

Abundance

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FROM PRAIRIE FLAX TO OMEGA-3 FOOD

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Upcoming Events

July 29, 2026 - Regenerative Organic Oats Field Day at Schill Family Farm, Balcarres SK
Fall Organic Agronomy Producer Meetings, 8:30am - 9:30am

- **October 14**
- **November 10**
- **December 9**

Save the date! March 23 & 24, 2027 - Advancing Organics Conference & Trade Show, Regina SK

SaskOrganics is always in the process of planning events. For the most up-to-date event list, stay tuned to our digital newsletter or visit our website events. <http://saskorganics.org/events/>

If you are not receiving our digital newsletter and would like to, please email admin@saskorganic.com and we will add you to the list.

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Happy Summer Days!

Summer in Saskatchewan is time to be cherished. The beauty of this province can be appreciated anywhere you go – from your own backyard or farm to our many lakes, or to our beautiful provincial and national parks. I hope you have some time to get out and enjoy the many things that make summer in this province so special.



SaskOrganics is pleased to partner with Canadian Organic Growers (COG) on two field days this summer. By the time you read this, our field day in the North Battleford area on July 8 will have likely already happened. A big thank you to the Jess family for welcoming everyone to your farm and offering

an interesting day full of activities! Next, we'll be at the Schill Family farm in Balcarres on July 29 for another exciting day of field tours, livestock grazing demonstrations, amendment trials and more. Check out our website for more information.

Of course, we can't host any of our events without the support of our sponsors-we are very grateful for your support that allows us to continue hosting our education program and events like field days for producers. And many thanks to all who attend the events!

In this issue of *Abundance*, we have an excellent *Sustain* article about the importance of pollinators and pollinator habitat on farms. Jointly written by Dunling Wang, PhD, PAg, Provincial Specialist, Alternative Cropping Systems, and Graham Parsons, MSc, PAg, Pollinator Biosecurity Specialist, Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture, this article discusses some of the many benefits of converting buffer zones into pollinator habitat in organic cropping systems. From increasing pollinator presence, which is crucially important these days, to tangible benefits on crop yield and seed uniformity and quality, there are many reasons to consider adding or increasing pollinator habitat in your farm or yard.

Our *Nourish* article takes us all the way to Vancouver to a bakery and store named Flourist. Flourist is a unique blend of mill, bakery, and community hub, bridging the gap between Canadian farmers and everyday cooks, bakers and food lovers.

Many of their premium, organic grains originate in the fields of Saskatchewan, traveling west to be transformed into fresh flour, artisan bread, pastries and pantry essentials for people who appreciate knowing exactly where their food comes from. Many of the prairie farmers' portraits are featured right on the product, offering traceability and a face to the grain.

In *Innovate*, we caught up with Cody McNernie, supply chain manager of O&T Farms and Oleet Processing. What began in 1967 as a family poultry farm has evolved into a premier processor of flax-based livestock feed. Their flagship product infuses flaxseed into livestock rations, naturally enriching everyday consumer foods like eggs, dairy and meat with health-boosting Omega-3 fatty acids. Flax and peas are staples for Saskatchewan's organic farmers, offering excellent crop rotation, improved soil health, and strong market potential. At Regina-based O&T Farms, these crops do even more – they drive a global nutrition story bridging prairie fields to grocery shelves across North America, southeast Asia and the Middle East.

It's summer, which means the kids or grandkids are off from school and parents are trying to find ways to keep them occupied. So, we thought it would be a great issue to bring back the kids' activities in our *Feature* article. Once you are done reading it, pass it over to a little one in your life for some organic agriculture themed puzzles, trivia, and colouring. The Unscramble puzzle might even be fun for adults!

As always, a big thanks to our *Abundance* advertisers, whose support continues to make this publication possible. Be sure to check out their ads in this and every issue.

I hope you enjoy this issue and the summer days ahead! ●

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Photos by Brook Thalgott

Grain with a journey

From Saskatchewan fields to an East Vancouver bakery, organic grains and legumes are finding new life in loaves, pastries and pantry shelves.

