

THE ISLAND AGRARIAN

NEWS FROM SAN JUAN ISLAND GRANGE #966

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

Winter Gardening

By Bruce Robinson

Recognizing that fresh, local food is difficult to find in the winter and early spring, the Grange has been promoting winter and shoulder-season gardening.

We have stocked our Seed Bank with seeds for winter crops and held talks on winter gardening.

Last year, Keith Keyser shared his winter gardening insights at our spring plant sale. This year we hosted a forum where folks shared their experiences growing winter vegetables and took home seeds from the Seed Bank.

We hope that, with a successful winter growing season, fresh vegetables will be on offer at the Grange booth at the Farmers Market next spring!



Growing Grain

The Grange Agricultural Support Committee is helping local farmer and Granger Court Bell of Goose Hollow Farm to grow, process, and sell grain and feed supplements. Since grain alone does not make a complete animal feed, Grangers are growing supplements to add to the mix.



Court Bell and barley

After harvest, our team will support sales of the grain and supplements by advertising and helping with direct sales at the Farmers Market and the farm. Anyone interested, please contact Bruce at brobinson@rockisland.com

Preserving Our Harvest

By Lois Moore

In 2022, the Grange purchased two new food dehydrators, and a third was donated by a generous Grange member. The large capacity units are portable and available for Grange members to borrow for home use.

To promote food resilience, the Grange hosted a workshop on food preservation with Washington State University instructor Jennie Goforth, covering canning, pickling and fermentation, freezing, drying, and microclimate storage.



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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A Year of Seeds

By Nancy Best

Let's just put it out there: eating is important! Being able to source food locally is increasingly important, and nothing is more local than our own gardens.

This year some of us at the Grange have been working to make sure seed is available to all. Our approach is three pronged:

The **Seed Bank**, started in 2022, focuses on keeping regionally adapted, true-to-type seed available. Some seeds from the bank were used for Seed Exchanges, and some seeds from the Exchanges were placed in the Bank (a refrigerator at Grange Hall).

Seed Exchange events allow community members to share their excess seeds. Three Seed Exchanges, held in February, March, and June of 2023, were busy and fun. Seeds arrived in bags, envelopes, and bowls; some were hard to find



varieties that are special to our county or region, some were old favorites. Speakers talked about growing plants for seeds, and winter gardening.

Finally, the **Seed Library**, which is still in its infancy, allows anyone to access free seeds. A beginner's Seed Library was taken to the Friday Harbor Food Bank twice, along with starts left over from our May plant sale. The starts and seeds were snapped up, and Food Bank clientele were enthusiastic about growing them out. A permanent seed library is planned for outside Grange Hall.

In the future, plans are in place to grow all three of these initiatives. Thanks to all who have helped these projects along!

Letter from the President

Our island imports the vast majority of its food from the mainland, along supply lines that are increasingly impacted by a changing climate and the end of the fossil fuel era. There will be disruptions; supply lines will sometimes break.

We can't predict the timing of events, but we can be sure that the transition away from fossil fuels and the impacts of a harsher climate will mean sourcing more of life's necessities locally. It is time to greatly increase our capacity to grow our own food through home gardens, community gardens, and farms. Our Grange is committed to increasing our community's resilience, the ability of a system to recover from shocks.

As you can see from this newsletter, our Grange has been laying the groundwork for a local agrarian renaissance. Our commercial kitchen; our feed co-op; our farmers market booth; our Growers' Circle Coffee Hour; our dehydrators, cider press and egg incubators for loan; our workshops on seed saving, food preservation, bees, and fruit tree grafting; our seed exchanges and seed bank; and our plant sales are all part of our support for a "resilient community of growers," as called for in our mission.

Here's where each Granger can help. We need to show that we are serious in supporting food resilience. I would ask you all to enter fruits, vegetables, preserved foods, baked goods, fermented beverages, poultry, livestock, and any other examples of local food at the San Juan County Fair this year. The fair is recovering from the disruptions of covid and could really use a boost. Let's be part of the comeback!]

Roger Ellison, 2023 President

GROWERS' CIRCLE COFFEE HOUR
 AT THE GRANGE HALL
 EVERY WEDNESDAY MORNING AT 8AM
 Currently via Zoom. Email roger.thornbush@gmail.com for the link.
 OPEN TO ALL. PREPARED IN LOCAL FOOD AND LOCAL FIBER. FREE PROVIDED. TEA AS WELL, SOMETIMES.
FREE! SAN JUAN ISLAND GRANGE #966

Notice Board

Have your pressure canner checked by Nancy Best!
 Nancyb1133@gmail.com
Growers Circle's Repair Fair is happening on:
Sunday, September 17,
starting at 2pm

San Juan Island Grange
LOCAL FOOD
 Show your support for local food! Get your FREE sticker at the Grange booth at the farmers market.

Preserve your fruits and vegetables using our Grange dehydrators! Available to members to take home on a three-day renewable loan. For info or to reserve, email: moore@stonehavenfarm.com

Working with Our Partners in Ag

By Bruce Robinson

The Grange is always eager to collaborate with other agricultural organizations to promote the production and sales of food in San Juan County.

