



501(c)3 organization

# North American Truffle Growers' Association Quarterly Newsletter Spring 2019



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

First of all, it is an honor to begin my term as president of this organization. I appreciate the opportunity to serve you and continue our journey cultivating and enjoying truffles. These are exciting times for the truffle industry. More orchards are producing, yields are increasing, and we are getting positive press.

Our recent annual meeting in Charlottesville was a superb gathering (thanks Olivia!). I was impressed with the quality of speakers, relevance of their topics, and everyone's desire to share their knowledge and experience among other members. Our annual meeting gets better and better with each passing year. The next annual meeting will be held in Charlotte, North Carolina on February 21<sup>st</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup>, and 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2020. Stay tuned for more info this summer.

Thanks to Ken Fry, Brad Springer, and Paul Beckman for hosting an excellent meeting in Idaho back in February. We visited two orchards, and with the help of a small army of Lagottos sniffing through a thin blanket of snow, found plenty of Bianchetto truffles. Tom Michaels provided the keynote lecture, and expertly answered many questions.

The new Executive Committee has been quite busy since coming on board at the Charlottesville meeting. We are excited to serve the membership, and we are already busy working on the website, planning the next meetings, and putting together a membership survey. Please look for the survey in the next few weeks, and make a point to complete it. The survey will cover many topics including research, meetings, speakers, speaker topics, member services, and the future direction of your association. We need to know what you are thinking, what is important to you, and how the association can address those needs.

Thanks to Dr. Powell of Burwell Farms for offering to host our summer gathering. We will meet there on August 10<sup>th</sup>, tour the orchard, see a dog demonstration, and enjoy a meal together. Please plan to attend this event as we will have a short business meeting as well. The time, address, directions, etc. will follow in the coming months.

Please keep in touch with the Executive Committee and let us know how we can better serve you.

Brian

# Winter Conference 2019

This past February NATGA held it's annual Winter Conference and Truffle Dinner. The event was once again held at Darden School of Business in Charlottesville ,Virginia. The conference had an excellent turnout with around 70 attendees. Those who attended heard from experts in various areas in truffleculture from research with Dr. Greg Bonito marketing and grading with Gavin Booth of Australian Truffle Traders. Marcos Morcillo was also a speaker who provided valuable information about the latest in truffle farming in Spain and the technique of using Spanish wells. The list of speakers also included some more local experts including Dr. Inga Meadows of NC State and Katlin Mooneyham from the Virginia Department of Forestry.

During the business meeting portion of the conference NATGA elected an entirely new executive committee. NATGA's new president is Brian Upchurch , our new vice president is Don Detmer, the new secretary is Raymond Prince, and our new treasurer is Diana Hudson. Thank you to our new volunteer executive committee for taking time out of their busy days to help our organization move forward! Thank you also to our exiting Executive Committee for all of their hard work!

That Saturday night after the Growers' Forum the conference attendees sat down again for another multi-course truffle dinner prepared by Darden. The dinner was again held in the lovely South Lounge. The conference was capped off by a Sunday market place where truffle producers, chefs, nurseries, and others could sell their wares. The market place was followed by a truffles 101 question and answer session with our attending experts.

Another successful NATGA event for the books!

Please enjoy some of the best photos from the event!

# Winter Conference 2019

## Photo Gallery



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# Lagotto Romagnolo Dog

The only breed of dog specifically bred to hunt truffles.



The Lagotto Romagnolo dog is an ancient breed of dog dating back to at least the 1500s. It was originally a waterfowl retriever from the Romagna area of Northern Italy. The Lagotto is believed to be the ancestor of most current day water dogs including: the poodle, Portuguese water dog, the Spanish water dog, and most retrievers. It derives its name from its original career as Lagotto or “lake dog” and Romagnolo- “from Romagna area of Italy” or waterfowl retriever

The Lagotto has a thick curly coat of hair making it very adaptable to retrieving waterfowl from the marshes and lagoons that were once throughout the Romagna region. Over time, many of the marshes and lagoons were reclaimed for use in farming. As the marshes and lagoons vanished, the Lagotto started to be used for truffle hunting. It is thought that this transition from retriever to truffle hunter began between 1840 and 1890.

The dog is a medium to small size breed. The males 18”-20” in height and weighing 28 to 35 lbs and the females from 16”-18” in height and weighing 24-32 lbs. They are very even tempered and high in energy. They are excellent with children and very good with other pets if socialized properly. They are extremely intelligent and eager to please which makes them easily trained. They make excellent family pets, companion pets, therapy dogs and wonderful truffle hunters. They need to be brushed a few times a week and groomed every 2-3 months. They should be exercised from 1-2 hours daily with walks or play-time. They enjoy truffle hunting, scent tracking, retrieving, and agility drills.

