



**WALK AND LEARN:**  
Growers attending a Farm Walks tour at Nicholson Orchards near Peshastin, Wash., absorb ideas from growers and researchers.

# Walks keep growers in step with methods

By T.J. BURNHAM

**M**ARCIA Ostrom has walked miles to help farmers meet farmers.

Her "Farm Walks" tours, now in their fifth year, open farms to other growers to learn the techniques of kindred producers.

Ostrom is head of the Washington State University Small Farms Program, but "small" doesn't mean the farms don't represent mainline agriculture.

Take a recent tour in a Peshastin, Wash., orchard. Here, visiting producers met a third-generation, full-time grower of about 200 acres of apples and pears, falling within state parameters of a full-time producer with average orchard acreage.

Information generated at this tour of the Nicholson Orchards could be of interest to any grower. For example, the grafting demonstration

featured tips from professional grafter Mike Hempel of Grouse Mountain Farm.

The Nicholson event marked more than 50 such tours in Washington, and many more are coming:

■ **June 2:** Zakarison Partnership in Pullman, where the focus will be on diversified wheat, grain and livestock

■ **July 28:** Alm Hill Gardens in Everson, which will cover diversified production and transitioning to cooperative ownership

■ **Aug. 18:** 21 Acres in Woodinville, where growers can visit an Agricultural and Environmental Learning Center

■ **Sept. 1:** Methow Creamery, Twisp, which will focus on value-added dairy products and on-farm feed production

■ **Sept. 8:** Nash's Organic Produce, Sequim, which will discuss integrating seed into a diversified organic program

■ **Oct. 6:** Styger Family Dairy Farm, Chehalis, where talk will

be on intensive grazing and prize-winning milk

Overall, the diversification of these tours covers the varying sectors of agriculture.

"The idea of these farm walks, unlike a conventional tour, is that they are here to learn directly from the farmer to spread information from one farmer to the next about sustainable and organic farming practices," explains Ostrom. "We discuss real, ongoing farm problems in hands-on settings where the farm owner and the attending farmers can share new ideas. Farm Walks are farmer-led. We give the floor to farmers actually working on production issues on their farm."

WSU's Small Farms team conducts research and outreach for small- to medium-sized farms owned by families. The team helps producers identify and meet personal and financial goals of producing crops of all kinds. Special emphasis

is offered to those interested in establishing roadside marketing, although the program offers all types of marketing assistance. Among the leading goals, says Ostrom, is to build public support for agriculture and preserve Washington farmland.

Unifying farmers and consumers in developing local markets and community food access, another project goal, is perhaps even more important today with high fuel prices affecting long-haul transportation, Ostrom believes.

Tours are conducted in conjunction with the Tilth Producers of Washington, and are \$10 for TPW members, and \$15 for nonmembers. All walks are conducted from noon to 3:30 p.m. Each tour provides a special booklet on presented information.

For more information, visit the WSU Web site at [www.smallfarms.wsu.edu](http://www.smallfarms.wsu.edu) or the Tilth site at [www.tilthproducers.org](http://www.tilthproducers.org).

## Handling language barriers correctly



**NURSE MURF**

By HELEN MURPHY

**W**E all know that workers need training before they are exposed to agricultural hazards. But English is not the first language for most farmworkers. Experts say it takes five to six years for someone learning a new language to reach professional-level, second-language proficiency, and five to 10 years to reach second-culture proficiency. Our challenge is to bridge that gap before an accident happens.

Our research found that farmworkers want training about workplace health issues on the work site either from supervisors or community health workers — *promotoras*, in Spanish.

Hands-on training is preferred over written materials because the latter may be intimidating for those without reading proficiency in their native language. Training should be provided by a native speaker in the language of the workers, which may be a language other than Spanish. The more interactive, the better.

### Be careful with signage

Signage is fine, but test it for appropriateness and comprehension. Case in point: We developed a picture (at right) to inform how pesticide residuals move from the workplace into workers' homes.

