

# THE ISLAND AGRARIAN

## NEWS FROM SAN JUAN ISLAND GRANGE #966

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



## Repair Fair Is Back!



**Date, time, location** Sunday September 17,  
12-4pm at Grange Hall

**Featuring:** Demonstrations and instruction on:

- Screen-printing and natural dyeing
- Basic mending/sewing
- Blade sharpening
- Small furniture repair
- Bike and tool repair (no combustible engines)

**What to bring:** Stuff to fix and clean clothing to darn, screen-print, or dye

**Provided:** Hot Chocolate, coffee, and tea (BYO mug)

Restroom (gender neutral, no ADA)

**Contributors:** Grange #966, Fellow Shop, Alchemy Art Center, Transition San Juan, and local volunteers

**Questions:** Contact Marc at [marcpolosantos@gmail.com](mailto:marcpolosantos@gmail.com)





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](http://sanjuangrange.org/officers.html)

Our bylaws and resolutions may be found at [sanjuangrange.org/structure.html](http://sanjuangrange.org/structure.html)

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## Plant a Food Forest!

By Roger Ellison

Our Grange is dedicated to increasing the amount of local food in our diets to enhance our resilience and self-determination. Estimates for how much of our food is island grown run from as high as 5% to as low as 2%. So, folks, we are definitely at the easy, low-hanging-fruit stage of our efforts.

But you say you don't want to run a commercial farm, and your land isn't suitable for that anyway. Well, just about any land on our island can grow trees and shrubs, and so you can grow a food forest. A food forest is a constructed woodland of



nuts, fruits, berries, mushrooms, and perennials that produces a lot of food, craft material, fuel, and medicine, while also providing many of the ecological services that natural woodlands provide.

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# Letter from the President

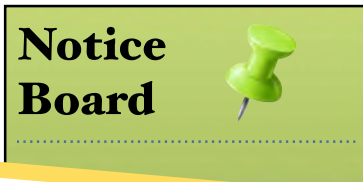
This edition of the *Island Agrarian* focuses on our Grange's presence at the San Juan County Fair. I love the way the fair offers encouragement and recognition to growers and makers in our county. And it is a lot of fun to boot! I hope you all had a chance to come and celebrate with us.

Our Grange's presence was felt in all corners of the fair this year: in fruits and vegetables, flowers, arts and crafts, preserved and baked foods, textiles and fiber, and more.

At the Ag Tent our displays looked great, and the educational presentations by Grangers were well attended. Thank you all so much for rising to the occasion. I want to recognize the work of Bruce Robinson and the Agricultural Support Committee for coordinating our participation at the fair. Thank you, Bruce!

Let's have another contest! The fair is funded based on local participation, and I feel pretty good that we have done our part. I would like to identify and thank the Grangers who rose to the occasion and submitted entries and won ribbons. I have emailed you all a short survey from [sanjuangrange@gmail.com](mailto:sanjuangrange@gmail.com) asking you to list the ribbons you won this year. So please look in your inbox. If you did not receive a survey and would like to participate, please email me at the above address, and I will gladly try again.

Roger Ellison, 2023 President



**Mark your calendars!**  
**Monday, Sept. 11 through**  
**Wednesday, Sept. 13, all five**  
**dehydrators will be available**  
**for use at the Grange kitchen.**  
**Please email if you plan to**  
**attend:** [moore@stonehavenfarm.com](mailto:moore@stonehavenfarm.com)



**Show your support**  
**for local food! Get**  
**your FREE sticker at**  
**the Grange booth at**  
**the farmers market.**

**BYLAW CHANGE?**  
 On September 5, we will discuss a bylaw change to increase membership dues:

- Associate membership: \$62/year
- Regular membership: \$62/year
- Family membership: \$128/year

# Grange at the Fair!

By Bruce Robinson

The Grange had a big presence in the Ag Tent at this year's San Juan County Fair.

Dozens of Grangers brought in home-grown vegetables, fruits, grain, canned and dehydrated goods, honey, goat milk, biochar, and flowers. This bounty was beautifully arranged by Harold and Nirmela Arsem across two tables. Below the Grange banner was a display of projects the Grange Agricultural Support Committee has been working on over the last year. Also on display was equipment owned by the Grange that is available for loan: dehydrators, incubators, brooding plates, a fruit crusher, and a cider press.

Much interest in the Grange was generated by this year's display. Thank you to all who contributed!



Meet Brucilla and Pedra, who were Grange representatives at the fair this year, helping teaching kids and adults to milk a "goat" at the Ag Tent. They were assisted by Granger Candace Jagel. Brucilla and Pedra were the creation of Bruce Robinson and Peter Fromm.



## ***Food Forest continued***

The food forest needs fewer inputs like water and fertilizer than a typical orchard because it mixes different plants with different heights and different needs rather than a block of identical trees all competing for the same resources. Tall trees such as chestnuts, walnuts, and semi-dwarf fruit trees can comprise your canopy layer, with hazelnuts, elderberries, and dwarf fruit trees making up the understory. Currants, gooseberries and other berry shrubs can make up the shrub layer, with herbaceous perennials and groundcovers below that.

You can plant trees in your grassland and actually improve the growth of the grass. If you have grazing animals, they will benefit as well. One strategy is to

plant in lines along the contours of a slope, with wide alleys in between for mowing and grazing. And planting on the contour allows you to capture rainwater in the soil rather than letting it run off your land.

