

# Fungifama



The Newsletter of the South Vancouver Island Mycological Society  
January 2004

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**SVIMS web site: [www.svims.ca](http://www.svims.ca)**

**Dues: \$15.00 per year** per household, payable in January by cheque made out to SVIMS or by cash at meeting.

**Meetings:** First Thursday of the month (no meetings December, January, July, and August), 7:00 p.m. sharp at the Pacific Forestry Centre, 506 Burnside Rd. W., Victoria. Lots of free parking. The meeting room is near the main entrance door. Non-members welcome.

**Caution:** The South Vancouver Island Mycological Society (SVIMS) newsletter, Fungifama, is not intended as an (online) identification or medicinal guide to mushrooms. There are risks involved in eating and in using wild mushrooms. The possibility may exist that you are allergic to a specific mushroom, or that the mushroom may be anomalous. SVIMS, Fungifama and the authors on this site

warn that the reader must accept full personal responsibility for deciding to use or consume any particular specimen.

## Prez Sez: January

Happy New Year! Lets hope the winter snow and frost has a beneficial effect on this years' mushroom crops. Bob and I went out a few days after the thaw and came home with enough hedgehogs (*Hydnum umbilicatum*) and *Hygrophorus pratensis* to flavour an omelette, so things are still popping up. Kevin of the mega-Boletus fame, reported finding pine mushrooms (*Tricholoma magnivelare*) right up to the freeze, even telling me he had found some frozen solid *Boletus edulis* at his secret site. SO! get on out there and peer at the ground and up the trees, some Oyster mushrooms fruit in winter. Also, simply enjoy the cheery blobs of bright orange jelly mushrooms festively decorating many rotting logs (probably *Dacrymyces* but I didn't check the basidia - tuning fork shaped for *Dacrymyces*, vertical cross-walls through the basidium, between each sterigmata for *Tremella*, making an X when you look down on one). Our last meeting in November featured David Largent who entertained and educated us on the *Entolomataceae*, stressing the unusual places he had found some of these mushrooms -under hedges, in rodent burrows etc. To the relief of the many who do not have a microscope handy, he assured us that with a little experience the species could be identified just from macroscopic

characteristics. We also learned how the colours can change within minutes of being picked, so taking notice of the fresh colour is a useful habit to develop. Our next event is of course the Survivors' Banquet on January 24th, so named because only those making correct identifications at the dinner table will be able to make it. It is again held at the Horticulture Centre on Quayle Road, turn up around 5-5.30pm, bring a potluck dish to share, mushroomy or not, and your own plate, cup, utensils and celebratory beverage, and of course an item for the raffle, and a few \$\$ for raffle tickets - you wouldn't want to miss out on the wonderful prizes we usually have. If you make a potluck dish including mushrooms you have grown or collected, we will have cards available to list the ingredients for those who may be sensitive to that species. As we are celebrating SVIMS' 10th anniversary leave room in your tummies for cake and punch, if you have any photos or slides of club events, bring them and we will endeavour to show the best of them. See you there!  
Christine.

### **Monthly Meetings:**

#### **Thursday February 5<sup>th</sup>:**

Paul Kroeger will be presenting a talk at our first 2004 meeting. Paul, the President of the Vancouver club, gives us a new presentation each year. Topics have been general identification, spring mushrooms and psychoactive mushrooms. Any of you who have attended any of Paul's talks, know how interesting and entertaining he is. Don't miss it.

#### **Thursday, March 4:**

Ian Gibson will give a presentation on Matchmaker, the mushroom identification program. It is available on CD as well as on the Pacific Forestry Centre's Web site. Matchmaker is an excellent tool. Other than it's primary purpose of matching the characteristics of the mushroom you have in

hand, you can use it to look up descriptions and examine photos. Ian will tell us lots more.

#### **Thursday, April 1:**

Dr. Jim Ginns, an expert on many basidiomycetes, will combine a foray with his presentation. Jim retired from the Biosystematics department in Ottawa, moved to Penticton and is adding to his taxonomic reputation by taking excellent mushroom photographs.

#### **Thursday May 6:**

Our President is working on getting Dr. Terry Henkel from Humboldt State University to talk to us on tropical mushrooms. His talk was well received in San Francisco.