By Brook Thalgott

On Vancouver's Commercial Street, far from the open fields where much of its story begins, Flourist has built a warm neighbourhood hub around a simple idea: people care more when they know where their food comes from.

Part mill, part bakery and part gathering place, Flourist connects Canadian-grown grains and legumes with home bakers, curious cooks and customers who may never have stood in a lentil field or watched wheat come off the combine. Some of those ingredients begin their journey in Saskatchewan, grown by organic producers whose crops travel west to become flour, bread, pastries, meals and everyday pantry staples.

For Saskatchewan organic growers, it is a glimpse of their work in the wild, transformed and loved far from where it started.



A TRANSPARENT START

Flourist was co-founded in 2014 by Janna Bishop and Shira McDermott. Bishop came from clothing design and McDermott from the food industry, but both saw the same gap in the growing farm-to-table movement. Diners were learning the names of vegetable growers and meat producers, yet flour, beans and grains often remained anonymous.

Flourist set out to change that by bringing supply chain transparency into a new food category. The company wanted to help people get curious about where their food comes from and make informed choices about what they consume.

That curiosity is still at the heart of the business. Flourist sells whole and freshly milled grains, along with Canadian legumes, giving customers a way to bring traceable ingredients into their own kitchens. It also uses those same ingredients in its bakery, turning flour and grain into food people can experience right away.



FROM FIELD TO STOREFRONT

In 2019, Flourist opened its flagship retail store in East Vancouver. The Commercial Street space was designed to showcase the foods Bishop and McDermott loved to eat every day, with room for customers to gather over a meal, drink coffee, pick up a pastry, shop for ingredients or browse recipes.

At the centre of the storefront is an Austrian flour mill shipped across the Atlantic, a working showpiece that reinforces Flourist's commitment to freshness and craft. The mill is more than equipment. It is a visible reminder that flour has a source, a process and a story.

For customers, that story might begin with a bag of whole grain on the shelf or a slice of bread at the table. For growers, it begins months earlier, with soil, seed, weather and the steady work of organic production.

LOVED FAR FROM HOME

There is something powerful about seeing Prairie ingredients take on a second life in a city bakery. Wheat, rye, lentils or chickpeas grown in Saskatchewan can land in a Vancouver kitchen, where they are milled, cooked, baked and shared by people who may know the farm name before they taste the food.

"It's gratifying as a farmer to be able to be a part of making the ideal of a short food chain from farm to table a reality. I appreciate our personal relationship with Flourist because it allows us to be flexible with each other when needed and gives us mutual benefits that are hard to come by in standard commodity grain markets," says Will Robbins, owner, Maida Vale Farms.

That connection is what makes Flourist's model resonate. It does not treat grains and legumes as background ingredients. It makes them central to the eating experience, inviting customers to understand their value, flavour and origin.



"I've had friends in Vancouver reach out to let me know they saw me on a local shelf, which is pretty neat," says Robbins. "To me, the relationship we have with Flourist is kind of the ideal market option for organic farmers."

Flourist says it exists to share the good feelings that come with a more nutritious, transparent food supply. In practice, that means building community around ingredients and celebrating the people who grow, mill, bake, cook and eat them.

For Saskatchewan organic producers, it is a satisfying full circle. Their crops leave the farm, travel across provinces and become part of everyday life in another community, still carrying the care of the land with them. ●

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From prairie flax to Omega-3 food

A Regina processor is building markets for Saskatchewan organic flax and peas by connecting local crops to livestock feed, food brands and consumers looking for more from everyday foods.

By Brook Thalgott

For Saskatchewan organic growers, flax and peas are familiar crops. They fit rotations, support soil health and can offer market opportunities when buyers are available. At O&T Farms in Regina, those crops are also part of a larger nutrition story that reaches from prairie fields to grocery shelves in North America, Southeast Asia and the Middle East.

