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# COUNTRY LIFE IN BC

The agricultural news source in British Columbia since 1915

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## Health labs to be rebuilt

### No easy fix for flood damage

PETER MITHAM

ABBOTSFORD – Damage from the atmospheric rivers that flooded Sumas Prairie farms in November 2021 is forcing the province to relocate its Plant and Animal Health Centre in Abbotsford. “It was severely damaged by the flooding, too, and completely inoperable for months,” BC agriculture minister Pam Alexis told producers gathered for the annual BC Agriculture Gala in Abbotsford on January 25.

Besides the damage

*More secure location* ▶



### The right cut

Horticulturist Molly Thurston attracted a keen audience for a tree pruning workshop at Claremont Ranch in Lake Country in February. Thurston says pruning is critical to orchard health and vitality. Getting out dead wood, training the tree and getting light to the branches encourages vigour and great fruit. She says this winter's cold snaps mean growers really need to watch their trees to determine if or how much to prune. MYRNA STARK LEADER

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## Kale acreage on fast track

PETER MITHAM

DELTA – Kale was the fastest-growing vegetable in BC by acreage in 2022, according to Statistics Canada data that shows field vegetable acreage in the province is on the decline. BC growers tended 13,146 acres of vegetables in 2022, according to Statscan's annual report on fruit and vegetable acreage, released February 16 (potatoes and greenhouse crops are considered separately). This was down 7% from a year earlier and 4%

from the five-year average. But within those numbers, kale took top-spot as the fastest-growing crop, with acreage rising 55% versus 2021 and 36% over the five-year average to 149 acres. The rise of kale is part of greater interest in leafy greens, with lettuce ranking second among the fastest-growing vegetables by acreage. Growers devoted 598 acres to lettuce in 2022, up 45% from 2021 and 20% higher than the five-year average. The strength of leafy greens

relates not only to a favourable climate but also market opportunities. The province's most lucrative crops on a per-acre basis are spinach, at \$28,051 per acre, followed by kale at \$21,932 per acre. Its fast-growing counterpart, lettuce, generated farmgate receipts of nearly \$9.5 million for growers last year, or more than \$15,855 an acre. This puts it ahead of the top-grossing crop in BC, cabbage, which

*Good news* ▶

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