



CLOUD MOUNTAIN  
FARM CENTER

community | education | sustainability

# 2015 annual report



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



## letter from the director

Four years ago, Cloud Mountain Farm Center became a reality thanks to the hard work of community members and our founding board. Those dedicated individuals had a vision for the local food system that included:

- **Increased economic opportunity** for local farmers;
- **More locally produced food** for NW Washington communities;
- **Innovative educational opportunities** for new and existing market farmers;
- **Improved access to resources and education** for consumers and home gardeners; and
- The creation of **strategic infrastructure** to make possible a dynamic local food system.

I am inspired by how far we have come in a few short years. We have made great strides in each of our three program areas: Community, Education, and Sustainability.

We are thrilled to provide the local aggregation and distribution site for the **Puget Sound Food Hub**. The Food Hub reduces trucking and marketing costs, and makes it possible for smaller farmers to access expanded markets. In three years, the Food Hub has grown exponentially, indicating strong demand from farmers and buyers.

2015 also afforded us excellent opportunities to connect with our community. In addition to our Summer Harvest Day and our Fall Fruit Festival, we offered 33 free and low-cost workshops. Over 3,000 of you visited Cloud Mountain this year.

Our **new farmer internship** program has graduated 21 individuals, 18 of whom now operate their own farm businesses or continue to work in sustainable food and farming. 2015 was our 2<sup>nd</sup> year offering land and shared equipment to new farmers as part of our **farm incubator program**. By doing so, we remove one of the biggest barriers facing new farm businesses.

Through our ongoing **research trials**, we continued to develop ways to lower production costs and manage crops. We tested new methods to grow fruit organically, and researched safe and cost-effective strategies to produce salad greens. We strive to strengthen the local farm economy by sharing this information with other growers.

Thank you for being part of the Cloud Mountain community. Know that your support is critical to our efforts to build a healthy, just, and sustainable local food system.

I look forward to connecting with you in 2016.

Sincerely,

Tom Thornton  
executive director





# measuring our impact

2015

## programs

## impacts

### community



- farming and gardening workshops
- farm tours
- puget sound food hub
- hands-on events

- **33** workshops
- **460** workshop participants
- **13** farms in food hub
- **850** volunteer hours

### education



- farming and gardening workshops
- new farmer internships
- farm incubator

- **7** interns
- **4** incubator farms
- **5** acres for new farmers
- **4420** training hours

### sustainability



- crop trials
- organic practices
- water conservation
- soil building

- **8** research trials
- **24** certified organic acres
- **580** research hours

## staff

Addie Candib, Development Manager  
 Dylan Cembalski, Operations Coordinator  
 Sean D'Agnolo, Education Coordinator  
 Layla Dunlap, Nursery Manager  
 Hilary Graham, Marketing & Packing Coordinator  
 Terry Maczuga, Nursery Administrator  
 Matthew McDermott, Farm Production Manager  
 Alexandria Spaulding, Communications Director  
 Chris Testa, Farm Lead  
 Mark Thompson, Farm and Propagation Manager  
 Cheryl Thornton, Market Development & Finance Director  
 Tom Thornton, Executive Director

## board of directors

Max Morange, Chair  
 Agricultural Programs Director, Bellingham Food Bank  
 Fred Berman, Treasurer  
 Derek Long, Secretary  
 Executive Director, Sustainable Connections  
 Steve Hollenhorst  
 Dean of Students Huxley College of the Environment,  
 Western Washington University  
 Sue Webber  
 Biology Faculty, Whatcom Community College, retired



# community



## making the connection from farm to table

For Cloud Mountain Farm Center, local food begins at home. As a result, the Center aims to help consumers understand where their food comes from and how it's grown. Each year, in addition to hosting tours and site visits, Cloud Mountain invites the public to two key events: the Summer Harvest Day, in August, and the Fall Fruit Festival, in October. These family-friendly events give visitors the opportunity to sample hundreds of varieties of locally grown vegetables, fruits, and nuts, and experience life on the farm first-hand. In 2015, Cloud Mountain hosted over 3,000 people of all ages!



“Excellent presentation with appropriate in-class and orchard demonstrations. I would highly recommend to others, with a variety of levels of experience. Good info for almost everyone!”

— 2015 Workshop Participant

## empowering families to grow their own

Cloud Mountain Farm Center strives to make growing information and resources accessible to as many people as possible. Cloud Mountain offered **33 free and low-cost workshops** to the community in 2015. Designed for home gardeners and orchardists of all experience levels, workshops covered everything from seed starting to advanced tree-fruit care and cider making. Over **460 participants** benefited from the collective knowledge and expertise of Cloud Mountain's highly-trained staff.



## expanding the market for local foods

Cloud Mountain proudly serves as the Whatcom County host site for the Puget Sound Food Hub. The Food Hub is a network of farmers and buyers who collaborate to aggregate and distribute locally produced food. In 2015, Cloud Mountain aggregated and distributed produce from **13 Whatcom County farms**, enabling their access to **223 buyers** in the Puget Sound region, including restaurants, grocers, schools, colleges, daycares, senior housing, hospitals, and corporate food service. Cloud Mountain's role in the Food Hub facilitated nearly **\$285,000 in sales** of local food!



