

THE ISLAND AGRARIAN

NEWS FROM SAN JUAN ISLAND GRANGE #966

GROWERS, MAKERS, AND KEEPERS WORKING TOGETHER

2025 Grange Officers Assume the Mantle



Installing Officer Anita Barreca welcomes Sherri Phelps to the post of Ceres

Secretary: Rachel Brooks
 Gatekeeper/Greeter: John Latimer
 Ceres: Sherri Phelps
 Pomona: Laura Jo Severson
 Flora: Alice Deane
 Executive Committee:
 Bill Severson (through 2025)
 Doug Rowan (through 2026)
 Patty Garcia (through 2027)
 Family Living Director:
 Charlene Amsden
 Musician: Mike Cohen

President: Roger Ellison
 Vice President: Jessa Madosky
 Program Director: Kevin Connolly
 Steward: Alison Longley
 Assistant Steward: Harold Arsem
 Lady Assistant Steward: Marc Santos
 Chaplain: Nirmela Arsem
 Treasurer: Boyd Pratt

Marshall Nancy Webb assists in the installation of Alison Longley as Steward





**SAN JUAN ISLAND
GRANGE #966**

San Juan Island Grange #966 is a grassroots, non-partisan advocacy group supporting a resilient community on San Juan Island.

The Grange serves San Juan Islanders with legislative programs and community activities, such as talent and craft contests, scholarships, and more. You don't have to be a farmer to belong, though many are. Our elected officers are volunteers, and our "work" is done through committees. The heart of our mission is fostering community well-being, and we enjoy gathering to celebrate this.

We are a 501(c)(8) organization, accepting donations towards our programs and to maintain Grange Hall, in downtown Friday Harbor.

Officers of San Juan Island Grange #966 may be found at sanjuangrange.org/officers.html

Our bylaws and resolutions may be found at sanjuangrange.org/structure.html

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Overmarsh Update

By Bruce Robinson

On December 15, close to 20 prospective project participants joined at Overmarsh Farm Commons for a tour. The tour began with a general overview of the land being leased by the Grange from the San Juan County Conservation Land Bank. It then moved into a detailed description of the area that will be available for gardening in the spring. By seeing the plot already in vegetable production, participants were able to determine how much land they might like to work this year. At least 1/2 acre will be available for production in March, with another 1/2 acre currently under tarps in preparation for later use.

The enthusiasm and talent-base of our project participants is truly inspiring to the Overmarsh steering committee. We are looking forward to seeing "the fruits (and vegetables) of our labor" become a reality.

The steering committee has been working on the Overmarsh budget for 2025. We will present our ideas at the budget brainstorming session on January 5, to which all Grangers are invited. The final budget will be developed two weeks later, on January 19.



Photo: Elaine Kendall

Letter from the President

Well, it's been quite a year!

Starting from a dream and a desire to improve our island's food resilience, our farm team wrote a winning proposal to the Land Bank to lease 40 acres, converted a quarter acre of pasture to vegetable beds, produced a first crop of potatoes for a celebratory dinner at the Hall, put up deer fence, converted more pasture to vegetables, installed an irrigation system, and planted a cover crop and several rows of winter vegetables. And we won a grant for a hoop house for Overmarsh Farm Commons through the San Juan Community Foundation's County Fair Giving Campaign. Whew!

Looking ahead, a winter crop of kale, collards, chard and broccoli will feed Grangers at our potlucks and dinners, with the surplus first going to the San Juan Island Farmers Market and then on to the Food Bank.

Our presence at the farmers market grew by leaps and bounds with produce by Larissa Nash and Brent Snow and black garlic and caramels by Paul Hopkins.

