

THE ISLAND AGRARIAN

NEWS FROM SAN JUAN ISLAND GRANGE #966

**GROWERS, MAKERS, AND KEEPERS WORKING TOGETHER
FOR MUTUAL BENEFIT AND COMMUNITY BUILDING**

Plant Sale Success!

By Lois Moore

On Sunday, May 26, a misty rain fell, but tents went up on the Grange Hall deck, and the Grange's third annual Spring Plant Sale was underway! The



The Grange Plant Sale succeeded thanks to the Grangers who donated plants and those who came to help that day.

All remaining vegetable starts were taken to the Food Bank and offered to Food Bank customers. They welcomed the plants, which were taken quickly, with most gone by the end of the day.

Proceeds from the plant sale will be used to support the Grange Seed Bank and our new (and very popular) Grange Seed Library.

sale was well attended, despite the weather and the holiday weekend.

This year, there was a surfeit of tomatoes of all varieties at all stages of growth, and many went home with happy gardeners. We also sold out of other popular plant varieties.





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

The Overmarsh Farm Commons project is moving forward in a variety of ways: some practical "boots on the ground" and some administrative.

On May 19, a dozen Grangers met at Overmarsh Farm and finished laying solarization tarps on the 100' x 100' area planned for the community garden. To anchor the tarps, grow cages were assembled, filled with hay and soil, and then planted with potatoes (see page 5). Next fall, the potatoes will be harvested and sold as a fundraiser. At that point, the tarps will be lifted and the area planted with winter vegetables and garlic.

Meanwhile, the Grange Ag Support Committee will hold a



Winter Harvest Seed Exchange on June 23 (see page 6), where community members can pick up seeds to plant at home or to grow as starts for the Overmarsh garden. Through the summer, we will be developing the details of the garden operation, and we will be accepting applications for land use later in the year.

Those driving by Overmarsh Farm may have noticed the new perimeter fencing. This work has been done mainly by the Land Bank, but soon to be joined by Grange volunteers. Overmarsh Farm Commons Volunteer Coordinator Rachel Brooks will be recruiting helpers for work parties.

An Overmarsh information meeting was held on June 2 at Grange Hall. Thirty people showed up that rainy Sunday and received an excellent overview of the project from Roger Ellison (see photo above). Many were excited by the project, and lots of good ideas were generated for consideration by the Steering Committee.

Letter from the President

Greetings, Grangers!

Our membership team has been knee deep in renewals the past few months. I would like to thank them all for their hard work in keeping our members in good standing and our roster up to date.

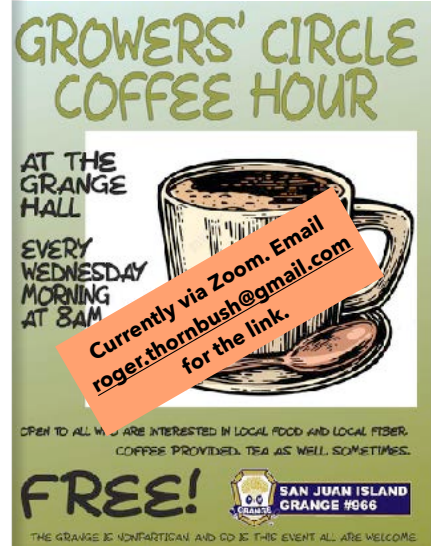
Please remember that the time to renew memberships is in December of each year. And that applies to new members, as well, even those who have been with us only a few months. To soften the blow, we charge only half the usual dues for new members when they sign up from July through December.

We've made it easy for you to renew. Just click on the following link to update your contact information and pay your dues for 2024: <https://forms.gle/KkkkdKKcg4MLwXDk9>

You can choose among three membership options. The most common is the \$68 individual membership. Family memberships are \$136 for members of the same household, including dependents under the age of 23. Finally, life memberships are a one-time \$500 and exempt the member from having to renew annually. The \$500 goes into an interest-bearing account at the State Grange, and our Grange receives the interest each year. As an added bonus, the interest payments continue to support our Grange, even after the death of the life member. This is our first year accepting life memberships. We are approaching ten already, and I expect the number will climb. By the way, life memberships make great gifts!

We have the most members of any Grange in Washington State, and at the rate that we keep growing, I think we will stay at number one for quite some time. Thank you all for making our Grange a membership success!

Roger Ellison, 2024 President



Notices

Repair Fair
June 9

Sundays 11-5 @ Grange Hall

March 10 | June 9 | Sept 22

5 FREE WOOD PALLET
Contact Grace at
gracefelt09@gmail.com

Building an Earth Bag Root Cellar at Seagate Farm

By John Latimer

Seagate Farm is getting ready to build a root cellar made with earth bags this summer.