#### **Thursday, June 3: TBA**

#### **Thursday, September 2:**

Tyson Ehlers is an ecologist and forest consultant working on Non-Timber Forest Products. He is an expert on pine mushroom ecology. Tyson is sure to give us incite on where to find these wonderful mushrooms. If you are intrigued by the value of this mushroom or just its unique culinary characteristics, don't miss this presentation.

#### **Thursday, October 7: TBA**

#### **Thursday, October 4:**

We are not sure of the presenter, yet, but the topic for this month will be "The Human Side of Mushrooms" plus identification of the most common fall mushrooms".

#### **Two notes on our Nov. 6<sup>th</sup> 2003 meeting.**

##### **Dr. Dave Largent's talk on Entoloma**

It is very difficult to balance the information given by speakers at our meetings. We have a diverse membership. Members who are mycology professionals want academic

details. Other members want general information on identifying, eating or growing mushrooms. It was with some trepidation that I went to Dr. Dave Largent's presentation. He was talking about the Entoloma family. This group is composed of small to medium, brown mushrooms. Differences between species often requires a microscope and are difficult for the beginner. Dave gave a tremendous talk. He captivated the audience. No one left early and he raised everyone's level of knowledge by entertaining us whenever things got a little technical. I wish all of my professor's and teachers had his talent and abilities. Thank you very much, Dave, from everybody who attended your talk. We were indeed fortunate and privileged to learn from you.

#### **Dr. Dave Largent's comments on his visit to SVIMS.**

"Please let your South Vancouver Island Mycological Society group again know that I really enjoyed both the field trip and giving my talk. Not only was I quite impressed with all the groups knowledge-I was more impressed by their friendliness. By the way, I should be seeing Bill Wood (the organic chemist who is an expert on the chemistry of mushroom odors as well as chemical ecology) at the next meeting of our club and I will ask him if a talk to your group is a possibility.

Finally the reception I received for my talk was astounding and outstanding-it has revitalized by enthusiasm for such talks and it has also reenergized me to begin to complete all the various projects I have put on hold for a while."

#### **Events and Forays:**

**Saturday, January 24<sup>th</sup>: The SVIMS Survivors' Banquet**

**Don't forget the Survivors' Banquet. It is at at the Horticulture Centre of the Pacific 5:00 pm to 10:00 pm. Organized by Shannon Berch. This will be our classic potluck event. Bring one of your**

**favourite dishes (mushrooms or not), a giveaway item and enjoy the "Vicious Raffle". The entertainment? Well, it is SVIMS 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary, so you better be there to defend or explain some of those pictures we are going to show of you doing who-knows-what. This is an event not to be missed.**

#### **Announcements:**

##### **SVIMS Calendar 2004:**

No this is not the old, recycled calendar of 1997 or whatever year it was. This is the new SVIMS calendar with all sorts of new mushroom pictures! There were a limited number of these printed. They are only \$12 per calendar for members. If you haven't got one, ask any of the executive to see if any are left. Otherwise, you might have to beg, borrow or .....

##### **Microscope Course:**

I received an inquiry at our Oct. SVIMS meeting regarding microscopy. Is there anyone out there who would like to take a beginner's microscope course - perhaps a one day session on the weekend - or perhaps a series of short evening sessions (4). Please respond and I will keep a list and let you know when we have found a teacher. Thanks, Jean

#### **Event and Foray Reports:**

##### **SVIMS Swan Lk. Mushroom Show, Nov. 2<sup>nd</sup>**

It is interesting to see how our mushroom show withstands adversity. The summer drought, sporadic heavy rain and low attendance did not lower the success of our show. Those that found out about the show were very keen indeed. They made the effort of picking, setting up, sorting, identifying, cooking and cleaning up very worthwhile. Thanks, again to all the members who made such a great effort. A special thanks to Bill Chalmers from Western Biologicals in Aldergrove. His display of oyster mushrooms, mushroom kits and

shaggy manes were super. The inky caps were delicious. Bill does not just sell his excellent products but provides free information on how you can get started and progress in this interesting and culinary pursuit.

