

## **Pender Community Transition - June 1, 2013 FRUIT TREE WORKSHOP**

**Note:** Here's an article about the expert presenters at the Fruit Tree workshop (Bob and Verna Duncan), which also makes really interesting points about adapting to climate change will affect what we can grow.

### **Milder winters allow growth of lemons and olives on Vancouver Island**

By Megan Cole (Canadian Press, May 9, 2013)

VICTORIA — With cold winters and less than tropical summers most Canadians don't think of planting lemon or olive trees in their backyards. But due to global warming, farmer Bob Duncan has been growing a piece of the subtropics on Vancouver Island for 20 years.

Duncan and his wife Verna ([www.FruitTreesAndMore.com](http://www.FruitTreesAndMore.com)), bought their property in North Saanich with the intention of growing fruit trees. While they initially focused just on temperate fruits like apples, pears, peaches, cherries and apricots, the couple has also had thousands of customers interested in growing lemons and other produce common in the Mediterranean. "I think it is within reach of every homeowner right now living on the south coast of British Columbia to grow their own citrus and these other types of Mediterranean and subtropical fruits," said Duncan.

According to the nursery owner, it is not the warmer summers that are allowing the growth of Mediterranean and subtropical fruits; rather, it's the milder winters. He said he's able to grow more types of trees outside of the greenhouse than when he started. The first lemon tree he planted outside nearly 20 years ago now yields several hundred lemons a year, which the Duncans use to make and sell lemon bars, reserving any surplus fruit for personal use.

"The last serious freezes we had here were in the late '80s, early '90s," said Duncan. "Back in the '30s to '60s every few years we would have a cold snap of a week or more duration where the temperatures were minus 10 (Celsius) or worse. You could skate on local ponds and that basically doesn't happen any more." Duncan said citrus fruits like lemons and limes don't need high summer temperatures; they'll ripen during cooler summers.

"In other words they can be grown outside," said Duncan. "They are still sheltered on a south wall, but they are outside." Instead of planting trees like lemons and limes in a greenhouse to protect them from colder winters, Duncan uses a cover and a string of Christmas lights. "The floating row cover allows the sun to pass through, almost like a greenhouse cover, but in a severe cold snap it traps the heat that the Christmas lights give off," he said.

But lemons aren't the only typically warm climate tree becoming popular on B.C.'s south coast. Michael Pierce of the Saturna Island Olive Consortium said personal interest from him and some friends was the inspiration to begin importing olive trees from California. Then they realized if they were interested in growing olives, likely others were too. "We brought in a couple hundred the first year and there was a pretty good response," said Pierce. "The next year we brought in 500, and since then it's been just me doing it."... "We've got so many varied microclimates around B.C., which makes it hard to generalize about what varieties grow well."

As with Duncan's lemon trees, Pierce said that anyone interested in planting an olive tree should avoid cold pockets and make use of south ridges or walls for protection.