

NONSYNTHETIC NEWS

VOLUME 1 ISSUE 2

FALL/WINTER 2004

MOA EVENT COORDINATOR HIRED

The MOA board of directors met via conference call Thursday October 14th and reviewed the single application for the position of *Special Event Coordinator*. This position will be responsible for organizing and managing the 2005 MOA conference scheduled to be held in Helena sometime in February.

Lise Rousseau is from Polson, Montana where she owns an organic apple and cherry orchard along the shore of Flathead Lake. Lise brings with her extensive experience in the non-profit sector, including web-design, program development, workshop and conference coordination, various publication skills and

office management.

The following is an excerpt of Lise's cover-letter submitted to the conference committee during the October board meeting:

I am especially interested in this position, as I believe my diverse experience in event coordination, writing, editing, and other skills are well matched with what you are seeking in a candidate.

In my capacity as Communications Director for the National Audubon Society, I held primary responsibility for coordinating many conferences and trainings for which the primary audience was volunteer activists, community and religious leaders. I have extensive experience



Lise Rousseau

in handling all logistics from budgeting to lodging to travel to meals to brochures and mailings to all the other important details involved in complicated events.

As all of these events were organized through grants, I have experience in writing reports for "management" and donors.

(Continued on page 2)

MOA CONFERENCE SET FOR FEBRUARY 4-6 2005

In a meeting held October 28 the MOA board agreed to hold the MOA annual conference February 4th - 6th at the Colonial Red Lion in Helena

Advisory Committee member Steve Baril was elected as chairman of the MOA

2005 Conference Organizing Committee.

Helena was selected as the conference location this year to take advantage of the Legislature being in session. A second, yet-to-be announced event will be held following the main

conference on February 7th.

Conference venue details, registration information and vendor participation information will be available in the January edition of the Non-synthetic News. Vendors may contact Lise Rousseau for more information.

BREIFS

- *WANT ADS? Interested in running a classified ad? Have a blue-necked widgeet arm to fit a '46 Studebaker for sale? Or do you just need a little CRP grass seed? Contact the editor for more details.*

NPSAS 26th Annual Winter Conference

To be held February 10-11, 2005 at the Ramkota Inn, Aberdeen, SD

Featuring Author and Nutritionist, Sally Fallon!!

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STOP AND SMELL THE COW-PIES BY R.R. KNOTTS

Greetings one and all and welcome to my first ever attempt at editing a newsletter. I landed this task much the same as one might acquire a fragrant layer of fresh manure on their boot sole during an innocent tour of the pasture. "Sure," I said. "How hard could it be?" And here we set.

Many of you already know me from my annual inspection forays throughout the state. For those of you who don't, my name is Rob Knotts and I live in Lambert, Montana. I'm an independent organic inspector for various certification bodies around

Montana and the upper Midwest.

I see many great and wonderful things while visiting Montana farms and processors and have high expectations for MOA and the organic community at large. I also see things that are not so great and would never qualify as wonderful.

One common misconception I encounter during my inspection tours is the belief that MOA is somehow affiliated with the MT



R.R. Knotts & Co.

Dept. of Agriculture certified organic program. That is simply not true.

The Montana Organic Association is an independent organization created to *advocate and promote organic agriculture for the highest good of the people, the environment and state economy*. It says so right in their Mission Statement. Word for word in fact.

I recently discovered that out of the five hundred and forty-nine individuals and families on my newsletter mailing list, only seven have bothered to join MOA. Seven. Is that pathetic, or

(Continued on page 3)

"WHILE I AM NEW TO THE MONTANA ORGANIC COMMUNITY, I BELIEVE MY COMMITMENT TO THIS ETHIC IS STRONGLY SUPPORTED BY THE FACT THAT, WITH MY HUSBAND, I OWN AND OPERATE AN ORGANIC ORCHARD AND DEVELOPING FARM."

ROUSSEAU

(Continued from page 1)

As an accomplished multitasker, I understand the need to not lose sight of the big picture while overseeing the most minute of details. And as a former employee of two nonprofits and a small corporation, I understand the need to maximize and prioritize resources: financial, personnel, and material.