**Crash Course by Experts: Sierra Club Metchosin Wilderness Foray by Oluna and Adolf Ceske, Nov 30th.**

Although Oluna and Adolf did not think the title of this foray was accurate (magic mushrooms were also mentioned in one announcement), the foray turned out to be a huge success. Assisted by Christine Roberts and John Dennis, the expert leaders of this group crashed enough information in the time allotted to make the audience fascinated by the fungal ecology and diversity. Here is the list of fungi found:

*Agaricus hondensis*  
*Amanita muscaria*  
*Calocera viscosa*  
*Camarophyllus russocoriaceus*  
*Collybia acervata*  
*Cystoderma amianthum*  
*Cystoderma granulosa*  
*Dacrymyces palmatus*  
*Fomitopsis pinicola*  
*Galerina heterocystis*  
*Helvella lacunosa*  
*Helvella quelletii*  
*Hygrophoropsis olida*  
*Hypomyces sp. (on Helvella)*  
*Lactarius luculentus*  
*Lactarius pseudomucidus*  
*Lyophyllum decastes*  
*Mycena alcalina*  
*Mycena chlorinella*  
*Mycena epiptergia*  
*Mycena galericulata*  
*Mycena parabolica*  
*Mycena spp.*  
*Nematoloma fasciculare*  
*Nolanea hirtipes*  
*Nolanea sericea f. minimospora*  
*Panellus longinquus*  
*Phaeolus schweinitzii*  
*Pleurocybella porrigens*

*Pseudohydnum gelatinosum*  
*Rhodocybe sp.*  
*Russula*  
*Stereum hirsutum*  
*Strobilurus trullisatus*  
*Xeromphalina fulvipipes*  
*Xylaria hypoxylon*

Thanks to Nikko Snow (Sierra Club, BC Chapter) for providing the venue.

It is pretty amazing how many mushrooms you can find during a dry year and in a fairly dry ecosystem. Although not open to SVIMS general membership, a foray for our November speaker, Dr. Dave Largent, was conducted on DND (military) land. We went to Douglas-fir and Garry oak ecosystems. We felt like we found very little, yet Oluna Ceske's list is surprising.

1) Douglas-fir forest with old *Arbutus menziesii* :

*Armillaria ostoyae*  
*Clitocybe concave*  
*Cystoderma amianthinum*  
*Cystoderma fallax*  
*Cystoderma granulatum*  
*Fomitopsis pinicola*  
*Gomphidius smithii*  
*Gymnopillus sapineus* group  
*Hebeloma crustuliniforme*  
*Hebeloma sp.*  
*Helvella lacunosa*  
*Inocybe glabrescens*  
*Inocybe lilacina*  
*Lycoperdon foetidum*  
*Lycoperdon perlatum*  
*Mycena filopes*  
*Mycena galericulata*  
*Mycena pura*  
*Mycena purpureofusca*  
*Nidula candida*  
*Nolanea latifolia*  
*Phaeolus schweinitzii*  
*Phellinus ferruginosus*  
*Pluteus lutescens*  
*Rhodocollybia butyracea*  
*Rhodocybe nitellina*  
*Strobilurus trullisatus*  
*Stropharia ambigua*

*Suillus caerulescens*  
*Trichaptum abietinum*  
*Xeromphalina fulvipes*  
*Psathyrella* sp.  
 2) Garry oak forest  
*Armillaria ostoyae*  
*Calocera cornea*  
*Cystoderma amianthinum*  
*Gymnopilus luteocarneus*  
*Gymnopus confluens*  
*Marasmius plicatulus*  
*Mycena pura*  
*Nolanea hirtipes*  
*Phaeolus schweinitzii*  
*Psathyrella* sp.  
*Rhodocollybia butyracea*  
*Strobilurus trullisatus*  
*Trametes versicolor*  
*Tubaria* sp.

"*Tricholoma*" with blackish gill margins turned out to be *Inocybe glabrescens* using Stangl's key and the key by P. [Brandon] Matheny. Metuloid cystida filled with yellow substance resulted in the dark margin of the gills.

"*Nolanea pusillipapillata*" turned out to be *Nolanea latifolia* (Largent page 223); it has also cap with a depression and intracellular pigment in pileipellis and roundish spores.

