



2020/2021 FLT Society Annual Report

From April 2020 to April 2021, The Farmlands Trust (Greater Victoria) Society [FLT Society] engaged in protecting local farmland, protecting eco-sensitive and culturally special areas, producing food for those in need, and providing relevant educational and related public awareness opportunities.

Our charitable not-for-profit organization advanced the following suite of initiatives and related activities in 2020/2021:

Farmland preservation and management

As part of our mission, the FLT Society produces food for those in need. From 2012 to present, the FLT Society has been gradually returning the 100+ year-old historic Newman Farm in Saanichton to active agricultural uses. During 2020, we continued to focus our efforts on our “field to plate” initiative (producing apples, assorted herbs, assorted squash, beets, carrots, cucumbers, garlic, leeks, parsnips, pears, turnips, and swiss chard). In 2020, we grew, harvested, and shared over 7,300 lbs., worth \$24,400.00 of fresh, local produce. As part of the FLT Society’s “field to plate” initiative, the produce grown at Newman Farm is shared with vulnerable populations (e.g., food insecure and homeless populations) throughout the Greater Victoria region. This produce is primarily provided to Our Place Society in support of their regional meal and snack programs (e.g., preparation of entrees, soups, side vegetables, nutritious salads, and desserts). ***From 2014 – 2020, our cumulative “field to plate” initiative total is over 72,000 lbs. of produce grown, harvested, and shared with food insecure populations in the Greater Victoria region, worth over \$177,000.00.***

In 2020, we installed a series of raised-bed herb gardens with funding from Peninsula Co-op and Vancity Savings. We secured additional funds from the Peninsula Co-op and will continue the raised garden bed initiative to grow more produce - thereby expanding the variety of produce grown and lengthening our farming season.

In recognition of the important role that trees play in aesthetics, air quality, soil and water conservation and protection of the environment, we planted 30+ fruit tree orchard at Newman Farm in 2019. With in-kind support from Bartlett Tree Experts, the orchard is flourishing. The orchard provides another food source that we are sharing with Greater Victoria families in need.

Bert James continues his excellent work providing farm management services at Newman Farm - managing the various daily operational duties and responsibilities for the historic farm, the FLT Society vegetable garden plots and raised garden beds, and sunflower/wildflower field. Bert James with a newly hired farm assistant and a group of dedicated FLT Society volunteers participated in planting and harvesting produce on the property as well as winterizing the vegetable plots.

As a charitable not-for-profit organization, the FLT Society remains committed to making the Newman Farm property a productive farm and fulfilling our mission to promote the economic viability of farmland in the Greater Victoria area through our “field to plate” and bee-friendly farming “field of dreams” initiatives, while continuing public awareness and educational programs. We have been happy to work with the Island Pollinators Initiative to continue growing pollinator-friendly plants and crops for the local native bee population.

Every year at the Newman Farm, we plant a portion of our lands into a bee-friendly meadow; including sunflowers, wildflowers, buckwheat, and clover. This beautiful display of flowers is an attractant for birds and bees from the local agricultural lands to support pollination activity. This year, we established a series of lavender beds and planted assorted pollinator-friendly flowers and crops (with funds from the Saanich Peninsula Community Foundation) to expand our national award winning certified bee-friendly farming program. ***The FLT Society’s licensed area of Newman Farm is a certified bee-friendly farm via the Pollinator Partnership Bee-Friendly Farming Program. The FLT Society is a member of the Island Pollinator Initiative and received the 2018 Pollinator Advocate Award for Canada.*** We also continued our commitment to growing bee friendly sunflowers and wildflowers as members of the Island Pollinators Initiative.

The FLT Society program at Newman Farm received certification from the Canadian Agricultural Partnership for completing an environmental farm plan assessment in 2019. To advance best management farming practices, we hope to use this certification to upgrade our irrigation system in the coming year.

COVID-19 pandemic

The World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic on March 11, 2020. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we focused our 2020 initiatives on producing food for those in need and protecting eco-sensitive areas. The FLT Society’s Newman Farm Program aligns with the Government of British Columbia’s pandemic essential services: service provider for vulnerable populations and provider of food and agriculture – as part of the Greater Victoria food supply chain for food insecure populations.

