

# Williamson Orchards & Vineyards

by Kelly Gates

Beverly Williamson's ancestors were some of the first to settle Caldwell, ID in the early 1900s as part of the country's Homestead Act. The family founded a farm on their claimed property, with virtually no modern day amenities, like irrigation.

According to Beverly, the relative who started it all — George Gammon — went to great lengths to bring water to his livestock and crops.

"He spent a number of years taking oxen down to the

crate it was delivered in was eventually converted to a hen house and remains a fixture at the farm still, an antique object with a tie to the family's beginnings.

During the decades that followed, the farm was passed on from one generation to another. When there weren't direct descendants to inherit the estate, nephews or other family members took the helm.

Today the land is still owned by family. But instead of row crops and livestock, it houses

agement," said Beverly. "My cousin Anne works in the fruit stand and my cousin Patrick, who graduated with degrees in Enology and Viticulture, is presently working at E & J Gallo Winery and will hopefully become our resident winemaker someday."

In all, four generations have kept the family legacy up and running since it began in the early 1900s. It takes the collective effort of the current crew to run the place, with over 300 acres of produce in production, a winemaking operation and an on-site sales division to boot.

Williamson Orchards & Vineyards grows everything from apples and cherries to peaches, apricots and pluots.

"Throughout the growing season we also offer a wide range of vegetables grown by local farmers who we know and trust, including tomatoes, cucumbers, zucchini, sweet peppers, hot peppers, cantaloupe, watermelon, corn, onions, potatoes, garlic and pumpkins," noted Beverly. "We also offer the harder to find vegetables like eggplant, broccoli, pickling cukes, and kohlrabi. And, we bring in raspberries, blackberries, blueberries, marionberries and black caps."

Roger starting pressing cider many years ago and even when the e-coli scare caused many other cider makers to shutter their shops, the closed-circuit processing system used by Williamson Orchards & Vineyards was high tech enough to meet regulatory standards for safe cider.

He makes enough cider to keep busy from October to Thanksgiving each year. Most of the cider is sold direct from the farm. A small portion is retailed at local boutiques and select grocery stores throughout the region.

Roger also has a hand in making another type of drink, the 12 wine varieties that bare the Williamson label.

"In 1998, we converted part of our cherry orchard into a vineyard and now, we have 42 acres of wine grapes in production," said Beverly. "Michael manages the vineyards, my dad is in charge of wine making — which is done through a third party source — and I run the tasting room."

Riesling and Viognier are the white grape varieties grown there. Reds include Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, Petite Syrah, Sangiovese and Mouvedre.



Emily Williamson pours wine samples at Williamson Orchards & Vineyards.

Some of the Williamson Vineyard wines are straight varietals while others are blends, with two to three dessert wines in house at any given time. In the future, the family hopes to add two more blends to the mix to round out the collection.

According to Beverly, only 20 percent of the grapes grown by the company are used to produce its wines.

"We source to other vineyards and wineries, mostly in the Snake Valley, but as far north as Lewiston," she said. "Some request grapes from a specific sections of the vineyard, but many order based on tonnage."

As soon as the grapes are hand-harvested for use in Williamson wines, they are taken to Koenig Distillery for de-stemming and crushing. Little time is wasted as the precise sweetness levels are attained just before picking, the flavor and quality of the grapes can diminished if the grapes are not processed shortly after being removed from the vines.

As with most vineyards, the ecosystem in which the grapes are grown impacts many factors of wine production. The geological backdrop at Williamson Orchards & Vineyards is just one element making the acreage well suited for growing grapes.

"The chalk hills surrounding our vineyard absorb heat from the sun during the day and release it at night," explained Beverly. "Since we're in the desert, it can get pretty cold when the sun goes down. But the hills keep the temperature from dipping too low, preventing extreme temperature changes that could negatively effect the grapes."

The consistent temperatures enable the growers to produce Viognier and Sangiovese grapes, two Italian varieties that others in desert states might find too difficult to grow.

After the grapes are de-stemmed, crushed, tanked, fermented and bottled, they are brought back to the vineyards' packing and storage facilities for labeling. Nearly 80 percent of the wines are sold from the company's tasting room—some to tourists passing through; most to loyal local customers, many of whom are members of the Williamson Vineyards Wine Club.

"We also sell through one distributor in northern Idaho and to local restaurants, but we only make 1,100 cases per year at this time, so we haven't shipped outside the state yet," said Beverly. "Eventually, we would like to expand our reach to other states, but we do a great amount of business from our tasting room, in part because we are open during the week, not just weekends. We're one of only three local wineries that are open during the week."