You will find I am a self-motivated, flexible, dedicated, and resourceful perfectionist who doesn't mind doing what it takes to get a job done (i.e., grunt work), who is a team player, and who excels at developing and maintaining personal relationships. I am also not too proud to ask for assistance and guidance when I recognize a weakness in my skills, experience or knowledge.

While I am new to the Mon-

tana organic community, I believe my commitment to this ethic is strongly supported by the fact that, with my husband, I own and operate an organic orchard and developing farm. To my own benefit, I would welcome this contract as a way to further my initiation into the local network, as well as to forge new relationships with organic producers, and the customers, vendors and agencies that support us, state and region wide.

I look forward to further exploring the opportunity to translate my skills to assist in creating a truly memorable Second Annual Montana Organic Conference.

After reviewing my résumé, if you agree that my qualifications are a close fit to your needs, I would be delighted to hear from you at your convenience. You may reach me at 406-887-2869 or via email at

liserousseau@aol.com. Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,
Lise A. Rousseau

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CHEMICAL TRESSPASS

by R.R. Knotts

You ever wonder what might happen if the neighbor got a little crazy with the 2,4-D, or a spray pilot couldn't read a map? I can tell you it's not a pretty picture for an organic producer. Two drift events this summer, and several others in preceding years, have taught me there are a couple of things that need to happen right away. First things

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DON'T PANIC, BUY ORGANIC!

Nonsynthetic News is a semi-regular publication of the Montana Organic Association. Submit all queries, suggestions, letters and requests for information to the editor:

Rob Knotts
PO Box 252
Lambert, MT 59243 email:rek@midrivers.com

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DEADLINES VARY FROM ISSUE TO ISSUE AND SPACE IS AVAILABLE ON A FIRST COME FIRST SERVED BASIS. CONTACT THE EDITOR FOR FURTHER DETAILS.

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COW PIES

(Continued from page 2)

what?

It boggles the mind. We have an organization created by local farmers, for local farmers, destined to go wherever the members want, and no one can be bothered to join. It's incredible, a genuine testament to the insular notions that plague our nation and

state.

I wish I could come and visit every single one of you. We could sit in the kitchen and discuss this over coffee. You could yell at me, me at you, and we could hash this out. But I can't, it's too darn far with gas at \$2.25 a gallon.

So instead I'll extend an invitation every certified organic producer and consumer in the state of Montana, regardless of certi-

fication-body affiliation, to pony-up their dues and join the fray. MOA needs you.

I have no doubt that if we work together MOA can and will become the most powerful and effective organic resource in the state, perhaps even the nation.

On the other hand, we could keep plodding along in our own little worlds while the really big decisions are made by out-of-state interests.

Comments? rek@midrivers.com

SO TELL ME ABOUT THAT VINEGAR?

BY R.R. KNOTTS

Anyone who is even half-aware in the organic community has heard or read the claims of vinegar as an herbicide. Whether these claims are valid remains to be seen.

A Google search revealed two USDA sanctioned studies, one in Maryland and the other in Pennsylvania, which rated vinegar's effectiveness as a weed-control agent. Both studies concentrated on the control of perennial weeds, and neither study addressed cost factors.

Several informal Canadian studies (also focused on perennial weed control) have put the cost at somewhere between \$15-\$65 per acre. This was based on a 15-20% vinegar applied at full-strength. A very cost prohibitive input to say the least.

So let's get down to the bare bones of these studies before we make any more assumptions. Both USDA studies targeted Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*) and creeping jenny AKA bindweed (*Convolvulus arvensis*). The application rates were (as stated above) full-strength solutions of 15-20% vinegar spot-sprayed on isolated patches. The results of the three weekly visual ratings

indicated that the effectiveness of the vinegar to kill weeds was dependent on the concentration and the plant growth stage.

Vinegar provided 95-100 % kill at all growth stages of the weeds studied at 15 and 20% concentrations. Canada thistle was the most susceptible species with 100 percent kill of top growth with as little as 5 % vinegar. However, there was some regrowth from the roots of plants of all age groups.

