

THE ISLAND AGRARIAN

NEWS FROM SAN JUAN ISLAND GRANGE #966

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

A Helping Hand

By Court Bell

As the Overmarsh Farm Commons project gets underway, there are many needs and many ways for Grangers and community members to help it GROW.

One way, of course, is to lend a hand at work parties at Overmarsh Farm.



Another is to support the project through a financial donation, as you are able.

To make it easy for donors to receive a tax deductible donation, the Grange is working with the San Juan Island Community Foundation (SJICF). SJICF has created an ongoing fund to receive donations to the Overmarsh project.

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A Greenhouse for Overmarsh Farm Commons

By Bill Severson

Overmarsh Farm Commons has just been selected by the San Juan Island Community Foundation (SJICF) as one of 30 projects to be featured at the 2024 County Fair SJI Cares booth. We will be fundraising for a greenhouse for the farm's Community Garden. Starting plants in a greenhouse is vital to successful crops, as I know from my own garden here on the island.

The greenhouse will be 40'x10' and made of galvanized steel pipe with polycarbonate panels, a door at each end, and automatic vents for temperature control.

The fair fundraising campaign lasts ONLY the four days of the fair (August 15–18). SJICF will match the first \$1,000 donated, with daily games for an additional \$500 each day.

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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

San Juan Island Grange #966
P.O. Box 2013
Friday Harbor, WA 98250
(360) 378 6632

admin@sanjuangrange.org

rentals@sanjuangrange.org

facebook.com/SJIGrange966

A Helping Hand continued

We have worked with the Community Foundation before, on the Grange Hall kitchen remodel, solar panels, and electric-charging-station projects. SJICF does incredible work supporting over 80 local non-profits and projects large and small. The list of non-profits that have funds with the SJICF is truly impressive. Take a look as you peruse their website!

To make an online donation to the Overmarsh Farm Commons project, go to sanjuangrange.org. At the top right corner of the landing page, click on "Donate." This will take you to the SJICF website, sjicf.org. From there, click on "Donate to a Local Fund," which links directly to our Grange Fund.

Greenhouse continued

The online SJICF Giving Catalog opens exactly at 12:01am on August 15 and closes at midnight on August 18. A link to the Grange's greenhouse fund will be publicized Monday, August 12.

Donations are accepted at the SJICF booth during the fair. You may also donate securely online (via Stripe) or by check payable to SJICF or with cash.



Checks MUST be written to SJICF, with "Grange" in the memo line. Checks can be mailed to SJICF, P.O. Box 1352, FH or dropped off at

the SJICF office at 640 Mullis St., #104 (8:30am - 5pm) or in the secure mailbox by the door.

We need to raise \$5,000 for the greenhouse. So please donate, and tell all your friends to donate during the San Juan County Fair!

Letter from the President

I encourage all our members to vote YES for the San Juan Island Library Levy on August 6. Our Grange passed a resolution at its July meeting to endorse and promote passage of the levy.

Granges do not endorse candidates or parties, but we do endorse ideas. And the public library is one of the best of all ideas, based on the notion that a self-governing community needs access to information, a comfortable place to study, and public spaces in which to gather to manage community affairs.

Be aware that a campaign of disinformation is attempting to confuse voters about the nature of this levy, which, in fact, is for Library services only. It is not for a new building, as the anti-levy folks imply.

The Library has been a partner in our mission to increase food resilience and independence for islanders. I am proud that my Grange has teamed up with the Library to bring you the Seed Library, a small and simple box with a big mission to spread the joy and economic benefits of gardening to a wider field. Anyone may take seed packets home from the Seed Library free of charge and perhaps gain a little more food security and independence. We could not have carried out this program alone, and I am concerned that defunding the Library will lead to fewer opportunities to collaborate in the future.

In these troubled times, it is crucial to protect and reinforce the institutions of democracy, and not let them be defunded. Yes, it does take some tax money to keep library services open, but it is money well spent. Grangers, please stay mindful of the importance of our Library in maintaining our island way of life, and vote YES!

Roger Ellison, 2024 President



Notices

Walk Now in Your Garden...and plan which fruits, vegetables, flowers, and other garden produce you might bring as contributions to the Grange display at the San Juan County Fair next month.