*Nolanea* from Garry oak is most probably *N. hirtipes*. Dark colour and sparse mycelium was caused by the dry conditions.

**Not SVIMS Forays, but you might want to examine their collections and choose in the future to join other groups on a foray in a not so distant land. Be sure to report back to us if you do.**

**Berkeley mycology folks made their annual foray up to Mendocino.**

We collected something like 130 species, and while this sounds like a lot, its actually a record low, possibly the smallest number of species we've ever collected. (We typically collect over 200 species on most years.) Most notably, we collected almost no boletes

– no *Boletus edulis*, no *Leccinum*, and only one single sample of *Suillus*!

We also collected fewer than 5 species of *Russula* and no *Lactarius*. Also, only 4 species of *Ramaria*. There were only a few collections of *Cantharellus*.

It seemed like saprotrophic species were better represented than mycorrhizal ones. That would not be an unusual pattern for very early in the season, before rain has had much of a chance to sink down to the soil depth typically inhabited by mycorrhizal hyphae; however, there apparently had been plenty of rain over the last several weeks. It was unseasonably cold, which may have had something to do with the lack of mushrooms we were seeing.

Another odd thing we noticed is that the California huckleberry (*Vaccinium ovatum*) bushes were almost \*totally\* lacking in berries - they're usually loaded this time of year. It seems to be an unusual season so far. The unusual mushroom and berry fruiting patterns point to something, but to what, I don't know.

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**Meanwhile 50 miles south.....**

**The Salt Point Foray turned out GREAT. Here is a report of the SOMA portion. When I left MSSF was still partying**

**Darvin de Shazzer**

The November foray was a treasure to remember. *Boletus edulis* was fruiting and members collected over 100 of them, although most were very small. An estimated 80 people joined in the fun. The California Native Plant Society, MSSF and SOMA were all represented with enthusiastic hikers and knowledgeable collectors.

After the hunt, five tables had stoves on them and the hot dishes just kept coming.....The pot luck was outstanding and included many excellent dishes such as acorn bread, rhubarb strudel, smoked salmon, abalone, too many cheeses and salads to remember and so much more! The food was incredible and the weather was great.

Fungi Found - 46

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Amanita flavoconia  
Amanita gemmata  
Amanita pachycolea  
Armillaria mellea  
Armillaria ostoyae  
Boletus edulis  
Boletus zelleri  
Cantharellus formosus  
Chalciporus piperatus  
Clitopilus prunulus  
Crepidotus mollis  
Cryptoporus volvatus  
Fomitopsis pinicola  
Fuligo septica  
Geastrum saccatum  
Gomphus floccosus  
Gymnopilus sp.  
Gymnopilus spectabilis  
Hygrophoropsis aurantiaca  
Hypholoma fasciculare  
Laetiporus conifericola  
Lepiota cristata  
Lepiota flammeatincta  
Lycoperdon foetidum  
Marasmiellus candidus  
Mycena alcalina  
Osteina obducta  
Phaeolus schweinitzii  
Pleurotus ostreatus  
Psathyrella sp.  
Pseudohydnum gelatinosum  
Ramaria botrytis  
Rhizopogon sp.  
Russula brevipes  
Russula brunneola  
Russula crassotunicata  
Russula nigricans  
Russula xerampelina  
Stereum hirsutum  
Strobilurus trullisatus  
Suillus brevipes  
Trichaptum abietinum  
Trichaptum fuscoviolaceum  
Tricholomopsis rutilans  
Tyromyces chioneus  
Xeromphalina caudicinalis

**Articles of Interest:**

***Rozties caperata* (the Gypsy Mushroom) – Cripples Herpes, other virus**

From *The Sporeprint*, LA Mycological Society, Feb. 2003

Rain forests and other remote, undeveloped spots on the planet aren't the sole source of medically useful plants and fungi.

Researchers at the University of Wisconsin Medical School have discovered the *Rozites caperata*, a mushroom that thrives among the jack pines in northern Wisconsin, can cripple certain viruses. The researchers reported their findings in the August (2002) issue of *Antiviral Research*.