The factor I found most interesting is that all the studies (Canadian and USDA) concentrated on spot-spraying perennial weeds in a row-crop situation. Although to give them credit, the Maryland study did comment on the peripheral effect on some annual weeds. Not really the kind of farming most of us in Montana do.

So I conducted my own study.

I grabbed a bottle of 5% table-vinegar out of the cupboard and mixed it half and half with well-water. By my crude reckoning that gave me a 2.5% solution, which I applied full-strength with a plastic squirt bottle.

The initial results were very encouraging. Everything I sprayed shriveled up

and died within four or five hours; buckwheat, creeping jenny, pigeon grass, Russian thistle and lamb's quarter all tipped up their toes and called it quits. Of course the creeping jenny was growing like crazy again within 48 hours, but that's to be expected.

What was really interesting though is the effect on annuals. The pigeon grass, Russian thistle and buckwheat never came back. New plants sprouted in different places, but the ones I sprayed were done.

Now we move on to the truly tricky part of this equation; how much does it cost? Casual conversations with farmers around the region put the base cost of 200 grain organic vinegar at \$5-6 per gallon. This reflects a 55-gallon barrel and includes shipping. 300 grain vinegar was also used at about the same price.

Hmmm, not exactly a low-cost input. Let's think about this some more. The base element is 200 grain (or higher) food-grade vinegar. Organic is preferable but not required.

What! Not required?

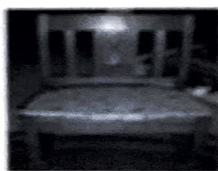
(Continued on page 5)

THE CHAIR SPEAKS

By Judy Owensette

MOA has hit the ground running! From our inception as "MOO" at the well received conference last winter, to all the hard work that went into writing the mission statement, purpose, by-laws, and articles of incorporation, we have come a long way.

One of the most difficult tasks we encountered was coming up with a name. While Montana Organic Association does not provide a catchy



"The Chair"

acronym, it does tell the public what we are about. Webster's defines ASSO-

CIATION as "an organization of persons having a common interest". Under COMMUNITY one finds "the people with common interests living in a particular area". Thus Montana is the particular area, Organic is the common interest, and Association is the people.

Summed up, we are a community. And that is what we look forward to MOA

being; a community. One that provides education, and assistance where needed. One that shares resources and information. And, most importantly, where we support and encourage one another in the varied endeavors of our growing organic community! Whether it is discussing weed control, splitting a barrel of vinegar, transportation networking, or sitting down to share a Montana grown organic meal, we are building our community. Welcome!!

Comments? terrapin@aboutmontana.net

TRESSPASS

(Continued from page 3)

first—protect your investment. Organic production is all well and good for the warm fuzzies it provides but the bottom line is profit, and chemical-drift insures immediate and absolute removal of the impacted land from production for 36 months.

Call your insurance adjuster the instant you discover chemical-drift. Not your neighbor, not the applicator, your adjuster. That takes the battle out

of your hands and puts it into the capable hands of folks who are accustomed to reparation/litigation and all the horrific details it includes. It's not pretty but someone has to do it, and it might as well be the ones who are making money off the premiums.

The Montana Department of Agriculture is the state agency that investigates possible drift violations. If you lack insurance they are your best option. Do not, I repeat, do not call the applicator's insurance agent until you've contacted the state. David vs. Goliath only works in the movies and this is

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Call your certifying agent next. Follow their instructions exactly. Remember you're facing 36 months of zero production. The faster you move the sooner that transition period is over.

The most important call will be your neighbor. If your farm is in full compliance they

will have been aware of its organic status since the beginning.

Be nice, neighbors are there for the long-haul, but be firm. This is your livelihood and you have to protect it. Above all, be fair.

Lastly remember, the best defense is a good offense—good buffers work, mostly.

Comments? rek@midrivers.com

VINEGAR

(Continued from page 4)

The NOP Final Rule states:

§ 205.206 Crop pest, weed, and disease management practice standard.

