

THE ISLAND AGRARIAN

NEWS FROM SAN JUAN ISLAND GRANGE #966

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

Make Cider at the Farmers Market!

By Roger Ellison

There will be a Grange cider pressing and tasting party open to the public at the San Juan Island Farmers Market, Saturday, November 2, 9:30am to



1:30pm at Brickworks. This is a great introduction to local food for the whole family. Kids love dropping the apples into the grinder, helping to load the press, and then catching the sweet juice in pitchers as it emerges. We will have fresh cider for sale, pending a food permit. Grangers, please set aside your apples for pressing, or volunteer for a gleaning party. Let's work together to make this event a success!

Friday at Grange Hall

San Juan Island Food Heroes Celebration

You are invited to an evening of food and fun **this Friday, September 27!** And come get a sneak peek at the new *Island Grown in the San Juans* film, featuring dozens of San Juan County farmers.

Enjoy appetizers at a fundraiser benefiting [Overmarsh Farm Commons](#)—the Grange project increasing access to local food.

Program

5:00pm- Appetizers and introduction to community farm resilience

6:00pm- Screening of *Island Grown in the San Juans* film

6:30pm- Drawing for local products featured in the film

Reserve your seat now!

Sponsored by the [SJI Ag Guild](#), [SJI Conservation District](#), [SJ Makers Guild](#), [SJI Grange](#), and the [Friday Harbor Film Festival](#)



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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Thank you!

By Bill Severson

Because of all your wonderful donations, the Overmarsh Farm Commons greenhouse project was fully funded during the San Juan Island Community Foundation SJC Cares campaign at the San Juan County Fair.

Donations were lagging going into the final day, but on Sunday our team finally got the chance to be in the Community Foundation booth. We received several gifts, and as the sun set, we exceeded our fundraising goal!

As an added bonus, with all of you spreading the word about Overmarsh Farm Commons, we are building awareness, support, and excitement for the project. The community knows that the number of island farmers has dwindled, and they are beginning to see the Overmarsh project as a way to counter this trend and start building a resilient island food system.

Letter from the President

The mission of San Juan Island Grange is “to support a resilient community of growers, makers, and keepers; to foster social and political engagement; and to maintain our hall as a home for celebrations and programs.” Let’s see how we’re doing!

Overmarsh Farm Commons is our biggest project so far to build a community of growers. A resilient community grows much of its own food, while developing the skills of gardening, cooking, and preserving. It is less reliant on an anonymous commercial sector for the staff of life.

The Grange booth at the farmers market—a collaboration between growers and makers—is increasing in size and economic impact. A resilient community offers opportunities to engage in commerce at a human scale.

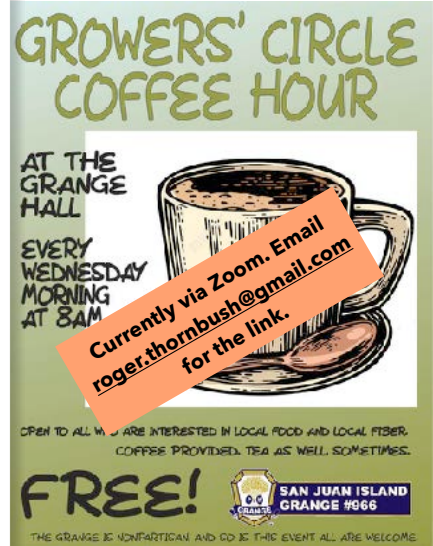
Repair Fairs at Grange Hall are building a community of makers while returning to service useful items that might otherwise be tossed. A resilient community shares knowledge and is frugal.

Social and political engagement: We passed a resolution to support the San Juan Island Library Levy. A resilient community respects knowledge and ensures access to information as a foundation of democratic self-governance. We also passed a resolution to support renewal of the San Juan County Conservation Land Bank charter. A resilient community values community access to land.

