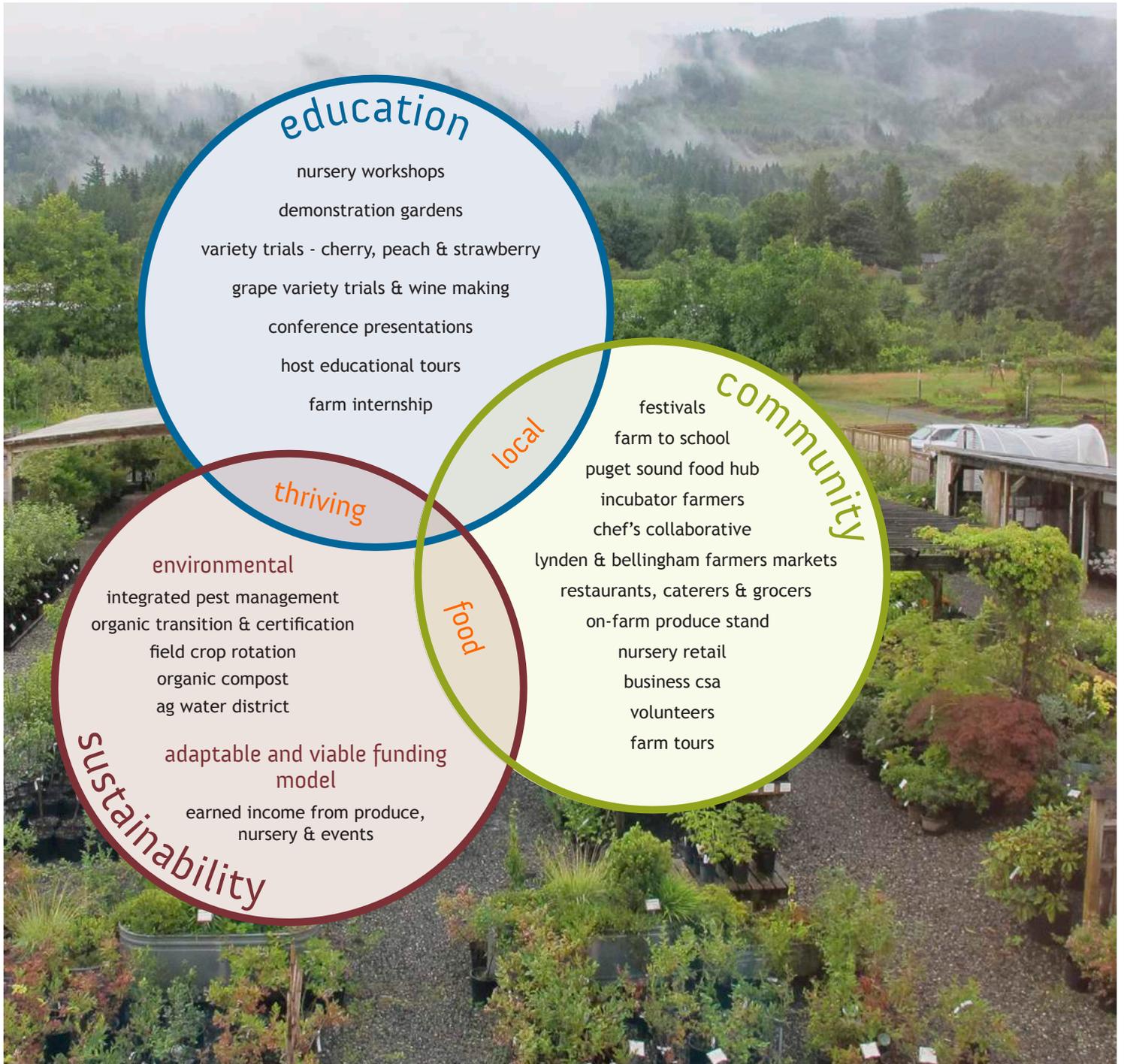


# 2014 annual report



our mission: to build experience, knowledge and community to expand dynamic local food systems

# education



## farm intern education program

### a curriculum-based hands-on education

Our farm internship program, now in its third year, offers paid interns hands-on experiences in agricultural production and management. The 8-month program instills essential skills needed for success in farming within today's food markets and economic environment. Graduates of the program leave with the expertise and skills to either start their own farm business or to be a key contributor at an existing operation.