As we needed to restrict access to and from Newman Farm due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we utilized our farm operations and COVID-19 protocols to coordinate a small group of dedicated volunteers to strategically support the FLT Society Newman Farm Manager and FLT Society Newman Farm Assistant with spring planting, summer garden maintenance, fall harvesting, and winterizing of Newman Farm. Stantec and the Shelbourne Community Kitchen also assisted us with the irrigation line set up and wind down in 2020.

As in-person contact was limited this year, the FLT Society Board of Directors met via videoconference call.

Financial

Many thanks to the following individuals and organizations who supported the FLT Society in 2020-2021 with regard to farmland preservation and local food security protection activities in the Greater Victoria region, in particular, our work at Newman Farm in the form of financial and in-kind donations: Bartlett Tree Experts, Coast Capital Savings (Sidney and Saanichton Branches), District of Central Saanich, District of North Saanich, FLT Society donors/supporters

(individuals and families), Integrity Sales and Distributors, Peninsula Co-op, Rabobank, Royal Bank of Canada, Saanich Peninsula Community Foundation, Saanichton Farm, Stanhope Organics, Stantec, Town of Sidney, United Way of Southern Vancouver Island (formerly United Way of Greater Victoria), Vancity Savings, Vancouver Foundation, Victoria Foundation, and West Coast Seeds.

Said funds made our charitable work possible in maintaining and improving the FLT Society's agricultural stewardship work which included growing fresh, local produce for redistribution to Greater Victoria's most vulnerable populations.

The FLT Society Board of Directors is most appreciative of the District of Central Saanich granting our charitable not-for-profit society with a multi-year permissive tax exemption. The permissive tax exemption provides certainty to the FLT Society as a means of advancing our farmland management activities at Newman Farm. Also, in 2020, we received a \$10,000 grant from the District of Central Saanich to support farm operations at Newman Farm.

Communications and public outreach

For more information about the FLT Society, visit

- FLT Society website: www.farmlandstrust.org
- FLT Society Facebook site: <https://www.facebook.com/The-Farmlands-Trust-Society-190493347776568/>
- FLT Society Twitter site: <https://twitter.com/FarmlandsTrust>

Looking to the future

During 2021/2022, the FLT Society Board of Directors are proposing the following activities:

- **“Field to Plate” - Crop Production Program.** The FLT Society continues to expand its licensed area cultivated by approximately 10% per year (i.e., vegetable growing area and fruit orchard). To continue with the existing program and program expansion, the following initiatives are to be addressed: (1) diversification of crops, which includes purchasing seeds, starter plants, and gardening tools; (2) expanding the current one-acre+ Newman Farm vegetable garden; (3) expanding the range of produce that we grow in the coming years; (4) supporting organic (fall/winter) fertilization and cover crops to support soil revitalization; (5) raised garden bed program expansion; and (6) orchard maintenance.
- **“Field of Dreams” – Certified Bee-Friendly Farming/Pollinator Program Activities.** This includes offering forage – providing good nutrition for native bees on approximately 30% of the licensed area. To conduct and maintain this program requires planting a continuous bloom of different flowering plants throughout the growing season, especially in early spring, offering a clean water source for bees, providing a variety of habitats for nesting and mating utilizing hedgerows, natural brush, and buffer strips, and practicing Integrated Pest Management – utilizing no chemicals on the Farm. This program requires an annual maintenance and revitalization program to operate these activities utilizing pollinator-friendly wise practices.

- **Irrigation Management.** Repair, maintain, and update our irrigation line and watering systems at Newman Farm to support optimal food growth (includes our fruit orchard, vegetable and herb garden boxes) and our national award-winning certified bee-friendly farming practices (includes a lavender garden installed in 2019). The FLT Society maintains the water line on the designated portion of Newman Farm that we manage, and we also monitor any risks of deficiencies in the irrigation system infrastructure throughout the growing season. Irrigation line upgrading would support our “field to plate” initiative and award-winning certified bee-friendly farm practices on our three-acre+ Farm.
- **Hiring of Part Time Staff.** Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, seasonal volunteer work parties at Newman Farm have been scaled back to align with the provincial health officer’s health and safety protocols. This resulted in hiring a part time staff member to help maintain Newman Farm Program Operations.

Many thanks to our 2020/2021 FLT Society Founder, Patron, Board of Directors, Community Advisors, Volunteers-at-Large, Farm Manager, Farm Assistant, Webmaster/Social Media Specialist, Newman Farm Volunteers, and Supporters for your ongoing commitment to regional farmland preservation and food security protection in Greater Victoria!