If you have forested land, see if you can enhance existing forest edges, such as along your driveway. Forest edges are highly productive, and trees grow faster there than deeper in the woods. The edges of your driveway are a good place to start because more sunlight is available, and you can keep an eye on things as you come and go. When you are ready you can expand into the woods.

Whether you are planting in grassland or along the forest edge, start with N-fixers like black



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## ***Food Forest continued***

locust, red alder, and autumn olive in the first year to build soil for your future food forest, and then add your crop plants.



The food forest is not “efficient” enough for commercial agriculture because it is built-for resilience and not for ease of crop production. But that makes it a great model for a local culture that values small-scale, land-based,

productive, and self-reliant households. Food forests are a natural strategy to accomplish our Grange mission to support a “resilient community of growers, makers, and keepers.”

## **Spelt—An Ancient Grain Trending Up**

By Bruce Robinson

At the Ag Tent on the first day of this year’s San Juan County Fair, Bruce Robinson and Court Bell talked about spelt. This ancient grain, which has been



grown for 7000 years and was a staple in the Roman Empire, is undergoing a renaissance in the culinary world due to its sweet, nutty flavor and chewy texture. It has the largest kernels of the ancient three farro wheats (spelt, emmer, and einkorn). High in protein and gluten, spelt is easier to digest than ordinary wheats due to its particular glutenin/gliadin structure.

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## Spelt continued

Last October, about 15 pounds of spelt, a fall-planted, over-wintering grain, were broadcast on a 40' x 45' plot at Goose Hollow Farm and watched over protectively by Court and Bruce. The 1800-square-foot stand thrived in our island climate. The stalks grew nearly four feet high, with heavy heads and large berries. The yield looks to be over 150 pounds.

On August 6th, a work party of Grangers—Nirmela and Harold Arsem, Sherry Phelps, and Jeremy Jennings—spent an hour or two hand cutting and bundling stalks into sheaves, while Bruce fed the grain into a stationary thresher, provided by Elaine Kendall and an island farmers equipment cooperative.

At the Ag Tent talk, Court and Bruce gave a history of spelt and demonstrated the thresher and fan-driven winnowing, while participants were put to work with small baggies of their own spelt heads, to work loose the kernels. Volunteers used a hand mill to make spelt flour, while learning more about grain farming from Jon Heglar, also of Goose Hollow Farm. Everyone enjoyed Ann Bell's 100% spelt bread and spelt banana nut bread.

The main drawback to spelt is that it does not thresh cleanly, leaving stubborn husks attached to some of the berries. Since farm animals are not bothered by the occasional husk, it makes excellent, high-protein animal feed. However, removal of those husks raises the cost of production for human consumption.

That may be about to change with a new hybrid, clean-threshing variety of spelt, developed over the last 15 years by Washington State University researcher Kevin Murphy.



If you are interested in spelt or the spelt project, contact Court at [cannoncreek@yahoo.com](mailto:cannoncreek@yahoo.com) And stay tuned for next year, since Goose Hollow Farm has sourced some of Kevin Murphy's hullless spelt, for planting this fall!

## Cider Days

By John Latimer

The Grange will be holding several different fruit-pressing events to use our fruit crushing and pressing equipment.

The first event will be on September 23 as part of the San Juan Island Farm Tours, 1-4pm at Sweet Earth Farm.

The other pressing events will be held at the Grange Hall on October 8, 14, and 22. There will be more details to come as we get closer to these events. If you have any apples and/or pears that need to be pressed



for fresh juice, bring them to any of these dates. We'll have the Cider Pressing Team available to demonstrate and help you get it done.

Make sure to bring clean jugs with you for the wonderful fresh-pressed juice!

### **Farm Tour—Apple Pressing—Saturday, September 23, 10-4pm**



The Grange apple press will be at Sweet Earth Farm as part of the Farm Tour on San Juan Island. Bring your apples between 1-4pm to turn them into delicious cider and enjoy the community event! Sweet Earth Farm (16 Sweet Earth Lane, off West Valley Road) will be open for the Farm Tour from 10-4pm.



## Friday Harbor Film Festival

With fall nearly here, it's time to prepare to live vicariously through exciting documentary films at the 2023 Friday Harbor Film Festival. The program will be available on the outdoor rack at the FHFF office (10 First St.) and at local businesses. Online ticket sales begin Sept. 1.

**FHFF is offering a special free event for our local community – an afternoon and evening of short films grouped by theme at the Grange on Thursday, Oct. 26.**

Films about the environment will start at 1pm. Marine ecology documentaries will begin at 4pm. Tales from the Heart films will screen at 7pm.

All Young Filmmakers Showcase entries will be available free by livestream starting at 10am on Thursday, Oct. 26 at [fhff.org](http://fhff.org). This special group of films by aspiring filmmakers will continue to be offered free through on Nov. 5.

The In-Theatre Festival, Oct. 27-29, and the On-Demand Festival, Oct. 30-Nov. 5, will include 25 feature films, 25 short films, and the special Young Filmmakers Showcase.

Special festival events will include the Opening Night Gala, the Filmmakers' Forum, the Local Hero Award, the Andrew V. McLaglen Lifetime Achievement Award, and the closing night Audience Choice Awards.

If you can't make it in person, you can watch most of the features, all of the shorts, and all of the Young Filmmakers Showcase films, as well as recorded Q&As and the Filmmakers' Forum on-demand the following week.