New Grange Instagram Account!
The new Instagram account is "sanjuangrange." There is an old Grange account, but we cannot access or delete it. You'll know the new account because it has multiple posts; the old account has only one. So please follow the new one

Progress on the Root Cellar at Seagate Farm

By John Latimer

Construction on the root cellar made with earth bags is in full swing at Seagate Farm! Earth bag structures, sometimes called SuperAdobe, is a building method that uses long sandbag tubes filled with on-site earth, which makes it more environmentally friendly and cost effective.



After the hole for the cellar was dug and the base leveled with gravel, the process of laying the bags requires a lot of labor. The "Mixer" uses a cement mixer to mix 10 parts soil, 1 part cement, and 1 part water. Either cement or lime are added as a stabilizer depending on the type of soil. The "Filler" fills bucket with subsoil, being careful to not include living topsoil, vegetation, or sharp stones. The "Pourer" then dumps dirt into the mouth of the earthbag, which is held by the "Layer." The "Layer" moves and shakes the dirt down into the earthbags and sets the bag into its resting position. The process is repeated until a full course is laid. The "Tampers" tamp down the course with a full pounder. The "Barber" lays down barbed wire along each course which acts

as both mortar and reinforcement for horizontal tensile strength. Layers of bags are stacked until the desired height is reached. After the walls are built, the door will be installed. The roof will be added and consist of wood beams, vapor barrier, insulation, and a waterproof membrane. The root cellar will then be covered with soil for a green roof.

The purpose of the root cellar is to store our non-off gassing fruit and separate them from ethylene producing fruit. It's important to keep ethylene producers away from ethylene-sensitive veggies and fruit. Ethylene producers include apples, pears, and tomatoes, while those ethylene-sensitive includes cucumbers, onions, and lettuce.

As a benefit to San Juan Island Grange members, Seagate Farm will offer free, short-term cool storage to members for non-off gassing fruits and vegetables when space is available. And a big thank you to the San Juan Ag Guild for the FARM Fund grant to help cover some of the construction costs.

If you're interested in helping and learning with us to build with earth bags, please let us know at seagatefarm.wa@gmail.com and follow us @seagate_farm to see the progress.

We have a new dehydrator!

By Lois Moore

It is a commercial model capable of drying large quantities of vegetables, herbs, and fruit. And so marks another step in our move toward a more food-resilient island.

This model is too big to take home, so must be used in the Grange kitchen. It should be available for use in perfect time to process the autumn bounty from your gardens; have a look at our kitchen calendar at www.sanjuangrange.org/reservations for available dates.

The new dehydrator has 32 trays with two separate drying zones, each zone adjustable for

time and temperature. The generous spacing between trays gives excellent flexibility in the kinds of produce that

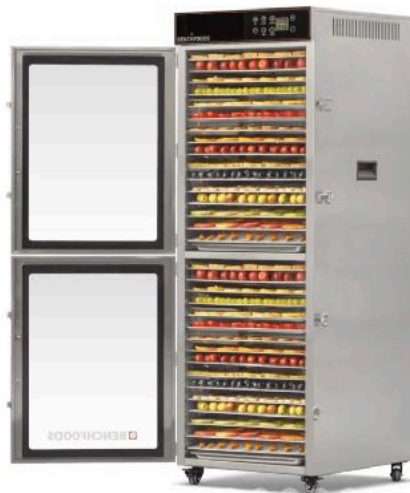
can be dried, and there is no need to rotate trays due to its advanced air-flow technology. Drying time can be extended up to 99 hours, and temperatures adjusted from 86° to 194° F.

And remember, we also have five portable dehydrators for taking home. Three of these have 9 and 10 trays and are large enough for significant amounts of fruits, vegetables and herbs. For smaller amounts, there are two smaller, 6-tray units. To borrow one of these, please email me at

the email address in the box below.



The Eagle has landed!



Don't Buy it, Borrow It!

You can borrow homesteading equipment from the Grange! See below for the equipment and the Grange member who can set up a loan.

Dehydrators: Lois Moore at moore@stonehavenfarm.com

Poultry raising equipment: -Bruce Robinson at brobinson@rockisland.com

Cider-pressing equipment (after mid Sept.): John Latimer at jt_latimer@yahoo.com



Seed Saving Starts Now!

