



## 2016 FINALIST

# *Environmental Farm Plan Stewardship Award*

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After following a winding route through a commercial and residential area in Pine Grove, Lunenburg County, you'll arrive at the Elmwood Winery; a picturesque 20 acre farm owned and operated by Bruce Wright and Sandra MacDougall. The farm consists of a 2 ½ acre vineyard, ½ acre of haskap orchard and a new small farm winery. The remaining acreage is managed woodland.



Nominated by the Grape Growers' Association of Nova Scotia, Bruce has been instrumental to the development of vineyard acreage on the South Shore and to the overall grape industry in Nova Scotia. An author of two grape production books and heavily involved in several industry groups, Bruce promotes the importance of soil health in order to reduce the reliance on pesticides and fertilizers in grape production.



With soil health in mind, Bruce relies heavily on composted seaweed, earthworm castings and compost teas to improve soil fertility. The compost teas also help inoculate the vines against disease. As a Certified Naturally Grown (CNG) farm, organic sprays are used only as needed for fungal control. For new plantings, rows are prepared using a tiller and subsoiler and grass between rows is left untouched, which helps avoid soil erosion. A cover crop of buckwheat, followed by white clover not only provides soil coverage, it increases soil nitrogen levels, decreases weed growth and provides food for

honey bees. No herbicides are used on the farm, and all weeding is done by hand. Grapevine prunings are chipped, shredded and composted before being applied to the vineyard as a mulch to help suppress weeds.

Biodiversity and wildlife habitat are important components of the farm. A wildflower meadow is being developed for honey bees and native pollinators. Honey bees are kept on the property for haskap pollination and their honey is used to make mead. The woodland is managed

conservatively to provide wildlife habitat. Riparian buffer zones have been left along seasonal streams and the wetland area has been left untouched.

In April 2016, Elmwood Winery received a Small Farm Winery licence. This small wine making operation uses the same minimalist, hands-off approach as the rest of the farm. To minimize the environmental impact of the winery, waste from the wine making process is taken off-farm and used to feed pigs. Any excess is composted on-farm. Bruce and Sandra are investigating the use of bees wax to instead of plastic shrink wrap to seal their wine bottles.



The efforts that Bruce, Sandra and Elmwood Winery have made to reduce their environmental impact have made them one of three finalists for this year's Environmental Farm Plan Stewardship Award. The award is part of the Environmental Farm Plan Program created through a partnership of the Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, the Nova Scotia Environmental Farm Plan and the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture.

The award recognizes producers who make land, water and habitat stewardship a significant part of their farm operations. To be eligible for the award, farmers must have an environmental farm plan. The voluntary plan helps them identify, assess, and reduce environmental risk on their farms. Since the program's inception in 1999, more than 1,800 farmers have developed Environmental Farm Plans for their operations.

The Environmental Farm Plan Program is supported under *Growing Forward 2*, a five-year agricultural agreement between the governments of Canada and Nova Scotia.

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