The company began as a family poultry operation in 1967 and has since grown into a processor of flax-based livestock feed ingredients. Its flagship product, linPRO®, is made with flaxseed and designed to bring Omega-3 fatty acids into livestock rations. When used in feed, the Omega-3s move through to foods people already buy, including eggs, dairy and meat.

For organic growers, the important part of that story is the supply chain behind it. O&T Farms purchases certified organic flax and peas from Saskatchewan farms, using those crops in its organic linPRO® program.

The company operates both conventional and certified organic product lines, but its organic program depends on certified organic crops grown close to home.

"Having organic growers in our backyard is what lets us deliver a consistently high-quality ingredient, reliably and affordably. The further we have to source, the more risk we take on — weather, transportation, and cost — and local sourcing is what keeps that risk low and our pricing competitive," says Cody McNernie, manager, supply chain, at O&T Farms.

WHY FLAX MATTERS

The company's process stabilizes the flax-based ingredient, protecting its Omega-3 content so it stays effective in livestock rations. Flax is one of Saskatchewan's signature crops, with the province producing more than 80 per cent of Canada's flax and supplying a crop that is naturally rich in Omega-3. For O&T Farms, that makes it a practical starting point

Photos provided by O&T Farms



for improving the nutritional profile of foods without asking consumers to change their habits or rely only on supplements.

O&T Farms says linPRO® has been supported by more than 140 university trials worldwide (including at the University of Saskatchewan, University of Guelph, Penn State and University of California) looking at animal health, performance and the nutritional profile of resulting food products.

Peas play a complementary role in the organic feed formulation, contributing protein to the ration and serving as an effective carrier of Omega-3s. Together, organic flax and peas help create a value-added ingredient that begins with crops grown in Saskatchewan and ends in products marketed to consumers looking for functional foods.

A LOCAL BUYER IN A GLOBAL MARKET

Finding a dependable market can be one of the ongoing challenges in organic production. Certification brings added management, record-keeping and cost, so growers need buyers who understand that value.

O&T Farms' production runs year-round, which creates ongoing demand for organic crops. The company's customer base now extends well beyond Saskatchewan, with a significant share of sales going to the United States and growing markets overseas. That broader reach can help buffer demand from purely local market swings, while keeping the first step of the chain in Saskatchewan.

The company is also investing in its Regina facilities, including expanded packaging and warehouse capacity. For growers, that expansion matters only if it translates into long-term relationships and consistent purchasing.

"We're looking for organic flax and pea growers who take quality seriously — clean, well-stored product that meets food-grade standards consistently, year over year," says McNernie. "Volume matters too; we want partners who can grow with us and commit to steady, reliable acreage. But more than anything, we're looking for long-term relationships. The best partnerships are the ones where the grower and the processor are planning the next several seasons together, not just the next load."

TRACEABILITY FROM FIELD TO FORK

O&T Farms has also developed Raised Omega Right®, a consumer-facing brand and certification program for foods enriched through its Omega-3 feeding system. Food products bearing the Raised Omega Right seal, and other Omega-3 claims created by feeding linPRO®, are independently verified to contain their stated Omega-3 level.

For consumers, that may show up as Omega-3 eggs, milk, yogurt, butter or cheese. Consumers have a trustworthy way to get essential nutrients through everyday foods, rather than supplements. For growers, it is one example of how a crop can move beyond the commodity stream into a traceable value chain.

That traceability is a key element of organic agriculture. Consumers want to know not only what is in their food, but how it was produced and where the ingredients came from. Saskatchewan growers are part of that story, even when the final product is sold far from the farm.

KEEPING VALUE IN SASKATCHEWAN

O&T Farms manufactures in Saskatchewan and sources organic flax and peas locally where possible. That matters in a province where raw agricultural products often leave before much value is added.

Processing, transportation, quality control and marketing all create work beyond the farm gate. When those steps happen in Saskatchewan, more of the economic activity stays in the province.

For organic growers, the opportunity is straightforward: a Regina-based buyer is actively looking for certified organic flax and peas to support a growing feed ingredient program tied to global food markets.