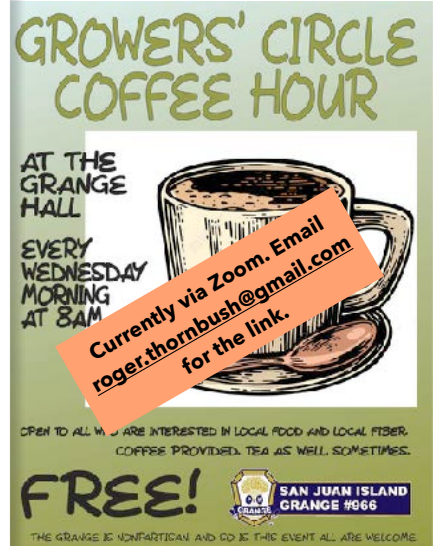
Our dehydrators, including our new 32-tray commercial model, were put into service drying apples for the Food Bank. We organized successful public cider pressings at Sweet Earth Farm and the San Juan Island Farmers Market.

We practiced political engagement with our public support of the Library Lid Lift Levy, the Fire Levy, and the Land Bank Renewal. Alison Longley represented us at the State Grange Convention, arguing in support of our resolution for the removal of the Lower Snake River dams.

We were socially engaged with a regular schedule of potlucks, game nights, and dances throughout the year, and our Hall had another successful year as a home for community celebrations and programs.

All told, it was a pretty good year. May we all have a peaceful and prosperous 2025!

Roger Ellison, 2024 President



Save the Date!



3rd Annual Seedy Sunday Seed Swap and Give Away and Seed-Starting Workshop!

February 23, 1-3pm
at Grange Hall

Bring your friends, bring your seeds,
go home with your friends' seeds!





Dressed for the Season



Grange Hall decorated for the holidays
Lighting and photo: Farhad Ghatan



Grange booth with holiday wares at the San Juan Island Farmers Market arranged by Jessa Madosky and Elizabeth McCubbin
Photo: Roger Ellison



Calling All Grangers!

Our January meeting will be on Wednesday the 8th. The traditional potluck will be at 6pm and the meeting at 7pm, starting with the annual candle-lighting ceremony.

Save the date for these events at Grange Hall!

- Sunday January 5, 1pm: **revisoning session** to develop our goals for 2025 in keeping with our mission
- Wednesday January 8, 6pm, **potluck and monthly meeting**
- Sunday January 19, 1pm: **budget creation meeting** based on goals from the January 5 revisoning session. We will look at the successes and failures of the previous year, make adjustments to our plan, and then build a 2025 budget.
- Every Monday, 7pm: free **contra dance**. No partner needed, every dance taught!
- Tuesdays January 14 and 28: free **game night!**

Growers' Circle Digest

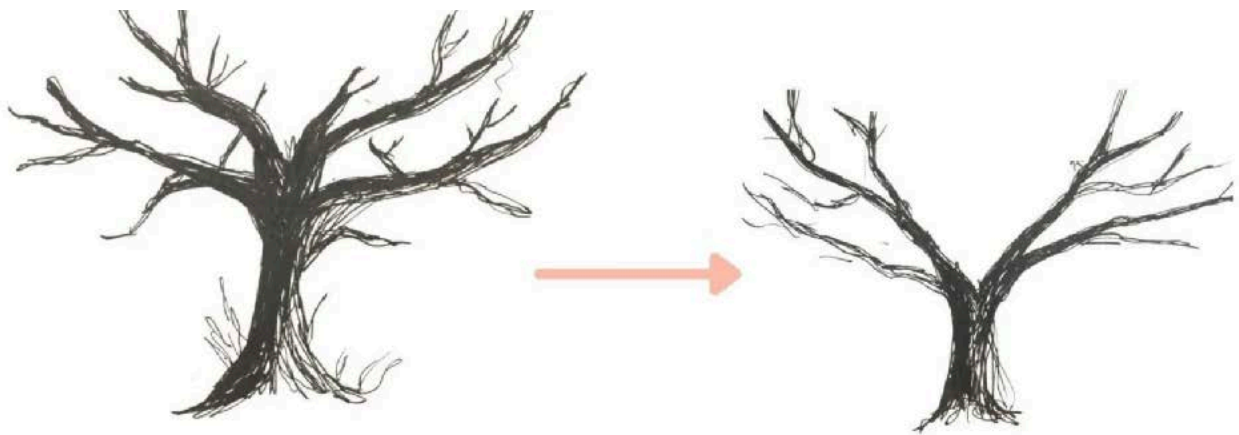
By Roger Ellison

At the November 27 Coffee Hour, we talked about improving a deer fence by adding a board or branch to the bottom of the fence, letting grass or brush to grow through the first few inches, or laying the bottom few inches on the ground surface before turning it vertically up the posts.