The Williamson family stays busy year round, whether the focus is on seasonal produce sales, orchard and vineyard maintenance or wine production and samplings. As the owners manage the multi-faceted operation, they never lose sight of its history.

"We work hard to be good stewards of the land," said Beverly. "We want to provide good products, good service and always remember how far this farm has come since our ancestors settled here over 100 years ago."



The Williamson family. Front Row (L-R): Evelyn & Jack W., Monica W. Middle Row: Mike W. holding daughter Olivia, Roger W., John W., Mike Lenehan, Patrick W. Back Row: Eileen W., Sue W., Anne W., Emily W.

Photos courtesy of Williamson Orchards & Vineyards

Snake River to get water and after a while, he decided there must be a better way," Beverly explained. "As the story goes, he hand-dug a 100 foot well, hauling buckets of dirt out of the hole using buckets and pulleys."

Gammon and his wife Lillian also ordered a windmill from a Sears & Roebuck catalog to produce wind power for their farm. The large wooden

a wine and orchard business called, "Williamson Orchards & Vineyards."

Beverly's father, Roger, is semi-retired, but helps manage many of the tasks at the business. Her siblings and other family members also work at Williamson Orchards & Vineyards.

"My sister Emily and I run the fruit stand while our brother Michael is in charge of vineyard and orchard man-



Roger Williamson (left) and Mike Williamson (right) pour wine samples for guest at Williamson Orchards & Vineyards First of Harvest Party.

# Heating things up using Geothermal Energy as alternative source for Greenhouse Growing

by Kelly Gates

Simply put, geothermal energy is heat (thermal) derived from the earth (geo). All around the globe, heat flows from the center of the earth to the surface along geothermal gradients, usually winding up at the surface at temperatures too low for it to be used as an alternative energy source.

However, in some parts of the world plate tectonics ensure that some of the heat is concentrated at temperatures and depths favorable for commercial extraction.

IFA Nurseries of Klamath Falls, OR is one such business benefiting from the natural offering. According to Jacky Friedman, manager there, even the site of the company's main nursery facility was chosen based on prime access to a geothermal source.

"We had looked at several locations on the East side of the Cascade Mountain range in order to market our seedlings to clients in Northern California, Eastern Oregon, Idaho & Eastern Washington. Here at IFA Nurseries, Inc, we grow seedlings for reforestation at our three container and three bareroot nurseries," said Friedman. "The key factors in our decision to base a nursery in Klamath Falls were the geothermal heat

1992 it began a marketing effort to attract more users to the system.

Along with heating a local waste water treatment plant, 24 downtown buildings and a sidewalk snow melt system, IFA Nurseries was able to tap into the benefits of the water that emerges from the wells and arrives at the nursery's facilities at a steamy 185 degrees Fahrenheit.

The company constructed its Klamath Falls growing facilities in 2001, after the City of Klamath agreed to add extra pipes out from the city center to the property where IFA Nurseries now has its corporate headquarters.

"The city's geothermal heat system runs beneath the downtown area of Klamath Falls, but the city also extended the line out to our facility before we began breaking ground on our first greenhouse," explained Friedman. "The city supply enters our facility and from here, we transfer the heat from the hot water to our internal heating system via a heat exchanger."

The heat exchanger is housed in a small pump building next to the greenhouses. Two pumps move the hot water around the site to any greenhouse that requires heating and



A bird's-eye view of IFA Nurseries.

houses with the geothermal heat we also heat our offices using the system," said Friedman. "At our Klamath Falls facility alone, we produce approximately 5.5 million seedlings per year utilizing the geothermal heat as our primary heat source. Whatever savings we incur, we are able to pass along to our customers."

The company's clients are private forestry businesses in the Pacific Northwest. IFA Nurseries grows and sells a wide range of forestry species including Douglas Fir, Ponderosa Pine, Western Larch, Western White Pine, White Fir, Red Fir, Sugar Pine, to name a few.

While growing such a large collection of seedling varieties is a challenge in and of itself, finding the most cost-effective, efficient energy source to

run the facilities was vital to making IFA's operation a reality.

With a standard geothermal system, the water that runs through the equipment circulates to a depth of at least 14,000 ft. It is then heated and moves upward along fault zones and fractures.

The process has enabled the nursery to thrive for many years and is being used by more and more growers like IFA Nurseries.