### curriculum categories

- vegetables
- ornamentals
- soils
- markets
- why farm
- fruits
- vines
- tools
- business

### what are past intern graduates doing now?

- three previous program graduates are launching their new farm businesses as part of the Center's incubator program (Chubby Bunny Farm, Pachamama Organics & Wildrye Farm).
- one has started her own farm on Camano Island (Island Harvest)
- three are working in regional food systems including here at the Center and Puget Sound Food Hub.
- one has her own consulting business (Wonder-Flora Landscape Design)
- three of the 2013 graduates are embarking on their second year of their CSA (Small Acres).
- one 2013 graduate is running the outback program at WWU.



*"Cloud Mountain was a great introduction to farming on a small production scale. My time there exposed me to many of the concepts and tools used on a production farm, and will undoubtedly serve me well as I start my own farm."*

Chris Henderson, 2013 Farm Intern





# education

## ongoing variety trials

We continue to run variety and production trials for a wide range of tree fruits, berries and vine fruits as we have for over three decades. We are inspired to innovate production and growing systems and share that information broadly to help create new opportunities for market farmers in the region.

## field production trials

Over the decades we've planted and trialed many fruit varieties, looking at disease resistance, eating taste and quality, and overall productivity to find commercial varieties that would be profitable for the local market farmers and enjoyable for home orchardists. Following are the active projects in 2014:

- **Cherries:** Testing an Upright Fruiting Offshoot (UFO), developing a production system using only certified organic inputs.
- **Peaches:** Experimenting with training systems, varieties and disease management strategies to mitigate losses during fruit formation for a viable certified organic model.
- **Table Grapes:** Testing variations of the Geneva Double Curtain Training System to increase production.
- **Apple, Pear and Plum Cultivars:** Continuing to expand our trials of flavorful and heritage varieties.
- **Strawberries:** Testing eight new disease-resistant strawberry varieties for organic commercial production and home gardens.
- **Wine Grapes:** Evaluating over 30 varieties of red and white wine grape cultivars that grow in our cooler west slope climate that will produce wines that can compete in today's marketplace. We are working with Northwest Wine Academy to produce small quantities of wine trials for sampling. We offer custom grape propagation for small growers and hobby winemakers.
- **Fertigation Trials and Tunnel Crops:** organic fertigation (liquid fertilizer) program in our high tunnel crops of tomatoes, peppers, melons and eggplants.

## 2014 nursery workshops

Our nursery workshops offer participants an interactive experience to learn directly from experts in a small group setting. As part of our commitment to customer service our education offerings are designed to help our customers succeed.

- 32 workshops
- 382 attendees
- \$3,860 in revenue
- \$326 in donations



## salad green market development

Recognizing the popularity and consumer demand for small tender leafy greens and ready-to-eat salad mixes, we have been collaborating with WSU and a few farmers on an integrated market development project with a vision to build a strong local salad green industry. 2014 results and milestones include:

- Managed 17 beds of production trials with results that made it possible to build an economic model in which the cost of production was lowered by 84%. With this new model local farmers will be able to expand into broader wholesale markets.
- Hosted two workshops attended by regional farmers from Whatcom, Skagit, Island, San Juan and Snohomish Counties, sharing production trial results.
- Gave a presentation on the project and production trial results at Tilth Producers of Washington 40th Anniversary Conference.
- Shared a "poster" of the project and results to the International Society of Horticultural Science.



# community



## connecting with the community

In 2014 we launched several new projects at the Center including vegetable processing for Farm to School, an incubator farm program and we joined the Puget Sound Food Hub as the Whatcom County Hub.



### vegetable processing facility – farm to school

With the new processing facility certified in 2014 we can now process salad greens, head lettuce, carrots, broccoli, and cabbage to be ready for distribution for institutional sales and grocery retail. In 2014 we began providing fresh produce to local schools through the farm to school program. This project is a collaborative effort with NW Agriculture Business Center and with grants from USDA Rural Business Enterprise and Whatcom Community Foundation.

### puget sound food hub

In 2014, we became the cold-storage aggregation and distribution site for the Puget Sound Food Hub in Whatcom County. The Food Hub enables one-stop local and regional distribution for participating farmers, and links them to buyers in previously hard-to-reach markets in Seattle and throughout Puget Sound.