Extracts from the mushroom prevented Herpes Simplex Virus Types 1 and 2 from growing in test tubes and reduced the severity of Herpes-related eye disease in mice. They blocked Influenza A, chicken pox, and a respiratory virus. What's more, the mushroom has unique characteristics that may help scientists unlock secrets about the way many viruses reproduce.

The active part of the mushroom, a compound they call RC-183, has been patented. "This is a novel compound, with a structure unlike anything that's ever been described," says Curtis Brandt, Medical School professor of ophthalmology and visual sciences, and co-author of the article. "We're hoping our studies will reveal new information about the way viruses replicate." "It's also possible RC-183 may become a lead compound for a drug to treat Influenza A," says Brandt's co-author Frank Piraino, an associate scientist in the department.

The Wisconsin scientists may be most excited about the lessons they hope *Rozites* can teach them about the inner workings of viruses. So, they know that RC-183 contains ubiquitin, a substance that appears to play a central role in at least two cellular processes. Like a garbage/recycling truck that removes household trash, it removes proteins that have finished their jobs in cells. It also helps the immune system recognize foreign antigens and mount a defense against them.

“Our challenge will be to learn exactly how RC-183 may block a ubiquitin-dependent step in virus replication,” says Brandt. “To start with, this project has shown us very clearly that concern over the disappearance of natural habitats as a source of new drugs applies universally, including ... right here in Wisconsin.”

### **Fungus fever and truffle trouble**

October 01 2002

In the biting chill of a winter's morning in north-west Tasmania, a man with a dog stalks slowly through a grove of bare, black hazelnut trees. Every now and then the dog sniffs the ground, and the man bends down and scratches at the earth.

He is hoping against hope that this will be his lucky day, and that a few centimetres down, attached to the roots of the tree, he will find a small dark brown knob like a warty golf-ball, which is rarer than gold, and almost as valuable.

This is *Tuber melanosporum*, the black truffle, worshipped by European epicures since Roman times and described by the French writer Alexander Dumas as "the gastronome's holy of holies". Nowadays, truffles are so expensive that they are rarely roasted and eaten whole. Its pungent, composty flavour is used to liven dishes from scrambled eggs to roast chicken and pasta.

Worldwide, truffles are so rare that fewer than 150 tonnes a year are unearthed. They are sold furtively by lucky hunters in Dordogne markets at prices from \$2000 a kilogram to a record \$35,000 (for the related Italian white truffle) reported in November, 2000.

Little wonder that, with a catastrophic decline in production that has been going on for a century - due largely to the clearing of French forests of hazelnut and oak, which are the hosts of the parasitic fungus - scientists have been trying since the 1970s to find a way of domesticating and farming the wild truffle.

At the other end of the earth, in Tasmania of all places, they have succeeded. At least, that is what Australian investors have been told, as no fewer than three rival outfits try to cash in on what is claimed to be a technological breakthrough, which allows the roots of tree seedlings to be "inoculated" with the spores of imported French truffles. To date, many have succumbed to temptation. They are lured by the magic of the mushroom, the generosity of the Australian taxation system towards farmers, and the promise of profits that (according to the New Zealand agronomist and truffle pioneer Dr Ian Hall) exceed the returns that can be made in any other kind of agriculture - including growing heroin poppies.

At a conservative estimate, about 200 Australian investors have subscribed \$3 million to various schemes for growing truffles. Some have paid \$21,000 a hectare to have their properties fenced, fertilised, irrigated and planted with trees said to have been seeded with truffle spores. If any truffles are produced, the proceeds are split with the operating company.

Others have bought the seedlings outright, at prices ranging from \$20 to \$60 each. More than 100 hectares have been planted in the decade since the first attempt - mostly in Tasmania, but also in New South Wales in the Blue Mountains, the Southern Highlands, and the Orange-Bathurst and Yass-Canberra areas.

Investors were painted a rosy picture of the profits they could expect, with one prospectus going as far as this: "The company has conservatively estimated yield in a well-managed trufferie (paddock planted with truffle-infected trees) to be 60 kilograms per hectare once the trees reach maturity." This would be worth in excess of \$120,000, a return on investment of 600 per cent per annum.

However, to the dismay of many investors, those returns have yet to materialise. In fact, although the promoters say it is early days yet, the total Australian production of truffles is barely enough to

keep one restaurant, Claudes in Sydney, supplied. Even Simon Johnson, the gourmet providore, would love to handle them, but he can't get his hands on any at all.

