

ROOT & VINE ACRES, Creston, BC

Good Management Skills Key to Helping Young Farmer Grow Her Business

Written by Tracey Fredrickson, Basin Business Advisors Agriculture Specialist

When Jessica Piccinin finished high school, she thought she was ready to leave the farm community where she grew up in the Creston Valley and went to Northern Alberta to work in the oilfields for three years. In fact, the experience made her appreciate her roots more than ever. “I realized that having grown up on an orchard/greenhouse based farm, it was only natural to build on the skills my grandmother taught me,” she says.



When she returned to Creston in 2008, Jessica enrolled in the Community Futures Self Employment program where she learned the importance of the “business side of farming” – keeping good financial records, consistent, targeted marketing and continuing to add new farm product – in addition to the science of agriculture and having a passion for farming. She started Root & Vine Acres on leased land and initially sold bedding plants, tomatoes and cucumbers at local farmers’ market. In 2015, Root and Vine moved to a 10-acre property that Jessica was able to purchase and has evolved into a multi-faced farm business.

“There is so much room for local food production in the Kootenay region” Jessica says. Global food security is unstable and the marketplace increasingly values access to quality, local food.”

A young generation farmer, Jessica’s understanding of food trends is reflected in her ability to continuously identify new marketing streams and maintain consistent, targeted marketing. Two acres of the farm are devoted to a market garden which produces vegetables, berries, grapes, tree fruits, walnuts and 12 kinds of garlic. In addition, she raises pork, and chicken and duck for eggs – all pasture-raised “with a conscience” and processed charcuterie-style. Agri-tourism in the form of regular visits by school classes and community groups is another area of activity. With a strong presence on social media and at farmers’ markets throughout the East and West Kootenays, word gets out there is always something happening at Root & Vine Acres.

Jessica contacted the Columbia Basin Trust Basin Business Advisors program about a review of her payroll and accounting procedures. While she had a good understanding of basic financial systems, BBA Advisor Barb Williams helped her learn a payroll system which saved Jessica time and helped her better track hours worked. Six months later they worked together again to discuss development of a formal business plan to guide the farm through further expansion.

“Regular check-ins with the BBA advisor is a really valuable resource for me,” Jessica says. “Things can change quickly in farming, from the weather to consumer preferences and you have to take risks. It’s great to know there is support to help me be well prepared to make informed decisions when I need it most.”