"The future of organic sourcing in Saskatchewan is bright. The interest from growers keeps building, the quality keeps improving, and the infrastructure to support organic production is stronger every year," says McNernie. "We're proud to be part of that story right here at home, and we're committed to growing alongside the producers who make it possible. The next decade is going to be an exciting one for organic agriculture in this province."

The flax or peas grown on a Saskatchewan organic farm this season could eventually help produce Omega-3 enriched milk in Dubai, eggs in California or dairy products from Ontario. It is a long journey, but it starts in a place organic growers know well: the field. ●

FOR the KIDS

Our kid's content is back, just in time for the summer holidays!

Unscramble

L A B E

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D A P S E

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R I A N G

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U Q C K A

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R T I E

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What the organic farmer looked forward to after a long day in the loud tractor seeding legumes.

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O O O O O



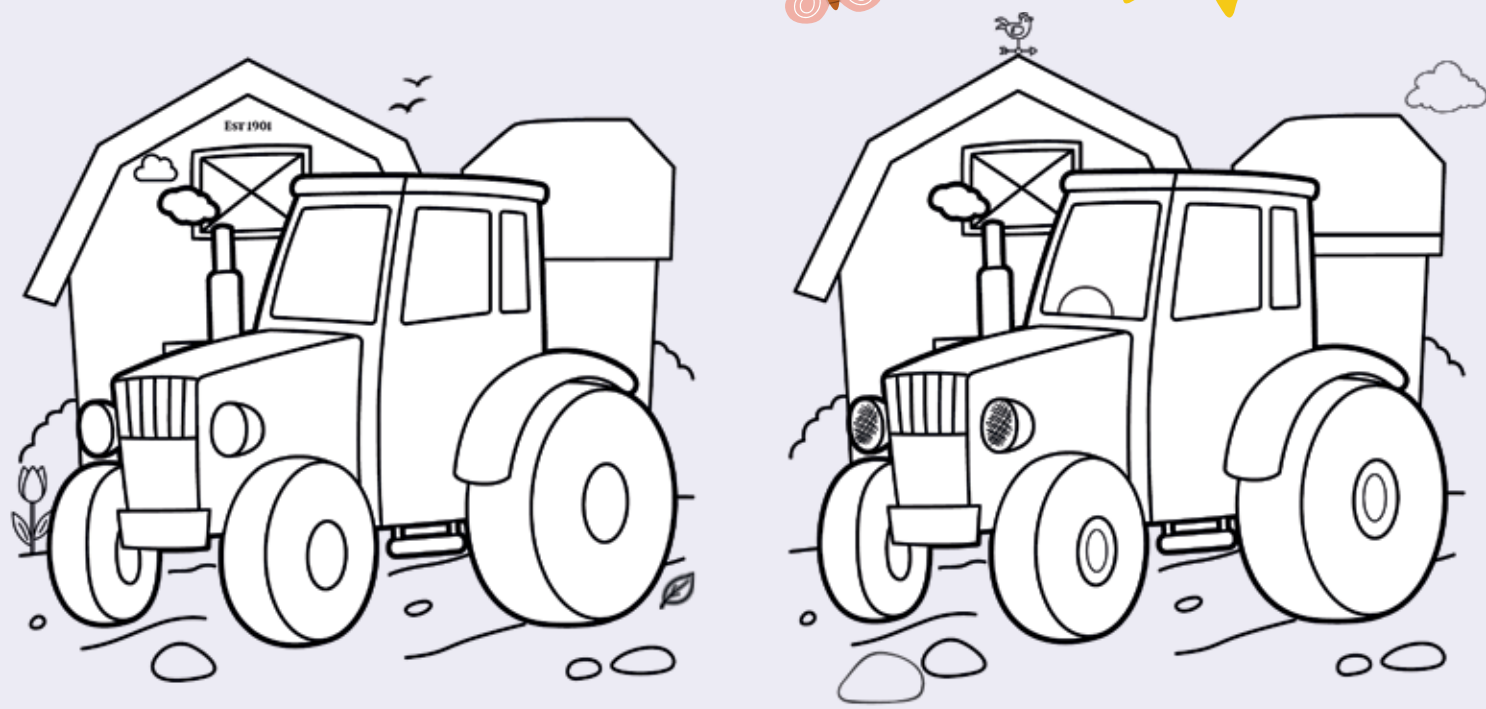
Unscramble the farm-themed words on the left, then use the circled letters to form the answer to the clue on the right. Hint: it's a pun! Answers on page 18.