Article by Michael Riggan

## Featured Farm- Branch Point Farm



Located north of White Hall, Virginia just off Brown's Cove Turnpike is Branch Point Farm. It has an acre of truffle oaks in their eight year that were originally purchased from Pat and John Martin at Virginia Truffles near Culpeper. The farm consists of 33 acres nestled between Fox and Pasture Fence Mountains with a wide view into Brown's Cove and the Shenandoah Park. Don Detmer hand dug the four foot trench for the irrigation pipes and also conceived of an inexpensive fencing to keep the deer out.

While I have yet to harvest any truffles, I am optimistic. Earlier this year, Olivia Martin Taylor trained in quick order a friend's chocolate labradoodle to sniff out such areas so I'm ready for 2020 and 2021! Along the way, I've found that the truffle community are a terrific group of people and a number have become friends. International visitors have given useful and timely advice as well when they've visited the farm.



The fence is made with 8 foot plumbing conduit pipes cut into half and driven into the ground for two feet at a bit short of 10 ft. intervals using a wood piece so that the top of the pipes aren't damaged. Heavy plastic Tenax fencing (7.5ft x100ft) is woven onto the 4 foot exposed conduit pipes and 8 foot rebar bars are put into the conduit pipes, driven 2 or more feet into the ground and the netting slid up until the 7.5 foot height is reached. Then cable zip ties are used to fix the plastic to the rebar so the fencing won't slip down. No zip ties are needed on the conduit pipes. I buried aluminum screening down a couple of feet as well as putting chicken wire from two foot down to two foot above grade, e.g., 4 foot high chicken fencing with the screen on the outside of the fencing and the chicken wire on the inside. I then used zip ties to connect the three layers together at the ground level before putting the dirt back to ground level. This has been helpful in keeping voles, rabbits, deer, etc. out of the tree area. I've needed to put up another layer of Tenax around some of the area after 6 years and I just put it on top of the earlier layer since most of the original Tenax was still fine. The same fencing has been great for two small orchards. Tenax has been purchased from Forestry Suppliers; I have no commercial connection to that company.

Of course, siting was important and then preparing the ground initially was a big job. Annual soil testing and lime applications along with alfalfa, weeding, and aerating has taken a lot of work plus mowing grass between the rows. The hose irrigation system from Israel has worked well and is now powered by an electric motor driven by solar power off the panels on my barn roof.

After enjoying the Barcelona week in February 2019, I was eager to create Spanish wells. With the most pleasant and able assistance of Jeanne Caruso from Mill Road Farm in New Jersey and Paul Payne, Jr., the wells were created the first week of April. A number of roots exposed while doing this were laded with the unmistakable scent of truffle spores. Samples of the roots are now being examined under a microscope.



# Truffle Dog Database Application

Now available on the website! Register your trained truffle dog with NATGA . NATGA is developing a database of trained dogs local to growers who do not have dogs of their own. This of course is voluntary

**NATGA Trained Truffle Dog Application**

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**Owner Information**

Owner(s)  
Full Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Last First MI

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Street Address Apartment/Unit #

\_\_\_\_\_ City State ZIP Code

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Company Name (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_ Active Member of NATGA (if yes, since) \_\_\_\_\_

Certification/  
License(s) held associated w canine training or search related activities \_\_\_\_\_

Willing to travel? YES  NO

If yes, please let max distance or area willing to travel \_\_\_\_\_

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**Dog(s) Information**

Dog Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

Breed \_\_\_\_\_ Neutered/Spayed/Intact (please circle which applicable)

Trained on truffles? YES  NO  Variety of truffles? \_\_\_\_\_

Years trained \_\_\_\_\_

Experience searching truffle(s)? YES  NO  If yes, please explain \_\_\_\_\_

Other pertinent info regarding this dog \_\_\_\_\_

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# Lagotto Puppies for Sale



ENCI Pedigree puppies born October 2 near Venice Italy, can be transferred to full AKC. From great truffle hunting lines. Up to date on all vaccines and rabies.

Michael Riggan  
Cell: 703-298-4480

# And Now A Word From Our Sponsors



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*Tuber melanosporum & Leucangium carthusianum*

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A Special Thanks To

*Anderson Cromer and Lisa Menefee*

*Blue Skies Farm*

*Raymond and Bernie Prince*