Has anybody tried a double fence? Maybe two fences 4' tall and 4' apart. [Deer Management for Home Gardeners Using a Two-Tiered Fence System | Home & Garden Information Center](#)

[How to Plant, Grow and Care For California Poppies](#)

[How to Prune a Peach Tree: A Step-by-Step Guide for Beautiful Harvests - Plant Propagation](#)



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We discussed The Pros and Cons of Cover Crops Around Your Fruit Trees

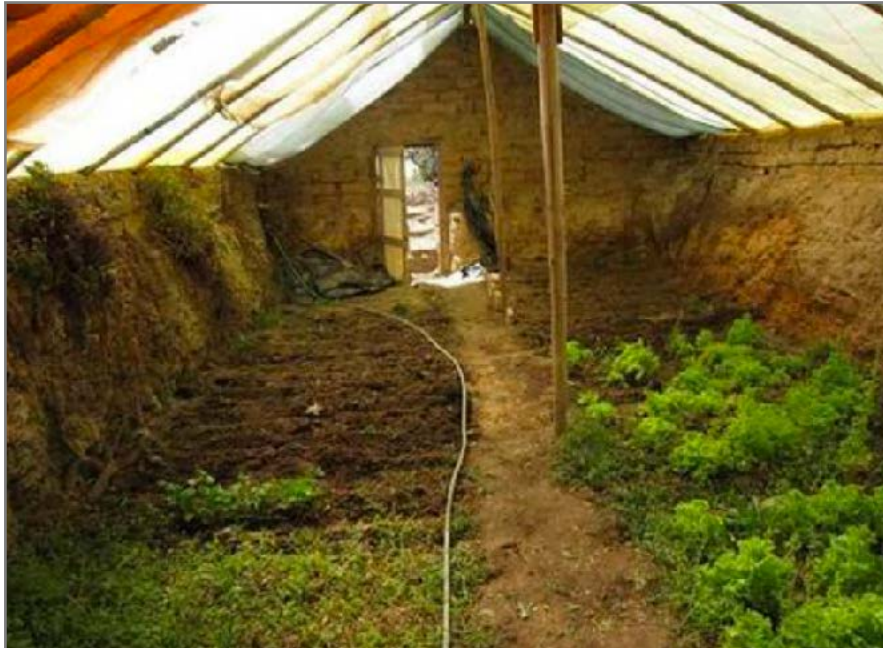


Here's a discussion we will bring up for a few weeks: What should be our priorities in gardening? Food only? Food and flowers? Productive trees only? Add some ornamentals?

If we were to try to vastly increase food production on our island, what would we grow? Maximize calories? Maximize nutrients? Grow the things that are easiest? That do not ship well? That are expensive to buy? Whose supermarket versions are tasteless? What can be grown with minimal soil disturbance?

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At the December 4 Coffee Hour we talked about walpinis, greenhouses that are sunk into the ground, so an earth-sheltered room with a translucent roof. Is a



Walipini Sunken Greenhouse Right for You? - Green Home Gnome

A few comments from growers:

- The limiting factor here might be light, not heat.
- Will it get hot enough for tomatoes?
- Can solar tubes be used to increase light?
- Will it flood in my clay soil?



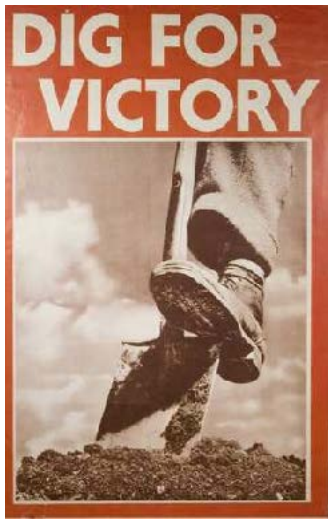
We also discussed replacement material for a deteriorating greenhouse film? Solexx was mentioned as good but expensive. Solexx Greenhouse Covering in Rolls. Another layer of greenhouse film is also a solution.