(a) The producer must use management practices to prevent crop pests, weeds, and diseases including but not limited to: (etcetera)

(e) When the practices provided for in paragraphs (a) through (d) of this section are insufficient to prevent or control crop pests, weeds, and diseases, a biological or botanical substance or a substance included on the National List of synthetic substances allowed for use in organic crop production may be applied to prevent, suppress, or control pests, weeds, or diseases: Provided, that, the conditions for using the substance are documented in the organic system plan.

Thus stated naturally produced (nonsynthetic), NON-GMO vinegar, not produced using excluded methods would be allowed as a weed-control agent. Providing of course you had exhausted all other means of controlling the offending weeds and had

documented the process {NOP 205.206(c)}.

Obtaining a Non-GMO affidavit might be a trick since you'll need to get it from the manufacturer and not the supplier (Let's face it, those salesmen will say anything to make a sale).

Another issue to consider is that vinegar used as a pesticide is subject to all the rules and regulations inherent to chemical pesticide application, per both the NOP and state agencies. Be certain to fully explore these rules prior to use on any crop land.

So where can you get food-grade 200 grain vinegar?

Good question. If you're serious about using it and need a supplier I imagine you'll have to do your homework and start looking. I can't do everything.

Comments? rek@midrivers.com

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The purpose of the Montana Organic Association is to provide education, information, support, assistance promotion and representation for organic producers, processors, handlers, retailers, consumers, researchers, agricultural service providers and other interested parties.

Green Manures and Cover crops for Organic Vegetable Production Systems. By Helen Atthowe

Green manures and cover crops are the foundation of organic production. Besides adding organic matter and nutrients, some green manures can make certain nutrients more readily available, increase soil water holding capacity, suppress weeds and disease, and decrease leaching. Which green manure to use depends on soil, climate, and the crops to be grown.

Nutrient Management: Legumes are prime cover crop and green manure choices because they fix nitrogen. But legumes do not fix nitrogen at equal rates, or under all conditions. Nitrogen fixation rates are decreased by low (< 40 – 50° F) soil temperatures and stop at freezing temperatures. Nitrogen fixation rates vary among legume species. For example, clovers, sweet clovers, medics, and vetch provide 1 - 25 lbs of nitrogen per 1000 sq ft. Several researchers report that Austrian winter peas have the highest nitrogen content (4%). Crimson and Red clover are reported to provide the best biomass and cover. Legumes also contribute phosphorus, potassium, calcium, magnesium, sulfur and micronutrients. Grasses take up and recycle nitrogen, but do not contribute much if any nitrogen to a vegetable production system. They contain less than 1% nitrogen. Most grasses have a carbon : nitrogen (C:N) ratio of 50:1. The C:N ratio for legumes is 12-20:1. In most soils and climates, a green manure with a C:N ratio of 20:1 or less is necessary to provide nitrogen to the following crop. Most studies report that the more nitrogen left in the soil after a cover crop, the higher the vegetable

MONTHLY AVERAGE

Nutrient Content of Living Mulch

	Percent							PPM		
	C/N Ratio	N	S	P	K	Mg	Ca	Fe	B	Zn
July	16	3.3	0.27	0.43	4.1	0.40	1.4	503	21	35
August	10	4.3	0.31	0.46	4.2	0.35	1.4	165	24	30
September	11	4.1	0.30	0.45	3.9	0.31	1.2	191	23	30

Biodesign Farm - 1996


crop yield. The chart below records the average nutrient content of Alsike clover grown as a living mulch between vegetable crop rows during 1995 and 1996 in Stevensville, Montana.

Pest Management: Grasses provide the best residue, or mulch, for weed management. Several studies have evaluated the residue biomass versus allelopathic (biochemical) weed suppression effect of rye (Secale). It is still unclear which effect is most important in managing weeds. Other studies report the best weed management following grass/legume green manure mixtures. Recent studies in Idaho and California are showing exciting weed and disease suppression using green manures in the Brassica (Mustard) family. There is some indication that Brassica green manures may help to suppress Pythium root rot in Western Montana soils, but that the effect only lasts for a few weeks.

More and more information is becoming available on green manures and their management in organic vegetable

production systems. We may soon be able to pick the right green manure to mitigate specific nutrient and pest problems in specific crops.

Comments? Atthowe@montana.com


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