Do you see a problem with this picture? Our community health workers who had been in this country for many years thought it was fine. Only on

## What's New on the Web

By Willie Vogt

### Your place for exclusive Web information

A visit to [www.WesternFarmerStockman.com](http://www.WesternFarmerStockman.com) offers you plenty of information, from local news to customized weather to detailed market and risk management resources. You'll also find the occasional Web

exclusive where added content beyond the features you find in the magazine can be found.

Just visit the site and check out the "well" in the center, which starts with local news, then national news, and then Web Exclusives. Simply by scrolling down through the site you get access to Web-only content you'll not find elsewhere.

Check it out on your next visit to the site, and consider making [www.WesternFarmerStockman.com](http://www.WesternFarmerStockman.com) your home page to keep in touch with the latest in local and national ag news.

If you have questions about the Web site, send an e-mail to Editorial Director Willie Vogt at [wvogt@farmprogress.com](mailto:wvogt@farmprogress.com).

## Western Close-up

**Loveland retires**  
Valoria Loveland, director of the Washington state Department of Agriculture, retired effective May 5. "Since her reappointment as agriculture director in April 2005, Valoria has been a tireless advocate for the farming community," says Gov. Chris Gregoire. "When I reappointed Valoria as director of agriculture I asked



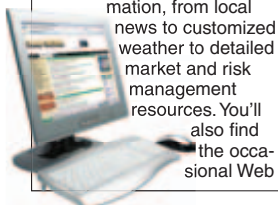
LOVELAND

that she expand the market for our state's agricultural goods.

Today, agriculture exports from Washington state are at record highs, thanks in large part to Valoria's leadership."

### Pierce president-elect of agronomy society

Fran Pierce, director of Washington State University's Center for Precision Agricultural Systems and a professor in the crop and soil sciences department, has been elected 2009 president-elect of the American Society of



showing arriving workers from Mexico was the problem revealed: the dog! Dogs are not usually allowed in Mexican homes because they are considered unhygienic.

If you use text with pictures, keep it short without idioms, which translate poorly. Avoid electronic translations. They don't work. Here's an example:

**Original English message:**

*Always wash your pesticide-contaminated hands with soap and water before using the toilet, answering your cell phone or eating.*

**Electronic Spanish translation:**

*Lávese siempre las manos contaminadas de plaguicidas con agua y jabón antes de usar el baño, en respuesta a su teléfono móvil o comer.*

**Back to English translation:**

*Always wash your hands contaminated by pesticides with soap and water before using the bathroom, in response to your cell phone or eating.*

Professional translators are best to write any text. Test it for comprehension by asking workers to read it and then paraphrase the meaning. Ask if they think others would have a problem understanding.

**More to consider**

When working with new Hispanic workers, here are a few cultural differences for supervisors to keep in mind:

■ Pointing at a person, finger snapping, whistling to get attention and extending the index and fifth digits (like horns) are insulting.

■ For Hispanic workers, looking a superior in the eye is considered confrontational or disrespectful. Avoidance does not mean deceit or inattention; rather, it is a sign of respect for the boss.

■ A firm handshake is seen as aggressive, while a weak one is respectful.

■ Readily admitting to a mistake or taking blame is considered a loss of face and personal honor.

■ To get to the bottom of a problem, a supervisor's questions should be indirect and depersonalized. Not "Did you do this?" but "How did the event happen?"

■ Speaking in a loud voice can be interpreted as anger.

■ Your worker may feel insulted if you ask, "Do you understand me?" This puts their ability to understand in question. Better to say, "Did I explain myself OK?"

*Murphy is outreach and education director at the University of Washington Pacific Northwest Agricultural Health and Safety Center. Reach her by phone at 206-616-5906 or by e-mail at hmurf@u.washington.edu.*

■ For more information, read "Uncomfortable Neighbors" from **El Mundo Communications Inc.**



**TRACKING PESTICIDES:** This sign explains how pesticides can be tracked from the job site to a worker's home.

Agronomy. He will take office as association president in 2010.