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How to prune a fig tree. [Fig pruning | NW Fruit \(Western Washington Fruit Research Foundation\)](#)

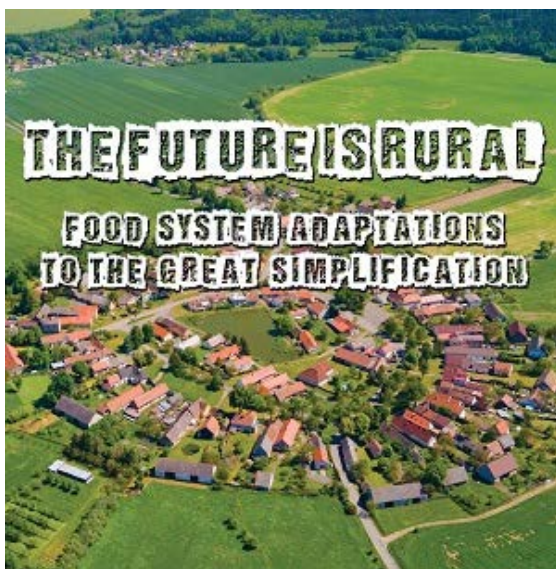
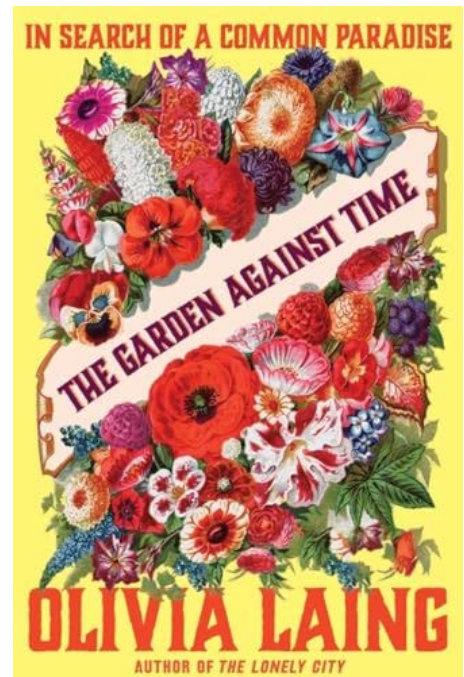
Increasing our food resilience:

Would flower growing help? Flowers feed beneficial insects, encourage pollinators, give us an income if we sell them at the farmers market, teach the important skills of horticulture, and can be easily replaced with food plants in an emergency.



Examples of quickly increasing local food production:

- Britain in WWII: [The Home Front in WW2, Growing and Cooking Rationed Food | Dig For Victory](#)
- Cuba after the collapse of the USSR: [The post-Cold War Cuban food experiment | Rapid Transition Alliance](#)



Books we discussed:

A grower recommended

[The Garden Against Time — Olivia Laing.](#)

My favorite book on PNW food resilience is [The Future is Rural: Food System Adaptations to the Great Simplification - Post Carbon Institute.](#)



Join fellow growers for the 2025 San Juan Islands Agricultural Summit on Friday February, 28 and Saturday, March 1. This year’s summit will be held on Lopez Island and will consist of in-person workshops, an evening community social at the Lopez Community Center on Friday, and an in-person conference day on Saturday at Lopez School.

This year’s theme, “Setting the Table for an Abundant Future,” is inspired by the name of the newly developed San Juan County Food System Plan, prepared by the San Juan County Food System Team. Summit participants will be collectively visioning the resilient food future we want to see in our county, as well as learning tangible skills, practices, and tools you can use now. Keynote speaker on Saturday will be the CEO of Tree-Range Farms, Reginaldo Haslett-Marroquin, who will discuss his whole-systems approach to agriculture.

You can get tickets to the summit with early bird registration through January 17. This limited-time registration period will save you 20% on tickets to workshops on Friday, February 28, as well as the full day on Saturday, March 1. Tickets for the community social, “Small Plates, Big Table,” are also available for purchase. Get tickets now while you can access reduced pricing.

For those needing housing, summit organizers will provide a list of options for you to self-book, including some first-come-first-served discounts.