A home for celebrations and programs: A community needs places to work and play together. Our rental calendar is full, serving the need for communal space. Grange programs include seed sharing, game night, contra dances, workshops, and cider pressing parties that we offer to the public to increase the resilience of our community.

Grangers, you should be proud of our progress toward our mission and goal of a resilient community. Let’s keep up the good work!

Roger Ellison, 2024 President



Cider Days

By John Latimer

It's that time of year again! Cider pressing is upon us, including as soon as **this Saturday at Sweet Earth Farm**, as part of the San Juan Island Farm Tours.

The Grange will hold several cider pressing events this fall, to use the Grange fruit crushing and pressing equipment to produce fresh cider.

Schedule

Saturday, September 28, 1-4pm at Sweet Earth Farm

Saturday, October 12, 1-4pm at Grange Hall

Friday, November 2, 9:30am-1pm at the San Juan Island Farmers Market

Bring your apples and/or pears to be pressed on any of these dates. We'll have the Cider Pressing Team available to demonstrate and help you use the equipment to get it done.



What a team!

Be sure to bring clean jugs with you for the wonderful fresh-pressed juice. It's always good to bring extra jugs because everyone runs out of jugs!



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: John Latimer at jt_latimer@yahoo.com

Overmarsh End-of-Season Update

By Bruce Robinson

From early spring through late summer this year, the Overmarsh Farm Commons project has gotten off to a tremendous start due to the efforts of many volunteers at five Grange work parties.

In May, at the first two gatherings, volunteers mowed 100'x100' of pasture grass and then laid tarps on the area to kill the grass. This space will become the community garden next spring.



Looking Ahead

For the 2025 growing season, the Grange is offering a range of parcel sizes to gardeners and farmers interested in working the land at Overmarsh Farm Commons:

- Community garden patches: 100-200 square feet
- Allotments: 1,000-2,000 square feet
- Commercial plots: up to half an acre
- Collaborative farms: up to one acre
- Custom plots: just ask!



For more information, visit the Grange website using the QR code or by going to <https://sanjuangrango.org/overmarsh-farm-commons.html>. You may also contact Amanda Zee at amanda@sjiaguild.com.

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Overmarsh Update continued

In mid-summer volunteers gathered to clip up the fence that will enclose the first area to be grazed by animals and to mow the fast-growing grass encroaching on the tarped area.



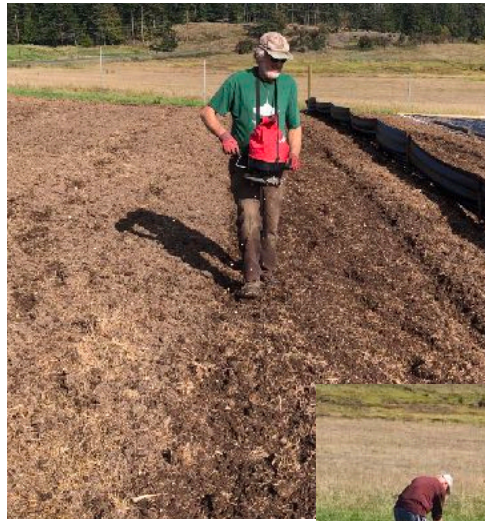
In late August, the tarps were removed from the community garden site, moved down the slope, and pinned down to prepare for expansion of gardening efforts.



On September 11, Court Bell brought in his tractor to till most of the formerly tarped area and plant cover crops (see next page). Over the winter, cover crops will protect the soil, suppress weeds, and boost soil fertility for next year's garden.

Continued on next page

Overmarsh Update continued



Finally, a few days later, a gathering of volunteers practiced true “no-till” cultivation as they hand dug and created



180' of raised beds and planted them in winter vegetables.



The last remaining bit of space will be planted in garlic and onions in October.

All of this work would not have happened without volunteers. The Overmarsh Steering Committee thanks the following volunteers for moving the project forward. We hope that when you see these individuals you will stop to thank them for all that they have done.