"Geothermal energy use in greenhouses is not a new concept," said Friedman. "But it is an amazing alternative energy source that enables us to grow our seedlings here in the Pacific Northwest just as it allows grower to produce bananas in greenhouses in Iceland using geothermal energy."



Jacky Friedman, Nursery Manager, holds a seedling that was grown at the greenhouse.

Photos courtesy of IFA Nurseries

source, the high elevation, the sunlight hours and there were some favorable tax incentives at the time too."

Indeed, the city of Klamath Falls offered an array of reasons for businesses to headquarter there. In 1981, the city constructed a district heating system for the downtown area utilizing a geothermal heat source and in

the entire system is computerized, opening and closing the main supply pipe to alter the flow of hot water into the heat exchanger, she added.

The hot water then flows into forced air units, effectively warming the air before it is blown through convection tubing that runs under IFA Nurseries' growing benches.

"In addition to heating the green-



The unit heaters and ducting are located in the back of the greenhouse.

# Growers and farm families donate thousands of real Christmas trees to U.S. troops and military families

## Christmas SPIRIT Foundation launches Trees for Troops® 2012

Trees for Troops®, the national program that provides free, farm-grown Christmas Trees to armed forces members and their families each Christmas, is off and running for 2012, with plans to deliver more than 17,000 Christmas Trees to military bases in the U.S. and overseas. Now in its eighth year, Trees for Troops is a program of the Christmas SPIRIT Foundation, working together with FedEx and members of the National Christmas Tree Association and many state and local Christmas Tree associations.

This year's Trees for Troops program kicked off Nov. 20 at Dull's Tree Farm in Thorntown, IN, where approximately 300 trees donated by members of the Indiana Christmas Tree Association will be collected and transported via FedEx to service members stationed in Kuwait. In the weeks that follow, thousands of

trees will be donated, collected and delivered to more than 60 military bases. Trees are provided through the generosity of Christmas Tree growers, retailers and consumers across the country, with shipping provided by FedEx.

The public is invited to help support Trees for Troops, and each donation will help ensure Trees for Troops can provide another Christmas Tree as a token of thanks and gratitude for the sacrifices of America's service men and women and their families. Donations may be tax deductible. To donate or learn more about how you can help, visit [www.treesfortroops.org](http://www.treesfortroops.org).

"Being involved with Trees for Troops is truly a gift that gives back," said Nigel Manley, Christmas SPIRIT Foundation chairman. "It's rewarding and meaningful to everyone involved, because it



The Trees for Troops charity has delivered over 100,000 trees to military families since 2005.

Photo courtesy of Trees for Troops

**Cover photo by Emily Enger**  
**Country Folks Grower wishes you and yours**  
**a memorable holiday season!**

### Country Folks

# GROWER

The Monthly Newspaper for Greenhouses, Nurseries, Fruit & Vegetable Growers

(518) 673-3237 • Fax # (518) 673-2381  
 (ISSN# 1065-1756) U.S.P.S. 008885

Country Folks Grower is published monthly by Lee Publications, P.O. Box 121, 6113 St. Hwy. 5, Palatine Bridge, NY 13428.

Periodical postage paid at Palatine Bridge, NY 13428.

Subscription Price: \$20 per year. Canada \$55 per year.

POSTMASTER: Send address change to Country Folks Grower, P.O. Box 121, Subscription Dept., Palatine Bridge, NY 13428-0121.

Publisher, President.....Frederick W. Lee  
 Vice-President Production.....Mark W. Lee, ext. 132.....mlee@leepub.com  
 Vice-President & General Manager.....Bruce Button, ext. 104.....bbutton@leepub.com  
 Comptroller.....Robert Moyer, ext. 148.....bmoyer@leepub.com  
 Production Coordinator.....Jessica Mackay, ext. 137.....jmackay@leepub.com  
 Editor.....Joan Kark-Wren, ext. 141.....jkarkwren@leepub.com  
 Page Composition.....Allison Swartz, ext. 139.....aswartz@leepub.com  
 Classified Ad Manager.....Peggy Patrei, ext. 111.....classified@leepub.com

Palatine Bridge, Main Office.....518-673-3237

Accounting/Billing Office.....518-673-2269.....amoyer@leepub.com

Subscriptions.....518-673-2448.....subscriptions@leepub.com

Web Site:.....www.leepub.com

Send all correspondence to:

