and retailers here in Canada
- helped establish "Hridayangam", a community-based organization that provides training and support to farmers and self-help groups in Assam
- supported development of "the small tea co-op" to sell quality products purchased directly from growers, and find markets for their naturally-grown teas in Canada
- worked with North East Affected Area Development Society to develop a demonstration garden in Sadiya, a remote region in northeast Assam. We've trained a young man from the village and hired him to maintain the garden and educate people from nearby villages.
- provided internships and volunteer opportunities in Assam for over 30 Canadian volunteers, including students from Camosun College and UBC.



## How you can help.....



### Make a donation

We're a charitable organization registered with Revenue Canada. Tax receipts issued for donations of \$25 or more.



### Share Your Aeroplan Miles!

Help our volunteers travel to Assam!

<http://beyondmiles.aeroplan.com/eng/partners/177>

**BEFORE Oct. 31, 2012**

OR

<http://beyondmiles.aeroplan.com/eng/charity/211>

**STARTING Nov. 1/2012**



### Join Fertile Ground

Individual memberships \$15  
family memberships \$25.

Applications available online  
or by calling us at 337-8348!