**Carlisle joins Valent sales for Oregon, Washington**

Evan Carlisle has joined Valent U.S.A. Corp. as a sales representative for Oregon and Washington in the company's Western Region. Carlisle brings more than 10 years of experience in Pacific Northwest agriculture, working most recently as regional sales manager for Alligare LLC. Company officials say Carlisle's experience, especially within the potato market, will be invaluable.

**Dhingra, DaVault partner for genomics research**

Washington State University genomicsist Amit Dhingra and Pullman High School agriculture teacher Tina DaVault have received a \$15,000 Partners in Science grant from the M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust. The grant will enable DaVault and several of her students to conduct Rosaceae genomics research in Dhingra's lab for two summers. In turn, DaVault will take what she learns in Dhingra's lab back to her classes, where she will train students in cutting-edge lab

# Wading through the permit jungle

By T.J. BURNHAM

**B**EFORE making the first move to build a biodiesel plant, get your permit ducks in a row.

Obtaining the proper permits before work begins is a must in Washington, warns Michele Vazquez. But her outfit, the Washington State Governor's Office of Regulatory Assistance, is ready as a guide through the regulatory quagmire.

Vazquez was a key speaker at the conference — Making Renewable Energy Projects Happen — in Portland, Ore., sponsored by the Northwest Environmental Business Council and Northwest Biofuels Association. She listed the assistance the agency can offer applicants.

"We can assist applicants navigating through the regulatory process," said Vazquez, one of several ORA officials in the state. "We can provide coordination and facilitation assistance, and help resolve disputes," she offered. "We can work with agencies to provide predictable time frames to accomplish the work that needs to be done. We can act as a central point of contact."

**Allow time for permits**

Permits can be a challenging experience, she said, but there are tips and hints that can help. When applying for air quality permits, make sure you file before starting construction, she urged. The permit can take up to four months until a final decision, but that doesn't include time needed for public hearings.

"If you have a very large ethanol plant, this permit process could take up to a year," she said.

Not only should all construction be delayed until an

techniques and eventually develop a curriculum in the area of horticultural genomics.

**McCain Foods promotes Polacek**

McCain Foods announced that Marv Polacek, who has worked at the company's Grand Island, Neb., food processing plant, will be getting a promotion and a transfer to their potato processing plant in Othello, Wash. Polacek will succeed John Shields, a longtime field department employee for McCain Foods in Othello, who resigned in March.

**Key Points**

- Biofuel plant permits are needed before construction.
- Washington state regulatory assistance office offers help.
- It will take longer to get permits than most expect.

air quality permit is issued, but also applicants cannot lay underground pipes, install building supports and foundations, or construct permanent emission-related structures, Vazquez noted.

**Strain on communities**

When it comes to resolving water issues for a new plant, remember that small communities will often need to expand existing systems to provide for your facility, she said.

"Rural communities may welcome you, but often are not aware of the regulatory requirements and permit time frames for expansion," Vazquez said.

"Time frames and water expansion needs should be considered as part of the site selection process," Vazquez noted.

Since wastewater cannot be handled on-site, it will be necessary to tie into local wastewater systems, and it can take a long time for a community to develop these potentially costly changes, Vazquez warned.

Overall, "getting permits will take longer than you expect," she said.

■ You can contact the ORA by phone at either 800-917-0043 or 360-407-7037, or check its Web site at [www.ora.wa.gov](http://www.ora.wa.gov).

**They said it**

"We will see smaller ethanol plants develop near their feedstock sources and near their markets. More farm co-ops will become involved."



**John Pierce,** alternative energy attorney, Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati, Seattle

"They're contracting corn to 2010! I've never heard of contracts that far ahead before."



**Adrian Higginbotham,** Washington farmer and corporate manager, Tanner Creek Energy, Portland, Ore.

"You may find [conventional] energy companies interested in investing in your [ethanol] project, in part to obtain your carbon credits."



**Rob Harris,** vice president of business development, JH Kelly (energy facility construction company), Longview, Wash.

"Permitting is an absolute headache."



**Peter Nessler Jr.,** president, Renewable Fuels Group, Des Moines, Iowa.

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