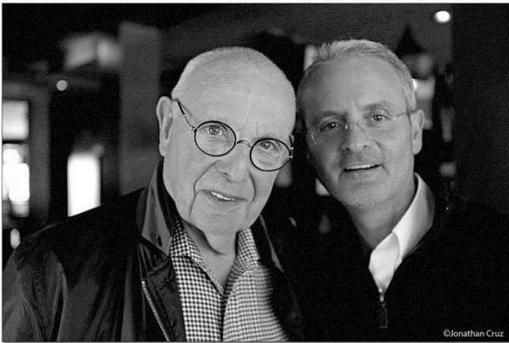




West Coast Seeds

**Craig Diamond, West Coast Seeds
Delta, British Columbia, Canada**

West Coast Seeds sells a large variety of seeds online and through its comprehensive printed catalog. The company's owners have a strong focus on community and environmental stewardship.



Charles (L) and Craig Diamond, father and son

Craig Diamond comes from a long line of go-getters. “My grandfather was just 17 years old when he came to the Vancouver region from Poland with a nickel in his pocket,” says Craig. “He worked first at a butcher shop, which led to his owning a chain of butchers and, eventually, a meat packing company.” Since that time, the family has owned a horse racing track, a tool company, and an auto dealership. Craig came to the seed business through a personal decision to lead a meaningful life. After 25 years of building the family's equipment and tool business with his father, Charles Diamond, he decided it was time for a change. The Diamond family agreed. They purchased West Coast Seeds in 2014.

The concept of *tikkun olam* is a guiding force behind West Coast Seeds. This Jewish term means, literally, “repairing the world.” Social responsibility, environmental stewardship, and drawing the community together are all a part of Craig's personal vision, and the company's business plan. “It's not all about profitability,” he says. “We donate seed to local school gardens and charities, as well as to projects in Nicaragua, Nepal, Burma, and other parts of the world.” Proceeds from the 2016 seedling sale at West Coast Seeds' retail store in Ladner, BC were given to an organization that provides housing for Syrian refugees.



Many of West Coast Seeds' 40 year-round employees have been with the company for years, and hold a wealth of collective know-how.

Mary Ballon founded the company in 1983. A pioneer in organic gardening, she was a fierce advocate of growing food locally. Over time, she created a retail gardening supply store, an extensive demonstration garden, and a mail-order catalog packed with planet-friendly seeds. The company has

continued to follow her approach even after Ballon retired, selling it to friend and neighbor Jeanette McCall, and into the present, with the Diamond family at the helm. Both former owners remain in touch, Craig reports happily. “They come to the annual holiday parties, and we talk about what’s happening in the business.”

West Coast Seeds’ 136-page catalog is more than just a catalog. Available online and in print, it offers growing guides, more than 850 kinds of seeds, and gardening products from beekeeping supplies to tools to beneficial insects. The company has always been focused on not just selling seeds and products, but ensuring that customers are equipped to grow food successfully. Products are widely sold by mail order, and also direct to farmers. “We plan to add to our offerings of high quality seeds into the future,” says Craig. “And the retail store in Ladner (about 20 minutes from Vancouver) is quite famous regionally and even among Europeans,” he adds.



Craig has big plans for the family-owned company. Together he, his father, and his son-in-law are creating a business that does more than sell seeds. With the purchase of a 17-acre organic farm in Delta, his vision is taking form. The large renovated barn will house packing and warehousing operations, as well as a quality control lab; the heritage home will serve as a conference and education center. “I foresee busloads of kids coming to the farm, and music concerts in summer,” he envisions. “We have a symbiotic relationship with the community, one that we will continue to nurture.”

Diverse Bits of Garden Wisdom from the West Coast Seed blog

- The easiest way to harvest quinoa seeds is to bash the seed heads inside paper yard waste bags.
- To roast garlic, cut through the top of the whole bulb, rub the exposed parts with olive oil, and set it upright in a small ramekin in a 400° oven, loosely covered, for 30 minutes or more.
- You can harvest tender new potatoes when the plants begin to flower.
- Garlic scapes make excellent pesto. Combine them with unsalted pistachios, grated Parmesan, olive oil, salt and pepper.
- Do not plant dahlia tubers until well after the threat of frost has passed.