Trivia

1. What fruit has its seeds on the outside rather than the inside?
2. What is the most widely grown crop in Saskatchewan?
3. What crop is used to make linen fabric?
4. Which insect is crucial for pollinating many types of crops around the world?
5. What is a baby goat called?
6. What is the fastest land animal commonly found on farms?
7. What is an adult male chicken called?
8. Grains like wheat, rice, corn, and barley are all technically types of what?
9. How many compartments does a cow's stomach have?

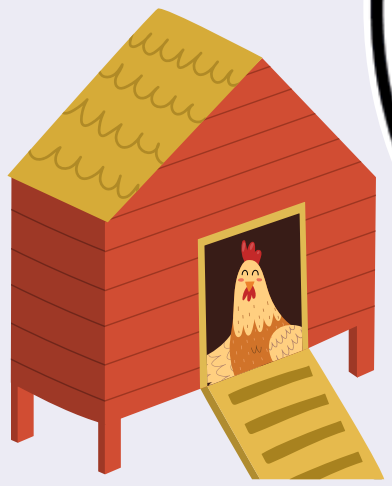
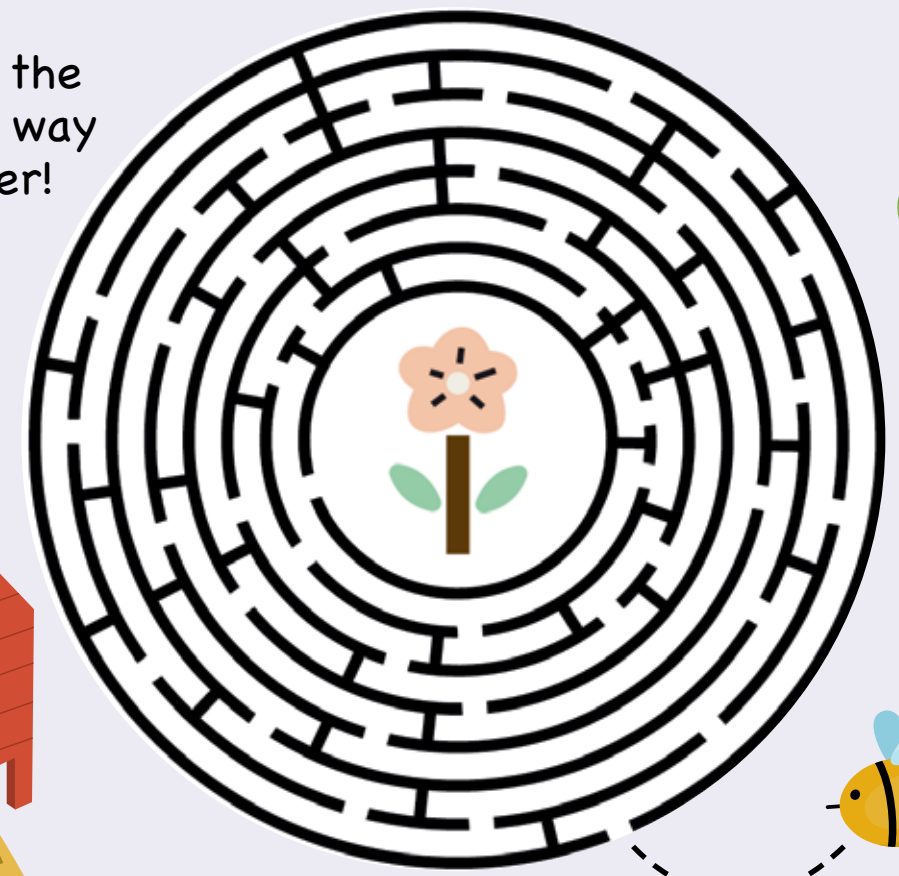
Answers on page 18.