Fiona Cushing
Kirsten White
Sarah Severn
Nancy Webb
Manuel Mendoza
Nirmela Arsem
Harold Arsem
Kevin Connelly
Rachel Brooks

Oscar Connelly
Julian Connelly
Lois Moore
Marc Santos
Jessa Madosky
Laura Jo Severson
Dalton Dillingham
John Stamey
Jenny Walker

Kat Rose
Kelly Robotham
Alison Longley
Bill Severson
Roger Ellison
Lenora Ellison
Iliana Ellison
Court Bell
Amanda Zee

Growers' Coffee Hour Digest

Reported by Roger Ellison

I send this link out every week to Growers who sign up. To join, email me at roger.thornbush@gmail.com. Here are highlights of recent discussions:

On July 31 we talked about the *Share our Bounty* program. Organized by the WSU Master Gardeners, this program encourages local gardeners to donate a portion of their homegrown produce to the Friday Harbor Food Bank. If you're interested in contributing, you can bring your extra produce to the Master Gardeners' Demonstration Garden on Wednesdays between 11am and 1pm or to the Food Bank on Wednesdays and Saturdays between 10am and 2pm. The Food Bank reports that the quality has been better than store-bought. Of course! And the Food Bank takes vegetable starts as well! Why are some of my garlic cloves translucent yellow? It is a condition known as "waxy breakdown." This is not a disease but rather a physiological condition associated with high temperatures during growth, especially near or after harvest. Poor ventilation and low oxygen levels during storage may also cause waxy breakdown.

We talked about eating garlic leaves. Are garlic leaves edible?—Chef's Resource

On August 7, a grower commented that his runner bean plant had produced no beans yet. We talked about pollination for runners and compared greenhouse versus outside growing. Here's a link from the UK on spraying runners to aid pollination: spraying water on runner bean flowers in *Grow Your Own* - Page 1 of 2 (allotment-garden.org)

And what are sand wasps? Sand Wasp (insectidentification.org) They eat flies!

How does a wasp return to the exact fruit that it was eating? A quick check online said that they have a good sense of smell and are attracted to fermenting fruit.

Temperatures for tomatoes: *Can Tomatoes Get Too Hot In A Greenhouse?*

Fertilizing tomatoes: *Fertilizing Tomatoes* - Garden.org

Blossom end rot: blossomendrot.pdf (cornell.edu)

On August 14, we talked about spinach. This is your last week to sow spinach! Bloomsdale was mentioned as a favorite. Per one website, "Some popular winter varieties include 'Giant Winter,' 'Bloomsdale Long Standing,' and 'Winter Bloomsdale,'" although some of those names may refer to the same variety.

Some growers grow chard in place of spinach, using it in spinach recipes such as saag. Growers mentioned Eliot Coleman's books as good guides to greenhouse culture in a cold climate.

We talked about kalettes, and the advice was to let them grow until Christmas.

Continued on next page

Growers' Circle Digest continued

We briefly touched on island-wide composting and a plan to house a couple food composting bins at the transfer station.

On August 21 we talked about peaches. Growers are picking, slicing and freezing or dehydrating them.

How come leeks are not getting big? Here's some information from a gardener who figured it out: [How to Grow Big \(Or Giant\) Leeks With Long, White Stems](#)

What can be sown or transplanted into beds after garlic is harvested? One Grower sows fava beans into the garlic bed as the garlic is maturing. After harvest, the favas have lots of room to expand. Other Growers said that beans and peas (and therefore favas) must not follow garlic because they share some diseases. I found a lot of conflicting advice online. Surprise!

We talked about [Using Horse Manure For Vegetable Gardens](#)

We finished up with a chat about dragon tongue beans.

On August 28, Alice reported that a banana tree in her living room is flowering!

What do we do with green tomatoes? Salsa? Fried green tomatoes? Relish? Mincemeat?

Varieties that are ripening well now: Stupice and Oxheart. Others?

Cilantro can taste soapy at times. We looked it up and found that it can have high levels of saponins. To avoid the taste, pick only the youngest leaves.