Of the three organisations promoting truffle farming, Perigord Truffles of Tasmania Pty Ltd, has the highest profile, having inspired gushing articles in national newspapers and magazines. The company was founded in 1993 by two Tasmanians, Duncan Garvey, 43, an agricultural economist from the town of Grove, and Peter Cooper, 44, of Plenty. The pair have been highly successful in attracting investment from the public, and from government. They received a five-year \$250,000 grant from the Commonwealth's Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation, after claiming that Australian truffles could become a valuable export industry, sending truffles to the northern hemisphere during the off-season (truffles are harvested only in winter). This has yet to happen.

Garvey and Cooper used part of the money to travel to France to investigate truffle propagation. There, the National Institute of Agronomic Research has spent four decades and tens of millions of dollars trying to propagate truffles, with no impact at all on the inexorably declining annual production, which the government describes as a "culinary catastrophe".

When Garvey and Cooper returned to Tasmania they imported truffles from France, used the spores to inoculate the roots of seedlings, and established the first small plantation near Deloraine in 1993. Just six years later, they achieved national headlines when Perigord claimed it had found the first black truffles in Australia on the property, called Askrig, in the shadow of the Great Western Tiers mountain range.

The following winter more truffles were found at three sites in Tasmania and flown to Sydney. The owner of Claudes restaurant, Tim Pak Poy, an enthusiastic promoter of the venture, staged a celebration dinner for wealthy foodies.

People flocked to invest. Perigord charges \$21,000 per hectare to establish a

"trufferie" on your land, planting 500 to 600 of the seedling hazelnuts to the hectare. A prospectus sent recently by Perigord truffles to a potential investor promised that the harvest would begin in year five, that financial break-even would be achieved in year seven or eight and that when the trees reached maturity in nine or 10 years each hectare would yield an estimated 60 kilograms - worth \$120,000.

The company contracted with a Sydney dog-handler to train dogs especially to sniff out the truffles (pigs and spinsters are no longer widely used). The deal is that Perigord organises the harvesting and marketing and splits the revenue from any truffles found with the landowner.

Perigord co-chairman Duncan Garvey says that 70 hectares in Tasmania and 20 hectares in NSW have now been planted - an investment of almost \$2 million. However, last year the total "crop" was about five kilograms, and this winter even fewer truffles had been found by late August.

Garvey said he was still "comfortable" with his prospectus prediction of 60 kilograms a hectare, and said this figure was based on production achieved in France and in New Zealand.

Looking over the fence at his property, Askrig, where the first truffles were found, Tim Terry is not as optimistic. He said that Perigord had found only eight small truffles on his property the previous week, and "in the whole of Tasmania you would be struggling to get a kilo. You've got five dogs and their handlers walking up and down three days a week. It's costing thousands." Tim Terry is also a commercial rival of Perigord Truffles - he's behind the second company promoting truffle culture, Tasmanian Truffle Enterprises. Next door to Askrig he has bought a second property called Needlesdale, 12 hectares of which he has planted out with seedlings he inoculated himself.

Using truffles imported from France (he said he had 20 kilograms of frozen truffles in his refrigerator) Terry says: "Anybody can do it (inoculation); it's not a

difficult process. There's a lot of myth and mythology about it. The hard bit is growing the bloody things."

Last year, Terry issued a prospectus seeking to lease one-tenth-of-a-hectare plots of the Needlesdale plantation for \$8745 each plus \$1000 a year in management fees. Eighty-seven investors forked out nearly \$700,000, says Terry, and a second release of land is planned for later this year. Terry was even more enthusiastic about his investors' prospects than his rival, claiming that in New Zealand a producer had harvested 100 kilograms per hectare, and that "this is indicative of the potential of the industry in Australia". The trees should be in full production in seven or eight years, said his prospectus, and after 15 years there would be a return of \$78,000 on an investment of \$29,000.