Spot the Difference & Color



Answers on page 18.

Maze Help the bee find its way to the flower!



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A zone of pollinator friendly habitat with flowers and grasses Photos provided by Graham Parsons

Benefits of converting buffer zones into pollinator habitat in organic cropping systems

By Dunling Wang, PhD, PAg, Provincial Specialist, Alternative Cropping Systems, and Graham Parsons, MSc, PAg, Pollinator Biosecurity Specialist, Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture

Converting buffer zones into pollinator habitat is one of the most cost-effective and ecologically powerful strategies available to organic producers. This transformation can turn buffer strips at field edges from low-return spaces into high-functioning ecological assets. When seeded to native forbs and grasses and managed intentionally, these areas provide forage, nesting sites, overwintering refuge and safe spaces protected from pesticide contamination.

In organic farming systems, where ecological resilience and yield stability are critical, pollinator-friendly buffer zones contribute significantly to crop performance, biodiversity and long-term soil health and water quality.

Canadian Organic Standards clearly encourage biodiversity features, such as pollinator habitat and insect areas. Converting buffer zones directly supports this organic principle while also aligning with broader Prairie land-use planning priorities focused on ecosystem health and resilience.

Enhancing Pollinator Abundance and Diversity

Across the Canadian Prairies, wild bees, hoverflies, butterflies, beetles and other insects serve as key pollinators for oilseeds, pulses, forages, fruit, vegetables and other specialty crops¹. However, simplified agricultural landscapes and short windows of crop floral abundance leave pollinators with insufficient forage and habitat for much of the season. Creating pollinator habitats directly addresses these gaps.

Research shows that flower strips and prairie plantings substantially boost pollinator abundance and diversity, especially when seeded with a variety of flowering species that offer plenty of nectar and pollen². For example, a study in the U.S. Midwest found that Prairie strips occupying just 10 per cent of a field produced a 3.5-fold increase in pollinator abundance³. While the geography is different, the Prairie climate and cropping systems are similar enough that these findings are highly relevant to farms in the Canadian Prairie provinces.

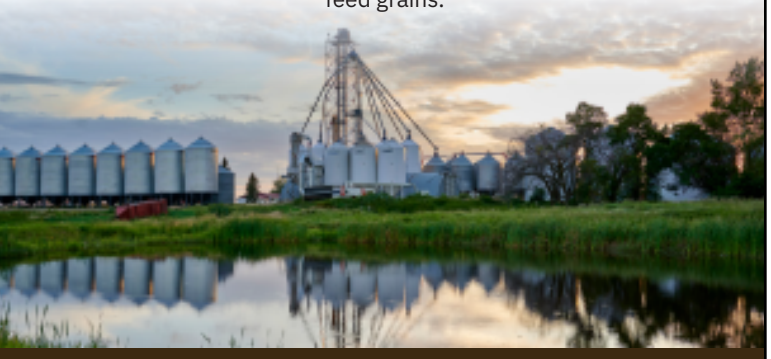


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Bumblebee on red clover flower in a flower meadow

IMPROVING CROP YIELD, UNIFORMITY AND SEED QUALITY

Crop yield responses vary across crops and environments in the Canadian Prairies, but pollinator habitat consistently increases biodiversity and ecosystem function. Yield gains are often measurable, especially in crops with partial or complete pollinator dependence, such as faba bean, buckwheat, mustard, sunflower, caraway, coriander and seed alfalfa. Benefits from insect pollination extend beyond crop yield. They also include reduced crop flowering duration, earlier and more even crop maturity and enhanced seedling vigor.

Alfalfa seed production is a strong example. Managed leafcutter bees and other solitary species are indispensable, and growers typically deploy 40,000–60,000 leafcutter bees per acre to achieve satisfactory pollination and seed set. Historically, alfalfa seed was grown in smaller fields bounded by woodland and brush piles, but as fields grew larger and nesting opportunities decreased, seed yields dropped. This led to the development and management of leafcutter bees⁴. Buffer zone pollinator habitat enhances this system by supporting both managed and wild pollinators.

