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# North American Truffle Growers' Association Quarterly Newsletter Autumn 2017



NATGA neither supports nor endorses any specific nursery, growing methods or approaches, business model or technology related to trufficulture. We endeavor to bring to the membership the breadth of knowledge available from multiple sources from which each member can choose. Membership by a nursery, scientist, vendor, etc. does not imply endorsement by NATGA.

## A Letter From the President



We are about to begin another truffle season and there is already news of truffles being found! This is very exciting for all of us in NATGA and I can't wait to see what the season holds for all of us.

The annual conference is coming together nicely. We have Dr. Christine Fischer as our key note speaker, and Dr. Charles Lefevre, and Brian Upchurch are also on our growing list of expert speakers. Make plans to stick around that Sunday of the conference, we will be holding a truffle identification workshop which will feature both European and North American truffle species.

Vitaly Baron has been working hard to get our new website up and running and it is ready to go! Check it out , it looks awesome!

Best of luck to all our growers this harvest season!  
—Olivia Taylor

## Your Executive Committee

**President—Olivia Taylor    Vice President— Vitaly Baron**  
**Secretary—Miriam Skinner    Treasurer— Caryl Talcott**



## Summer Meeting 2017



This past August the Garland's graciously hosted NATGA's annual summer potluck meeting. The afternoon included a tour of the Garland's home and orchards, delicious food, and some catching up between members. The membership present had a brief informal meeting discussing the possible topics for the upcoming winter conference. Based on the feedback from the members the topics with the most interest were passed on to our key note speaker Dr. Christine Fischer. Thank you Franklin, Betty, and Gavin Garland for your hospitality.



# Featured Farm

## The Upchurch Family



After nearly 25 years of growing ornamental plants, and with considerable mixed feelings, I sold my wholesale, specialty nursery 4 years ago. I was certain I would no longer play in the dirt professionally. I fenced the old nursery space on the farm, and allowed our menagerie of animals (Scottish Highland cattle, Miniature Sicilian Donkeys, four dogs, and Darwin, our dromedary camel) to enjoy their newfound expanse of space. Little did I know that my then 15 year-old son, Davis, had other, far grander ideas. He came to me with a proposal. He wanted to grow truffles on our Southern Appalachian farm. Not just any truffle, the Black Truffle or *Tuber melanosporum*.

I thought the notion would pass. After all, he was only 15 and at that age, passions come and go. I knew precious little (read: nothing) about truffles. I challenged Davis to do his homework, which he did thoroughly. My wife, Linda and I looked over his findings, and we agreed that his idea looked not only promising, but exciting. A business plan was created, and we attended our first NATGA meeting connecting us with experts around the world already in the business. Our journey had begun. Books were read, mycorrhized seedlings ordered, generous amounts of lime spread, ground prepared, and irrigation (re)-installed. We were officially in the truffle business. Davis assumed the role of visionary, entrepreneur, webmaster, social media expert, and President of Thinking Outside the Proverbial Box. Linda took on the financial aspects of our new endeavor, Carolina Truffières, LLC, and I embraced my familiar duties managing all of the horticultural aspects. We initially planted a little more than 2 acres of *Quercus robur* and *Quercus macrocarpa*; both mycorrhized with *Tuber melanosporum*; as well as a very few *Castanea* mycorrhized with *Tuber aestivum*.

Our current goal is to plant several additional acres each year with species of host trees including a more cold hardy subspecies of Holly Oak (*Quercus ilex ssp. rotundifolia*), Portuguese Oak (*Quercus faginea*), and several species of Filbert (*Corylus* sp.) that are highly resistant to Eastern Filbert Blight. We are excited to be a part of a growing, dynamic industry that is poised for substantial growth in the coming years. There is nothing quite like farming, even with the considerable challenges it presents. We are pleased to have support of new friends in the industry as our small business moves forward. We are equally excited to do what we can to promote the industry at large.



# Upchurch con't

Our competition in the truffle business is not each other. Our competition is other uses for discretionary income – theater, movies, vacations, etc. We must work together to develop the industry, and find synergies with other similar areas of agriculture, like viticulture, that target comparable end users of our unique product. This means supporting research in any way possible, sharing information with our customers, and offering consistent, high quality product to consumers.

Even with 25 years of experience propagating and growing plants, there was much to learn. We were determined to learn how the industry around the world was growing and thriving. During a truffle conference Davis and I attended in Barcelona, we met growers from around the world who shared their trials and successes. It was evident that a fascinating worldwide industry was evolving. It was also evident that much of the information we had come across in the United States was often incomplete or ill-suited for the growing conditions at hand. We decided to approach a Spanish company, Micologia Forestal & Aplicada with the idea of a partnership to support our new company, and secondly to promote the industry in the United States using proven methods from Europe - adapted to our unique growing conditions. We had met Marcos Morcillo of Micoforma at a NATGA meeting. Micoforma was also looking to increase its presence here, so the timing was ideal. We now have access to technical support from proven truffle producers and their ongoing, cutting edge research taking place in Spain.

After further research, we soon felt that our initial choice of host trees was not ideal. The host species we then sought could not be located domestically, and USDA import restrictions prevented purchasing seedlings from overseas. From my 25 years of nursery experience importing and exporting nursery products, I was able to negotiate the regulatory minefield, and, import the desired seed from Europe. Carolina Truffières is now mycorrhizing seedlings in-house. In addition to *T. melanosporum*, we are quite interested in *T. aestivum* and *Leucangium carthusianum*; as well as co-cropping to utilize the host trees' attributes for nuts and other commercially viable products. In my past life as a nurseryman, I had worked closely with several NC State University research faculty. I now have a NCSU bio-fuels trial on my farm, and it was a simple progression to work with them on collaborative efforts to evaluate alternate truffle host species, as well as new and innovative truffle production practices.



## Who is producing?????

Little birds are telling me that not one or two but possibly several people are starting to produce. This is so exciting!

Through the website we often get inquiries about who has truffle and how some can be purchased.

If you are producing enough to sell we need to find a way to connect suppliers with demand!

# Winter Conference 2018



**Where:** Inn at Darden  
University of Virginia  
Charlottesville, Virginia

**When:** March 2,3,4 2018

**Who:** Details to come!

# And Now A Word From Our Sponsors

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