Pressed on his prediction that investors in Needlesdale could be harvesting 70 kilograms of truffles a hectare by 2008-09, Terry made this extraordinary statement: ". . . that was written with the best of intentions two years ago, and we had to come up with figures that were palatable to us, to the Tax Office and to ASIC (the Australian Securities and Investments Commission) . . . we have to pull a figure out of the air and say well, what's the figure going to be. In a new industry where are you going to start? Do you start with five kilos?" He said that the new prospectus would not contain the 70 kilos claim: "There is no way morally or ethically I would go out into the marketplace and do the same thing as I did two-and-a-half years ago."

So would he refund the investors' money? "We haven't had a complaint yet. We'll worry about it when it happens." Terry, a farmer who said that 10 years ago he had never heard of truffles, said: "I have not made a bloody cent out of truffles, not one single cent," although he conceded he was drawing a "very small wage" from the venture.

Finally, down at Bombala, in south-east NSW, Bill and Raelene Stevenson, "disappointed with the returns from wool

production", spent \$100,000 in 1999 establishing a facility to inoculate seedlings with truffle spores, using technology developed in New Zealand by Hall. They have a simpler scheme - they have been selling the seedlings for \$60 each, although the success of this venture is doubtful since Terry has recently been advertising his seedlings in the rural press for only \$10 each. However, the Stevensons are as optimistic as their rivals in promoting the "staggering returns" they say can be achieved.

"This technology has proven successful with harvests after just five years," says their promotional material. "Yields of up to 60 kilograms per hectare could be expected from a well-managed trufferie."

Across the Tasman in New Zealand, Hall, an acknowledged expert in truffle propagation, is dubious about these claims. He is a scientist at the Crown Research Institutes near Dunedin (the New Zealand equivalent of the CSIRO) who has been researching truffle-growing since 1984, using the inoculation technique.

He says New Zealand produced its first truffles - "the real McCoy," not fakes from China - which have infiltrated the international truffle trade.

Hall said he believed there were plantations in France and Italy that did produce 100 kilograms a year. And he said that his brother Alan was the fabled source of the claim that yields of 60 kilograms a hectare had been achieved in New Zealand. It turns out that is not the half of it. Alan Hall, who has a hobby farm near Gisborne, says that three winters ago he dug up that quantity on just half-a-hectare of land he planted with inoculated seedlings only five years earlier and some of them were monsters, weighing more than a kilogram each.

The bad news is that he has no idea how many of these were saleable, because many were badly damaged by insects, and others had rotted away by the time they were found. "It's just heartbreaking to find a truffle

that size honeycombed by slugs," he said. Furthermore, that prodigious harvest has never been approached since, nor replicated anywhere else in the world that The Age could find.

And, curiously for a man who held fungi the size of cricket balls worth \$NZ3000 (\$A2600) each in his hands, Alan Hall has decided he doesn't want to be a truffle farmer. What he does is use the truffles he finds - you guessed it - to inoculate thousands of oak and hazelnut seedlings, which he sells to other people for \$NZ40 each.

Those thinking of investing should remember that in the long and sorry history of exotic tax-driven agro-investment schemes - from joboba to paulownia trees, llamas to ostriches and olives - the only people who have made real money are the initial promoters who provided the breeding, or seedling stock.

Back to Ian Hall, who points out that, in spite of the fanciful claims being made in Australia, the entire New Zealand production was less than 100 kilograms last year, a yield of not 100 or 70 but just two kilograms per planted hectare.

"I'm not saying invest in this folks," he warns. "It is high risk. You have to be honest and provide the investors with all the information (including) 'Hey, you can finish up losing your socks here, folks'."

*This story was found at:*

***<http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2002/09/30/1033283436056.html>***

### **Membership News**

**It seems only fitting at this time to give a special thanks to everyone who puts in not only time but in some cases, money, to support SVIMS. Just two examples are the financial support given by Shannon Berch who has been looking after the cost of our website and Marlee and Gerald Loiselle who have been donating the "goodies" at the SVIMS meetings. Although we may not say it often, their efforts and generosity is much appreciated!**

### **Welcome new members:**

**Johnathan Colvin & Judy Lee, Mike Hillary, Marta Klinovsky, Michael**

**Mascall, Herbert Moore, Shikako Poffenberger, Heike Ramien, Chris**

**Schoening, and Kazimiera StypkaTineke Van der Voort**