CREATING CONTINUOUS SEASON-LONG BLOOM

One of the biggest limitations for Prairie pollinator health is the variation in floral availability throughout the year. By converting buffer zones into flower-rich habitat, producers can create an April to September continuum of bloom, which is a key driver of pollinator abundance and diversity.

Prairie-adapted species are especially valuable, offering staggered bloom times and high-quality forage while thriving under Prairie soils and climatic conditions. A recommended native Prairie pollinator seed mix should ideally contain 15–30 different species, prioritizing prairie forbs (broad leaf, herbaceous flowering plants) and legumes over native grasses and sedges at a 4:1 ratio (80 per cent forbs and legumes: 20

per cent grasses) to maximize blooms⁵. This mix creates stabilized forage stands, supports nesting sites and helps suppress weeds. Some key species include wild bergamot, blanket flower, prairie clovers, goldenrods, asters, coneflowers and yarrow, ideally sourced from local experts.

By creating continuous floral resources within buffer zones, organic producers can stabilize pollinator communities throughout the entire growing season, resulting in more consistent pollinator populations and reliable crop pollination services.

SUPPORTING NESTING, OVERWINTERING AND HABITAT CONNECTIVITY

Well-established wild bee communities require more than flowers. About 70 per cent of wild bees nest in the ground, while others rely on stems, wood cavities or hollow plant structures. Converting buffer zones into pollinator habitat allows producers to integrate untilled, sunny and sandy patches for ground nesters; bundles of plant stems or drilled wooden blocks for cavity nesters; and brush piles or unmown grassy areas for overwintering.

These micro-habitats are easy to create and maintain and can significantly increase the reproductive success of wild pollinators. As many native bee species forage within a range of 200 meters or less, placing habitats near target crops can maximize pollination benefits by reducing insect travel distance. Buffer zones also serve as corridors, linking isolated natural patches in the field, including sloughs and groves across the landscape. The networks created by this connection support richer, more resilient pollinators and beneficial insect communities.

STRENGTHENING NATURAL PEST SUPPRESSION

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pests, such as aphids, caterpillars and leafhoppers. By strengthening these natural enemy communities, producers can reduce the need for external pest control intervention. This approach also closely aligns with organic production principles. Habitat-enhanced biological control works together with improved pollination, offering multiple ecosystem services from the same buffer zones.

Increasing the abundance and activity of natural enemies through flower-rich buffers leads to more resilient and self-regulating agroecosystems. These intentionally managed field edges also enable beneficial insects to move more effectively among crop areas. Altogether, flower-enriched buffer zones represent a practical strategy for improving pest suppression and supporting the long-term sustainability of organic farming systems.

SOIL CONSERVATION AND WATER-QUALITY BENEFITS

Buffer zones planted with dense perennial vegetation offer significant advantages for conserving both soil and water. Deep-rooted native species help stabilize the soil, reduce erosion and enhance overall soil structure. These vegetated strips also improve nutrient cycling. Research indicates that planting 10 per cent of a field into strips of prairie along the contour can reduce surface soil runoff by 95 percent, and nitrogen and phosphorus loss by 84 per cent and 90 per cent, respectively³. As a result, nitrogen and phosphorus runoff into nearby water bodies is greatly reduced, helping to better maintain soil organic matter and aggregate stability over time.

In organic production systems, where soil fertility and biological activity depend on natural processes, these benefits are even more valuable. Improved soil health supports moisture retention, healthy root development and efficient nutrient cycling, all of which contribute to more resilient cropping systems.

OTHER BENEFITS

The idea of converting buffer zones to pollinator habitat can also be extended to other low-productivity spaces in the field, such as saline areas, awkward corners, shaded edges and drowned-out spots. Producers can use these routinely underperforming sites to improve overall field productivity. The economic opportunity cost remains low, while the ecological return is high.