By Nancy Best

As the first lettuces start to bolt, and the peas planted in March stop producing, it's time for a little seed saving.



Why bother, you ask? Three good reasons:

- Saving seeds is cost effective.
- Many of our old favorite vegetable varieties are no longer offered in catalogs, as hybrid varieties replace heirloom.
- Saving seeds means we have seeds to swap at Seedy Sundays!

First, always check the original seed package your plants came from to make sure they are Open Pollinated (OP) or 'Heirloom,' not F1 or Hybrid. Seed from hybrid or F1 plants don't breed true, so new seed must be purchased.

The beginning seed saver might want to stick with peas and beans, which don't cross pollinate. When you pull out the plants, the pods that were hiding and are now hard, yellow, and over ripe are your next years' crop. Label them with name and variety, and let them dry until hard (on a window sill in the sun works fine). Then transfer them to an envelope with their information and the year, and store them some place dry and cool. A glass canning jar in a cool cupboard is my go-to.

Tomatoes are self pollinating and fun to save seed from. Go here for instructions: <https://youtu.be/qbVcHLpHxKg>. And that bolting lettuce? Grab some of those tiny seeds and see what grows out next year. For info., go to https://youtu.be/HFhyksQc_MU

Many favorite flowers volunteer widely around the garden. Consider saving some of these seeds to share with your neighbors at the seed swap.

There is lots of information about seed saving online:

- <https://www.almanac.com/how-save-vegetable-seeds>
- <https://extension.psu.edu/saving-seeds-from-your-garden>
- <https://extension.psu.edu/seed-saving-basics>

Fair warning, once you start saving seed, you may become one of those people who comes back from a walk with random seed heads sticking out of your pockets!

The Growers' Coffee Hour Digest

Reported by Roger Ellison

I send [this link](#) out it every week to Growers who sign up. Email me at roger.thornbush@gmail.com to join. Here are highlights of our recent discussions:

On June 19 we talked about garlic. When can we expect the hardnecks to produce scapes? Answer: any day now. Many growers harvest in late July and cure them for several weeks so they will be ready to show at the San Juan County Fair. And what should we plant in the bed that had the garlic? Some growers transplant brassicas sown in pots in June.

We talked about root maggots in brassicas, which led to a discussion of clubroot and resistant varieties and ways to deal with clubroot, including this information from Oregon State University.

Slugs came up. We talked about leopard slugs especially and what to do to protect against slugs in general. FYI, not all Sluggo is acceptable in organic gardening. Check the label!

There's a new nursery on the island! Biodiversity Nursery

Got a favorite green bean? Runner beans like Scarlet Emperor and Lady Di were mentioned, as were Kentucky Wonder and Fortex.

On June 26 we again talked about beans. Runner beans, big kahuna beans, half-runners. Got a favorite? Let us know at the Coffee Hour!

Do ultrasonic pest controllers work?

We talked about grazers, browsers, land disturbance, and the Book of Wilding.

Here's a story about ruminants on the prairie.

On July 3 we talked about algae on the surface of seedling flats. Here's a link that discusses it. Does algae affect germination? There are some research findings on the effects of algae on germination, but they concern seaweed extracts rather than living algae on seedling soil. Do algae fix nitrogen? Well, one has been found to, anyway. How about algae as soil amendments?

We talked about Kalmia latifolia, mountain laurel, and how its leaves look similar to those of the noxious spurge laurel. What would the neighbors think?

Why does arugula bolt at a small size, and what can be done about it?

How to propagate lilacs from shoots.

Here's a topic that we barely scratched and should take up again: Is it OK to plant non-native trees?

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Which ones, where, and how many? Shrubs, too? Annuals? Would it be better (or worse) to plant non-native fruit trees or to buy imported non-native fruit from the supermarket? And what about non-native animals?

On July 10 we talked about strawberries. One grower reported their berries are few and tart. We looked it up and found that weather conditions can cause that.

And of course, some produce grows really well in hot weather. Okra, for instance. We can grow it in the greenhouse here.

Should we replace the soil in our pots every year? If we are talking about "potting soil," which is not actually soil, there is no need to replace it. But many growers do dump the pots into the compost pile in order to biologically liven up the growing medium for the next round of growing. Sounds like a good idea to me. That would be harder for perennials, so some growers scrape off and replace the top few inches; others give the potting mix a nice compost tea or bokashi drench, or apply fertilizer.