Earth bag construction, sometimes called SuperAdobe, is a building method that uses long sandbag tubes, barbed wire, on-site earth, and a few tools.

The earth bags are filled with moistened earth and arranged in layers or long coils until the desired height is reached. Strands of barbed wire are placed between each sandbag layer to act as both "mortar" and reinforcement.

Stabilizers such as cement or lime may be added, depending on the type of soil. The long coils of sandbag provide vertical compression strength, while the barbed wire adds horizontal tensile strength. The earth itself provides insulation, flood resistance, and fire-proofing. Earth-bag buildings have passed severe earthquake code tests in California.

We're building the root cellar as a place to store our non off-gassing fruit, to separate them from ethylene-producing fruit. If you're storing your own items in a root cellar or pantry, keep ethylene

producers away from ethylene-sensitive veggies and fruit.

Ethylene producers include apples, bananas, avocados, kiwi, cantaloupe, peaches, pears, tomatoes, and peppers. Ethylene-sensitive veggies and fruits include

sweet potatoes, broccoli, apples, bananas, cucumbers, lemons, limes, onions, squash, lettuce, peaches, and pears.

As a benefit to San Juan Island Grange members, when space is available Seagate Farm will offer free short-term cool storage to members for non off gassing fruits and vegetables.

A big thank you to the San Juan Islands Agricultural Guild for the FARM Fund grant that is covering some of the construction costs. We'll be starting work the first week of June, so if you're interested in helping and learning with us to build with earth bags, please let us know at seagatefarm.wa@gmail.com or follow us @seagate_farm.



Et Voilà! Potatoes Planted at Overmarsh Farm Commons

By Bill Severson

Challenge: How to start a garden in a hurry on land that has been fallow for many years, and without using any heavy machinery?

Solution: Gather a dozen islanders one afternoon, spend two hours, and "wala"! You have a potato patch in place that will ultimately feed several dozen families. And when this quarter acre of potatoes is harvested in the fall, then we will plant garlic and winter vegetables. This is the first step on an ambitious adventure in learning how to feed ourselves.



The author and dirt man Kevin on the job

To set up our site, we first laid out large, heavy tarps on top of the grass. These tarps were actually reclaimed highway billboard vinyl, with advertisements on one side and a black layer on the other. These black tarps will quickly kill the grass, leaving the roots for worms and other organisms to feed on and enrich the soil until our vegetables are planted.

The crew quickly divided up the tasks of assembling the wire cages, lining the sides with old hay, filling the cages with a bucket of dirt and half a bucket of

compost, and then planting several seed potatoes. I worked the shovel to fill the buckets. Kevin was the dirt man, carrying the bucket of dirt to each of the 45 cages.

With the day's work finished, we eagerly divided up the wonderful "Blondy" cookies that Laura Jo had made specially for us and watched Roger on his large mower clear a path to the other side of the 35 acres. Three foxes were following behind Roger as he mowed, seemingly happy for the right of way.



SAVE THIS DATE!

Winter Harvest Seed Exchange

Sunday, June 23, 2-4pm at Grange Hall

By Nancy Best

Even though it doesn't remotely feel like summer as I write this, it's time to start the winter garden. With a little careful planning and attention to dates, winter-harvested plants can be squeezed in among the summer bounty and provide fresh winter meals when much of the "fresh" food in the market comes from far away in time and place.

Winter cabbages and broccoli like January King cabbage and Purple Sprouting broccoli can stand all winter in the garden, but they grow slowly and do best started in June. Look for other cold-hardy cabbage and broccoli varieties that show 100-180 days to harvest on the package. Carrots, beets, Swiss chard, and other greens planted in July are harvestable size in fall and winter.

For a full list, see Linda Gilkeson's "When To Plant For Winter Harvests": <http://www.lindagilkeson.ca/pdf/Linda%20Gilkeson%20Planting%20Schedule.pdf>.

As seeds for the winter harvest can run out, bring your favorites and exchange with your neighbors, or just come and take home some free seeds for winter eating.



Commercial Dehydrator Coming to the Grange Kitchen!



By Lois Moore

As most of you know, the Grange currently has a fleet of five portable dehydrators that can be borrowed for drying fruits and vegetables at home. This summer we will be purchasing a larger dehydrator that will be permanently situated in the Grange's commercial kitchen and which is specifically engineered for commercial use.