PO Box 121, Palatine Bridge, NY 13428

Fax (518) 673-2699

Editorial Email: [jkarkwren@leepub.com](mailto:jkarkwren@leepub.com)

Advertising Email: [jmackay@leepub.com](mailto:jmackay@leepub.com)

#### AD SALES REPRESENTATIVES

Bruce Button, Ad Sales Manager.....bbutton@leepub.com.....800-218-5586, ext. 104  
 Dan Wren, Grower Sales Manager.....dwren@leepub.com.....800-218-5586, ext. 117  
 Jan Andrews.....jandrews@leepub.com.....800-218-5586, ext. 110  
 Dave Dornburgh.....ddornburgh@leepub.com.....800-218-5586, ext. 109  
 Steve Heiser.....sheiser@leepub.com.....800-218-5586, ext. 119  
 Ian Hitchener.....ihitchener@leepub.com.....518-210-2066  
 Tina Krieger.....tkrieger@leepub.com.....800-218-5586, ext. 262  
 Kegley Baumgardner.....kegleyb@va.net.....540-255-9112  
 Wanda Luck / North Carolina.....wwluck5@gmail.com.....336-416-6198 (cell)  
 Mark Sheldon.....msheldon@gotisky.com.....814-587-2519  
 Sue Thomas.....suethomas1@cox.net.....949-599-6800

#### Lee Publications

6113 State Hwy. 5, PO Box 121, Palatine Bridge, NY 13428

We cannot GUARANTEE the return of photographs. Publisher not responsible for typographical errors. Size, style of type and locations of advertisements are left to the discretion of the publisher. The opinions expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the publisher. We will not knowingly accept or publish advertising which is fraudulent or misleading in nature. The publisher reserves the sole right to edit, revise or reject any and all advertising with or without cause being assigned which in his judgement is unwholesome or contrary to the interest of this publication. We assume no financial responsibility for typographical errors in advertisement, but if at fault, will reprint that portion of the ad in which the error appears.

gives us the opportunity to say thank you to our troops, and help ensure military families have the kind of joyful, traditional Christmas memories that we would wish for America's heroes."

"America appreciates the sacrifices military service men and women and their families make each and every day," said Cline Church, president of the National Christmas Tree Association and owner of Cline Church Nursery in Fleetwood, N.C. "As Christmas Tree farmers, we want to provide a little Christmas spirit and maybe help start a new tradition with military families to be able to experience

a traditional Christmas with a Real Christmas Tree."

Since 2005, Trees for Troops has delivered more than 103,000 Real Christmas Trees to thankful troops and military families. Each year, thousands of trees are donated by Christmas Tree growers (through the National Christmas Tree Association, state and regional Christmas Tree associations) and consumers. FedEx and its team members generously provide shipping to bases in the U.S. and Middle East, through FedEx Express air operations and the FedEx Freight trucking network.

## Agricultural organizations call on Congress to pass Farm Bill

National Grape and Wine Initiative (NGWI) joined a broad coalition of 235 agriculture organizations signing on a letter which called on Congressional leadership to pass a new five-year farm bill to be signed into law by the end of the legislative session. All together, 10 grape and wine groups were part of the effort to pass a full Farm Bill.

In a related action, NGWI president Jean-Mari Peltier outlined the negative impact of failure of Congress to act to renew the Farm Bill at a meeting of the California State Board of Food and Agriculture on Nov. 6. "A simple one-year extension will not renew important provisions of the 2008 Farm Bill," according to Peltier. "Key among these is the Specialty Crop Research Initiative (SCRI), which has provided funding for game-changing grape research to combat drought, pests, and diseases."

Grape research has been a major beneficiary of SCRI, with projects addressing challenges across the United States.

Peltier also pointed out that the lan-

guage adopted by the House of Representatives (HR 6083) incorporates key changes sought by a broad coalition of specialty crop interests. That language would specify a two-step process for reviewing grant applications, including a review by the specific specialty crop industry to determine a proposed project's relevance and impact on the economy. "This provision would assure that in times of limited federal funding, the projects with the greatest industry impact would be funded."

Washington observers are split when asked about the likelihood of passage of a Farm Bill during the lame duck session. Some believe that a divided Congress will focus only on the issue of the "fiscal cliff" and sequestration. Others believe that the potential budget savings (\$23 billion in the Senate bill or \$35 billion with the House's measure) could attract Congressmen looking for budget cuts. Continuation of critical research to assure the competitiveness of the grape and wine industry awaits Congressional leadership.