When is it safe to remove the cabbage moth netting? I found this: The cabbage moth life cycle is complete when the adults die, typically within two months." I could not find which two months we are talking about.

Can we eat immature butternut squash? And can we make square squash using forms? Yep. Look them up on Amazon under "cucumber shaping mold."

On July 17 we talked about wild sweet peas (Lathyrus latifolius), which is in bloom now. They are beautiful but toxic, so do not eat or let your animals eat the seeds! They will naturalize on our island, so keep that in mind if you sow seeds (not recommended).

Also in bloom now is birdsfoot trefoil (Lotus corniculatus). It is the low mounding yellow pea flowers appearing along roads and in fields. Wikipedia says it is used in agriculture as a forage plant, grown for pasture, hay, and silage. It does not cause bloat in ruminants and may be used as an alternative to alfalfa in poor soils.

And we talked about water, how much it costs from the Town of Friday Harbor or Roche Harbor Resort and the town's decision to stop selling water to non-town folks. An aquifer recharge study was done by the USGS that ought to help the county come up with a rational water policy. We moved on to talk about composting toilets and catchment systems.

We then talked about how to dry garlic: intact with the stems and all, laid out or hung in a place where warm air circulates, out of hot direct sun.

On July 24 we talked about the fire at Sooke sending smoke our way. And of course that led to a discussion of fire risk on our island. <https://www.islandsready.org/wildfires> Managing a safe zone around our buildings is a proven strategy: Firewise Landscaping: The Basics | Forestry | Extension | USU.

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And for those of us with forest or woodland, here's a great resource: [Resources for San Juan County Forest Owners - Northwest Natural Resource Group \(nnrg.org\)](#) The bottom line: Over a hundred years of fire suppression and bad forest management have lead to a possible catastrophic fire risk on our island. And finally, a book recommendation that should help us improve our forest management practices here: [Our New Book – A Forest of Your Own - Northwest Natural Resource Group \(nnrg.org\)](#)

Can beets be sown now? According to West Coast Seeds in B.C., August is a good time to sow beets for fall and winter harvest: "Direct sow a crop for fall harvest 8-10 weeks before the first average frost date." Our first frost date is usually mid October to the first week of November. Here is a good growing guide from West Coast Seeds: [SM120_2019-Fall-Winter-Guide_Final.pdf \(shopify.com\)](#)

Overmarsh Update

By Bruce Robinson

The Steering Committee of the Overmarsh project will soon be meeting with the San Juan County Conservation Land Bank to hammer out the details of the lease of the 35+ acres at the Beaverton Preserve.

In the meantime, work at the site continues under a user agreement.

On July 21, 15 volunteers came to Overmarsh for a Mow-Down Clip Up work party to mow down grass around the future community garden site and clip up the fence separating animal grazing space from the garden area.



Jessa Madosky, Marc Santos, and other volunteers clipping up the livestock fence

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Overmarsh Update continued

Charlie Behnke of the Land Bank has been coordinating most of the work at Overmarsh, but Grange volunteers have certainly helped get the project underway. Our next major project will be to install a solar pump in the well and lay a waterline to the community garden site.



Mowing down along the fence

So, what's happening in the potato patch?

In May, after the first mow-down, tarps were laid on the site of the Overmarsh Community Garden. To help hold them down, reusable potato cages were created with wire, hay, and a central pocket of soil into which potatoes were planted. Though it has been challenging to keep them watered, the plants have grown and will hopefully provide a bounty of spuds. These will be sold at the farmers market as a fundraiser for the Overmarsh project. The hay and soil will be composted and the wire saved for future needs.

Once the potato cages are removed, the tarps will be taken up, making room to create the Community Garden. Since the garden will not open until the spring 2025, part of the space will be planted in winter vegetables, winter and perennial grain, and garlic and onions, which will be sold as a fundraiser. The rest will be planted in a cover crop.

The Steering Committee is pleased to announce that Jessa Madosky has agreed to be our Community Garden Coordinator. She has been working with us to develop guidelines for garden use. More information about the Community Garden will come in our next newsletter.



Thirsty potato plants in their cage