The BenchFoods dehydrator is a 32-tray unit with over 50 sq. ft. of drying area, so that large amounts of produce can be dried at once. There are two separate drying zones, and two temperature and timer settings can be used simultaneously, as desired. The dehydrator has a broad temperature range (86° to 194°) and a 99-hour digital timer. Like our other units, the BenchFoods dehydrator is made entirely of stainless steel.

We anticipate that this dehydrator will be available for use in time to preserve the summer and autumn harvest of fruits and vegetables, and we will announce its arrival!

Growers Circle Digest

By Nancy Best

On May 8 we talked about neonicotinoids, [their effects on bees and other insects](#), and whether our Grange ought to create a policy against the sale of neonicotinoid-containing products to consumers on our island. A bit of research will be done by some of our members, and we will come back to this topic at a later Coffee Hour. The main neonicotinoid pesticides are acetamiprid, clothianidin, dinotefuran, imidacloprid, and thiamethoxam.

Let's talk about how policy is made at the Grange. A member proposes that our Grange take a stance on an issue and submits a draft resolution at a meeting. The resolution is read at the meeting and then tabled to the following meeting. Meanwhile, the resolution is presented to the Grange membership for research and discussion. At the following meeting, a motion to accept the resolution is debated under "unfinished business." It is then either accepted as written, accepted as modified, or rejected, as members see fit. If accepted, it becomes the policy of our Grange.

We have created policies on several issues, including rights for immigrants, support for a GMO ban in our county, the removal of the lower Snake River dams, and a few others. If anyone wants to be the new

chair of our Legislative Committee, let me know! The post is available.

We also asked whether "no-till" applies to greenhouse beds or boxes? The principles of no-till apply if one considers the structure of the soil, the pore space, the crumb structure, and worm tunnels and tries to keep them intact.

[EM-I](#) was recommended as a soil drench to revive dormant dry beds.

Oatmeal as a soil amendment.

[Mitigation vs adaptation:](#) I suggested that we ought to put all our effort into adapting to climate change and no effort into mitigating it. I was being simplistic, and, it turns out, I do not actually believe what I said. Driving my statement was my thought that "if they continue to create more technologies to fix this problem, I will not have to change my lifestyle." I strongly believe that lifestyles will change, and it is better to work together for the changes rather than have the changes forced upon us by famine, drought, wildfire, war, and other catastrophes. Adaptation means growing more food at home or buying it from local farms, tending the forest and homesite for fire safety, collecting rainwater, and installing solar power. Mitigation (to me) means the difficult political work needed to lower greenhouse emissions globally and creating policy that will fairly help us transition past fossil fuels to a more

Continued on next page

Growers Circle Digest continued

diverse energy regime based on solar and wind (and, on this island, wood!). Though I am naturally drawn to the local efforts that give us immediate results, I do recognize that we cannot get past the current crises without doing the national and global work as well. Actually, looking back at my list of adaptations, I see that many of them will lower emissions, that is, they will mitigate the problem as well. And good mitigation strategies contain adaptive elements, like biochar sequestering carbon and improving soil at the same time. Your thoughts?

[Bentonite clay](#) can be bought in bags to seal the bottom of a small pond.

What are [electric composters](#)?

On May 15 we talked about a plant found in a grower's pond. We tentatively identified it as *Persicaria amphibia*, but it will be easier to name once it blooms.

Then we identified a larva as a [cutworm](#). It was a green one, but they come in different colors and patterns and belong to a species of moth.

We had a discussion about what plants or animals feel, and how it feels to us to harm them, for instance, when one cuts earthworms in half to try to get two worms. [It depends.](#)

We talked about grant money for studying the use of Ulva sea lettuce harvested for

use in fertilizing land. It is overly abundant in some places—a pest in the shellfish industry, for instance. Can somebody suggest a link to put here? We might like to offer a test plot at Overmarsh for a research project.

The question came up, Can we rely on our own homegrown fertility? And we talked about being self-sufficient for fertility on our own properties and at island scale. Putting a conceptual boundary around the island and the near shore would give a better chance of reaching self-sufficiency than drawing a boundary around your property. Interesting thought experiment: What if the island were cut off from the mainland?

The concept of the [limiting nutrient](#) comes into play here.

On May 22 we talked about rain. It had been pouring, and we discussed accumulated amounts. Tanks were filling up—a pleasant reversal of the April drought. Weather Underground said that we had 1.17" on May 22.

John recommends the advice from Trees of Antiquity on watering fruit trees.

It's not too late to plant leeks!

We discussed growing asparagus.

Can't we eat slugs or snails or maybe raise the types used for *escargot*? Slugs, snails and fresh-water mollusks:

eattheweeds.com/are-slugs-edible-what-about-snails-2