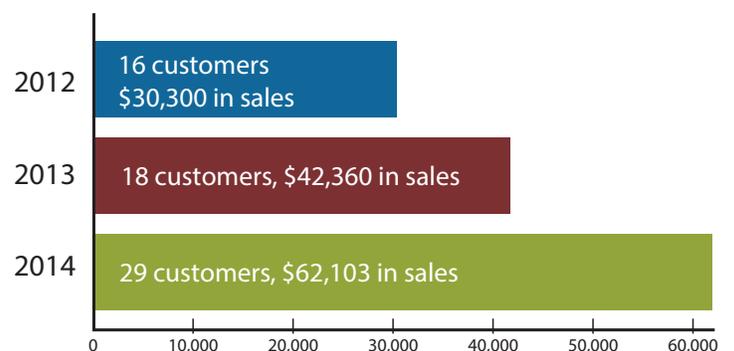


### incubator farm program

We are dedicated to maintaining and improving the local food system and farming business in Whatcom County and helping new farmers get their start is a key part of that initiative. Our internship program helps with learning and experience, but access to workable land can be a challenge for new farmers. In 2012 we purchased 20 acres of tillable land, and in 2013 we began preparing that land with tilling, cover crops and fencing. In 2015 we have four new farm businesses leasing land and sharing in equipment use and barn storage.

### relationship building, increasing sales

The number of restaurant, caterer and grocery customers increased by 60% in 2014 and sales increased by 46% over 2013 revenue.





# community

## events

### fruit festival, october 4 & 5

An annual event for 25 years. Guests tasted over 200 varieties of fruit and nuts, enjoyed live music and tasty food and purchased produce, plants, pumpkins and decorative gourds.

- 1700 attendees
- \$20,332 earned income from entry fee & nursery sales

Our second annual harvest day celebrated the bounty of summer and focused on educating the public on the many programs at the Center. We invited outside groups to participate including Mount Baker Beekeepers, Bellingham Food Bank, Master Gardeners and Whatcom Locavore.

- 250 attendees
- \$1317 in gross revenue from the nursery and farm stand, no entry fee charged.

## farm tours

the center hosted multiple tours including:

- WA State first lady Trudi Inslee and local food system influencers
- governing and business representatives from Bellingham's Sister City in Korea- Cheongju
- Home Garden Seed Association, national association's annual tour
- WSU, WWU and Edmonds Community College student groups
- other regional farm intern programs including the Organic Farm School at Greenbank
- chef tours
- school district food service directors
- western WA farm educators including Viva Farms, Seattle Tilth Farmworks, and Greenbank Farmworks and Youth Gardenworks programs



## volunteer support

- 5 people donated 236 hours on winemaking
- over 150 hours were donated by volunteers supporting on farm events
- over 120 hours were donated by volunteers working around the farm, nursery and in the processing center



# sustainability



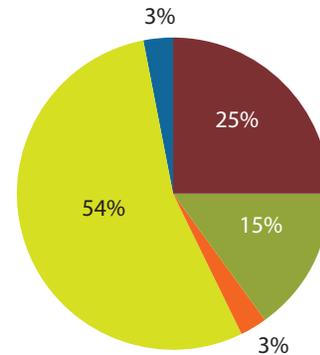
## financial sustainability

building an adaptable and viable funding model

### 2014 income

sales: nursery	\$230,239
sales: fruit & vegetables	\$136,437
education: workshops & intern tuition:	\$22,860
grants:	\$503,835
other:	\$24,568

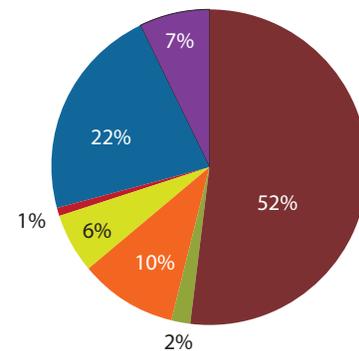
total income: **\$917,939**



### 2014 expenses

labor:	\$475,500
professional services:	\$19,571
supplies:	\$89,894
repairs & maintenance:	\$53,000
overhead:	\$7,977
asset purchases:	\$206,226
planned asset purchase carryover	\$65,771

total expenses: **\$917,939**



earned income helps pay for farm operations — 2014 earned income covered 59% of operations expenses

expanding our own nursery production to increase earned income — new multi-year crops include propagating our own rhododendrons, cider apples and fruit trees.