In the past year the Grange has partnered with the San Juan Islands Agricultural Guild, Washington State University Extension, the San Juan Islands Conservation District, and the San Juan County Agricultural Resources Committee.

Together, these groups organized the San Juan Islands Agricultural Summit, the Ag Org Retreat, the Ag Tent at the San Juan County Fair, the FARM Fund program (with the Grange contributing \$7,500), and more. The Grange is committed to working with our partners to promote local food.



Ag org representatives brainstorm food system issues

The Poultry Project

By Elaine Kendall

Could it be true: Local food resilience + climate change = chickens???

The contribution of chickens to the diet of so many of us is hard to overstate. Eggs are an integral part of our cuisine, and chicken meat an important source of protein.



To ensure that our community has access to locally produced eggs and chicks (layers and broilers), the Grange has started a poultry breeding project. Hatching eggs and chicks were made available this spring. We hope to expand the number of chicks and breeds available in coming years.

Participating in this project could be a great way to connect with others and contribute to food resiliency on San Juan Island.

To learn more, contact Elaine at elainemkendall@yahoo.com.

Grange Workshops

By John Latimer and Bill Severson

Island folks just love to keep learning. A couple hundred members of the community attended educational events at the Grange this last year. From bees to trees, the Grange held workshops to increase local food production, to help islanders learn about food preservation, and to benefit our island environment.

Food processing.

Granger Nancy Best led a workshop on Cooking with Rhubarb, with everyone sharing their rhubarb recipes. Participants made Nancy’s rhubarb and mint chutney in the wonderful new Grange commercial kitchen.



A Sourdough Bread Workshop with Pam Stewart, of Café Demeter fame, focused on the care and feeding of starters, before getting to the basics of baking with sourdough. Everyone got to take home some warm fresh bread!

A Food Preservation workshop led by Washington State University’s Jennie Goforth was a full-day event covering water bath canning, pressure canning, pickling, freezing, fermentation, and drying.



An apple-pressing party organized by Bruce Robinson demonstrated the new Grange cider making equipment.

Plant propagation and pollination.

The Grange hosted a Fruit Tree Grafting Workshop led by Kwiaht botanist Madrona Murphy. Madrona provided fruit tree scions and taught the group how to graft fruit trees for the home orchard. Some attendees brought scions from their own trees and grafted them onto new rootstock. Madrona is available to visit old orchards and help identify varieties. She will also help folks obtain and graft heritage varieties and provide technical support for maintaining heritage trees. Visit www.kwiaht.org for more info.

At a workshop on Growing Sweet Potatoes, Washington State University Vegetable Extension Specialist Carol Miles and her graduate student Srijana Sristastha presented research to

show that sweet potatoes can actually be grown outdoors in the Pacific Northwest. And they explained how! They also gave workshop attendees sweet potatoes to use for

slips. The sweet potatoes were of varieties best suited to our cool maritime climate.

Grange Workshops continued

A workshop on Pollinators was led by Washington State University small fruit horticulture specialist Lisa DeVetter. Lisa and other specialists covered

pollinator diversity, native pollinators, pollinator ID, how to support pollinators year-round, and recent research on the topic. Resource material compiled by the WSU Small Fruit Horticulture Team may still be found online at <https://linktr.ee/wsupollination>.

Soil and seeds. As part of the Grange spring plant sale, island farmer Amanda Zee spoke about Soil Microbes and Soil Health. Amanda broadened our understanding of the magical world beneath the soil surface and explained what plants need beyond basic NPK.

A subsequent Grange seed swap featured speaker Eliza Habbegger, who manages native seed propagation for the San Juan County Land Bank. Eliza, covered Seed Saving for the Home Gardener. She maintains that that “... there is something for every gardener: vegetables, fruits and herbs from Amaranth to Zinnia, from old favorites like Provider beans to unusual local varieties like Sea Blush flowers and Waldron Kale.



With all of the educational opportunities and valuable knowledge shared this past year, we look forward to even more great and engaging Grange workshops in the future!



Photo by Lisa DeVetter

POLLINATORS!

Can't do without them

You are invited to a free workshop, November 9, 10:30am–1:30pm

Attend in-person at Brickworks in Friday Harbor

or **via Zoom** by going to www.sanjuangrange.org/events.html

Learn about pollination science, pollinator diversity, native pollinators, basic pollinator ID, how to support pollinators year-round, and recent research on pollinators with Washington State

University (WSU) small fruit horticulture specialist Lisa DeVetter; entomologist Bob Gillespie; WSU graduate students Emma Rogers and Kayla Brouwer; and WSU intern Adriana Barsan.

Drinks and snacks will be provided at the workshop. San Juan Island Grange, WSU, and San Juan Islands Agricultural Guild programs are available to all without discrimination. Reasonable accommodation will be made for those with special needs by emailing snoberryfarm@rockisland.com before November 1.



Photo by Lisa DeVetter