Pollinator-friendly buffer zones also act as refuges when neighbouring conventional fields are sprayed. Well-managed buffer zones help reduce pesticide drift into pollinator habitat, protecting forage and nesting sites.

As plants in the buffer zone mature, they provide strong pollinator responses year after year, with sustained returns in pollinator activity and floral abundance. After initial establishment (typically about three years), maintenance may involve occasional strip mowing outside bloom periods and, if grass becomes dominant, inter-seeding forbs.

CONCLUSION

Converting buffer zones into pollinator habitat in Canadian Prairie organic systems yields substantial ecological, agronomic and economic benefits. Scientific research demonstrates clear improvements in pollinator abundance, crop pollination, soil and water protection, pest suppression and whole-farm resilience. Several early organic adopters in Saskatchewan have already observed some of these benefits.



Helianthus pauciflorus (stiff sunflower) meadow

Converting buffer zones into high-quality pollinator habitat, especially when strategically placed in low-return areas, provides consistently positive ecological outcomes with measurable benefits across many crop systems. As Prairie climate variability continues to challenge agricultural stability, buffer-zone pollinator habitat stands out as a practical, research-supported strategy for sustaining both organic production and ecological integrity. ●

Additional Reading:

1 Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, 2014. Native Pollinators and Agriculture in Canada https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2014/aac-aafc/A59-12-2014-eng.pdf

2 Glenny et al., 2025. Flowers for habitat enhancement primarily benefit common insect pollinators across temperate grasslands. J. Appl. Ecol. <https://besjournals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/1365-2664.70216>

3 Schulte et al., 2017. Prairie strips improve biodiversity and the delivery of multiple ecosystem services from corn–soybean croplands. Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. 114 (42): 11247-11252 <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28973922/>

4 Peck and Bolton, 1946. Alfalfa seed production in northern Saskatchewan as affected by bees, with a report on means of increasing the population of native bees. Scientific Agriculture. 26. 338-418.

5 USDA, 2022. Conservation Planner Guide: planting and understanding diverse native seed mixes. <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2024-10/DiverseNativeSeedMixesGuide.pdf>

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Bits & Bites

By Deb Tuchelt, Executive Director, SaskOrganics

GRAIN MILLERS CELEBRATES 25TH ANNIVERSARY

On July 14, Grain Millers is celebrating their 25th year of business in Saskatchewan by hosting a customer appreciation event. The event features a dinner, live music, raffle prizes and more. Held in the Ituna arena, home of Prairie Oat Growers Association (POGA), this event will have fun for the whole family, good food and drinks, and a 50/50 with proceeds supporting the Ituna arena.

"Grain Millers would not be where we are without the unwavering support of our farmers. We have had 25 years worth of great partnerships with the producers of Saskatchewan, and we look forward to having many more with you!" said Scott Shiels, grain procurement manager at Grain Millers.

PRAIRIE HERITAGE SEEDS MARKS THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE KAMUT® BRAND WHEAT

Also on July 14, Prairie Heritage Seeds is hosting a producer appreciation event with a dinner, talks and more to mark the 40th anniversary of the KAMUT® brand wheat.

"For 40 years, the KAMUT® brand has created value for producers and has been supported by dedicated growers who believe in quality, stewardship, and long-term partnerships, and some of those partnerships are onto the second generation" said Alex Galarneau of Prairie Heritage Seeds. "We're excited to bring people together to celebrate that history and thank the producers who have played such an important role in this milestone." ●

Happy Anniversaries to both, on behalf of SaskOrganics!



Unscramble

Bale
Spade
Grain
Quack
Tire
"Peas" and quiet

Trivia

1. Strawberry
2. Wheat
3. Flax
4. Bee
5. Kid
6. Horse
7. Rooster
8. Grasses
9. Four

Spot the difference and color!

Cloud, weather vane, leaf,
flower, extra rock, birds, puff
of smoke from tractor, year
of establishment on barn,
headlights, tire hubcaps, extra
line on roof, steering wheel

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