# sustainability

## environmental sustainability

We continue to work on maintaining and improving our environmental sustainability, especially improving the land. Active projects and practices include:

- transitioning farm land to organic; several acres at main farm and all of Lawrence Rd farm will be eligible for organic certification in 2015.
- developing a stringent crop rotation plan to ensure long-term health and soil viability for future farmers.
- placing a higher percentage of ground in fallow periods for cover crops and better soil-enrichment practices.
- build and use organic compost.
- using technology to improve management and reduce irrigation water use.
- using integrated pest-management practices.
- manage vegetable fields with minimal tillage.
- improved record keeping on land use and farming practices.



## Participated in developing four new Ag Water Districts in Whatcom County.

- worked with seven other farmers and stakeholders for two years to create a stable water supply for agriculture in Whatcom County.

- in 2014 the effort resulted in a proposal for four new water districts for ag on the ballot. Voters passed all four districts with a minimum of 85% approval rates.
- these new districts give agriculture representation on water distribution decisions in the County and they establish a structure in which agriculture can be held accountable for their use and practices.

## it's a team effort

As a key part of the Center's long-term viability we are investing in people and capacity. We are creating the infrastructure and providing support for staff to create a sustainable model of a productive farm and learning center. We are enabling staff to learn and grow in their new roles as stewards of the land and educators to the interns and the community at large.



staff, interns and intern alumni at the fall fruit festival october 2014

## board of directors

- **Sue Webber**, Biology Faculty, Whatcom Community College, retired
- **Max Morange**, Agricultural Programs Director, Bellingham Food Bank
- **Fred Berman**, Program Director for Client Services, Rural Cooperative Development and Agricultural Processing Initiatives, Northwest Ag. Business Center
- **Derek Long**, Executive Director, Sustainable Connections
- **Steve Hollenhorst**, Dean of Students Huxley College of the Environment, Western Washington University



community | education | sustainability

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PRST STD  
 U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
 Lynden, WA  
 Permit No. 20

### nursery open

#### spring

February 1 thru June

Mon - Sat: 10 am - 5 pm; Sun: 11 am - 4 pm

#### summer & fall

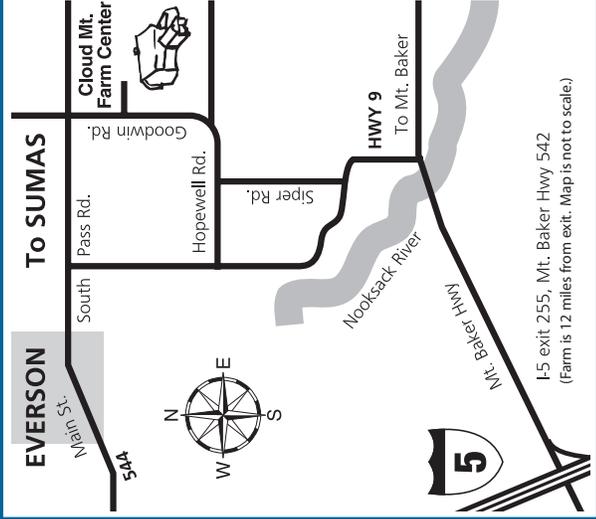
July thru October 31

Wed - Sat: 10 AM - 5 PM; Sunday: 11 AM - 4 PM

november thru the sunday  
 before Thanksgiving

Wed - Sat: 10 am - 4 pm; Sunday 11 AM - 4 pm

#### directions to the nursery



I-5 exit 255, Mt. Baker Hwy 542  
 (Farm is 12 miles from exit. Map is not to scale.)

### cloud mountain farm center

is located along the western edge of the Cascade Mountain range in northwestern Washington. Our twenty acres of nursery stock and fruit orchards grow on the lower slopes of Sumas Mountain, facing west towards the vast lower Nooksack River Valley.



[www.cloudmountainfarmcenter.org](http://www.cloudmountainfarmcenter.org)