# education



## training a new generation of growers

“ I learned more than I ever thought possible. I didn't know that things were going to be covered in such depth. Every day I was blown away with something new I had heard or seen. ”

– Adam Hoffman, 2015 Intern



2015 was the third year of Cloud Mountain's farm internship program. Using a curriculum-based, hands-on training approach, the 8-month program teaches interns essential agricultural production and management skills. The curriculum covers vegetable and ornamental production, tree fruit management, soil fertility, direct marketing, business planning, equipment maintenance, and more.

Interns learn from and network with established farmers, scientists, and leaders in the local food community.

In 2015, 7 interns graduated from the Center's internship program, each now equipped with the knowledge and expertise required to start and successfully operate their own farm businesses.

## growing farm businesses

According to the National Young Farmers Coalition, 68% of beginning farmers identify access to land as one of their biggest challenges. With its Farm Incubator program, Cloud Mountain is systematically removing this barrier for beginning growers. Cloud Mountain's Farm Incubator Program provides participating farmers with low-cost access to land, shared equipment, and storage, as well as advice and mentorship. In 2015, the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of the program, the Incubator Program supported and nurtured 4 new farm businesses.



### Chubby Bunny Farm

Building on his experience as a Cloud Mountain intern in 2014, farmer Michael Deitering launched Chubby Bunny Farm at Cloud Mountain's Incubator Farm in 2015. In its first year, Chubby Bunny Farm produced salad greens, arugula, basil, tomatoes, and squash, and sold directly to consumers and restaurants, as well as through the Puget Sound Food Hub. In addition to benefiting from the shared resources offered by the Incubator this year, Michael learned the importance of building customer relationships and promoting his businesses. Michael looks forward to building his capacity and developing his business plan during his remaining two years at the Farm Incubator.





# sustainability



## researching for safe, cost-effective, organic local production

Cloud Mountain Farm Center is dedicated to improving the sustainability not just of its own farming operations, but of the local farm economy, through research and innovation. In 2015, Cloud Mountain managed **8 active research projects**, all intended to identify the most efficient and cost-effective ways to grow vegetables, fruits, and berries locally and organically. Cloud Mountain's 2015 crop trials included testing varieties of strawberries best suited for organic production, managing disease in peaches and cherries to make organic production possible, and evaluating wine grapes for production in the Pacific Northwest. These research projects, and others, contributed to a large body of knowledge and expertise, benefitting the regional community of agricultural producers.



## farming for the health of the environment

2015 saw Cloud Mountain deepen its commitment to sustainable agriculture. With a constant focus on soil health, the farm utilized a stringent crop rotation plan, practiced crop rotation, cover cropping, and minimal tillage, and built and used organic compost. The farm relied on improved technology to manage and reduce water use. With an eye toward enhancing stream health and wildlife habitat, Cloud Mountain installed hundreds of native plants in riparian areas bordering the cropland. And, as of August 2015, all vegetables grown at Cloud Mountain are certified organic!





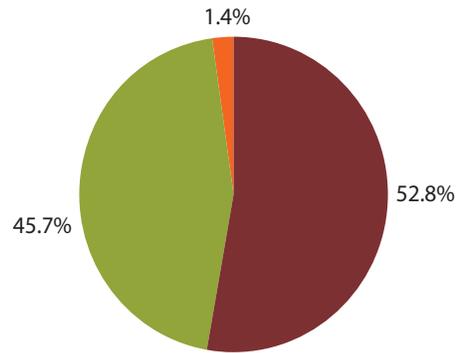
# financial



## 2015 income

■ earned income	\$499,116
■ grants	\$432,199
■ donations	\$13,554

total income: \$944,869



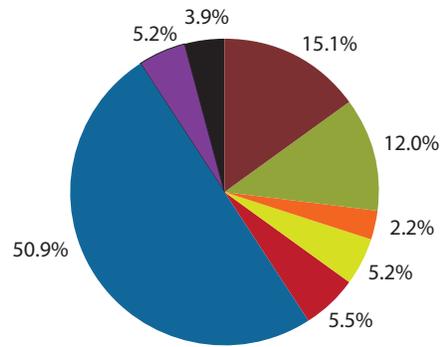
## 2015 expenses

■ admin	\$142,238
■ asset purchases	\$49,455
■ planned asset carryover	\$36,960

programs:

■ education	\$113,289
■ incubator	\$20,628
■ food hub	\$49,363
■ food processing	\$51,858
■ fruit, veg, and nursery production	\$481,078

total expenses: \$944,869



## thank you

Thank you to the customers, donors, funders, and community partners whose loyalty and support make Cloud Mountain Farm Center's work possible. We are especially grateful to the Whatcom Community Foundation and the Sustainable Whatcom Fund for their ongoing investment in our mission and their lasting impact in the community. Together, we are shaping the future of our local food systems.



photo credit David Hoffman

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come visit cloud mountain farm center  
taste - learn - explore

## events 2016

summer harvest day  
saturday, july 30 10am-5pm



## fall fruit festival

october 1 10am-5pm  
october 2 11am-4pm

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