How about blanching and freezing shelly beans? And that question led to favas and how to cook them.

We had a bit of a discussion about elephant garlic, which is more closely related to the leek than to the garlic.

There is a pink-fleshed apple tree on Waldron Island. It would be good to collect scion wood for grafting. Here's an article on red-fleshed apples: [12 Common Apple Varieties That Are Red On The Inside](#)

On September 4 we again talked about Alice's banana plant, which led into a discussion of what other foods we can grow with a bit of protection. Meyer lemons? Ginger? Papayas? Mangos?, Loquats? Here's a video: [8 Fruits You Didn't Know You Could Grow in the Pacific Northwest \(and Vancouver Island\)](#)

We talked about the uses for different apple varieties. Google "apple uses chart" for numerous graphic ways to show off the wide uses of apples.

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Growers' Circle Digest continued

A grower reported using burlap on top of floating row cover to keep carrot seeds moist in the garden. Carrots are notoriously slow to pop up, so this sounds like a good trick. Honeyberries can be grown here. Here's some information from Raintree Nursery: Honeyberries (raintreenursery.com).

On September 11 we talked about canning. One grower mentioned her steam canner, which apparently can be used for high-acid foods but is more efficient than water bath canners. Steam Canner: Ever heard of steam canning? Learn how to use one here. Low-acid foods and meats still need a pressure canner. One Grower has a digital pressure canner made by Presto. Presto Precise® Digital Pressure Canner—Presto® The canning bible is *So Easy to Preserve*, by the University of Georgia Extension. So Easy to Preserve | Food Preservation | Food | Extension (uga.edu)

We talked about when to harvest mason bee cocoons. Here's a calendar from Crown Bees, our local supplier: The Mason Bee Raiser Calendar (crownbees.com)

We talked about salicornia. Wild Foraging: How To Identify, Harvest and Prepare Sea Beans (aka, Sea Asparagus or Samphire) - The Daring Gourmet

How to keep potatoes over the winter for planting next spring? Here's some advice from Ireland: How to Keep Seed Potatoes for Planting Next Year - GrowerExperts

We talked a bit about whether our island is becoming more food resilient. Growers pointed out an increased number of farm stands and farms, more produce at the farmers market, and of course the new Overmarsh Farm Commons.

Building Resilience

By Elaine Kendall

The Grange celebrated community resilience in the Ag Tent at the fair this year by highlighting the Overmarsh Farm Commons and numerous other Grange projects. Farm produce and flowers were on display, and coffee and tea were served!





2024 San Juan County WSU Master Gardeners Gardening Workshop Series, October 15-24

Successful gardeners know that beautiful and bountiful gardens require knowledge and planning. Fall is the perfect time to start thinking about the what, when, where, why, and how of our gardens!

This year, the popular and informative San Juan County WSU Master Gardeners Annual Gardening Workshop Series will again take place via Zoom. Eight live one-hour webinars will be held on Tuesday and Thursdays afternoons, October 15-24.

Keynote speaker is Frédérique Lavoipierre, author of *Garden Allies: The Insects, Birds & Other Animals That Keep Your Garden Beautiful and Thriving*. Registrants will be able to view recordings of

presentations at their leisure for a full month.

Registration for the entire series of presentations is \$35 and will close Wednesday, October 9. To

read more about the eight

educational and inspiring presentations and to register for the workshop series before the October 9 deadline, click on gardenworkshop.org.



Discounted Tickets for Islanders Now Available for the Friday Harbor Film Festival

To make attending the 12th Friday Harbor Film Festival affordable to island residents, the festival is offering discounted tickets to exciting new documentaries coming to San Juan Island theatres, October 25-27. Also available are single tickets and tickets to the Opening Night Gala Honoring Filmmakers. All tickets are available at fhff.org/tickets.

Details about the festival are available on the FHFF website now.

The Online Festival runs from Oct. 28-Nov. 3 at fhff.org.

