

THE ISLAND AGRARIAN

NEWS FROM SAN JUAN ISLAND GRANGE #966

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

More Pressing Matters!

By John Latimer

The Grange was in action again, holding a successful apple pressing event at the San Juan Island Farmers Market on November 2. Community members brought apples to press, sampled heirloom apple varieties, and learned how apple juice is made using the beautiful Grange press. We even sold some of the fresh apple juice and raised \$327 for the Grange!

On hand was Madrona Murphy of Kwiaht and Lori Brakken of the Seattle Tree Fruit Society to provide tastings of heirloom apples specific to the San Juans and to help identify unknown apple varieties.



Volunteers extraordinaire Harold Arsem
and Bruce Robinson
Photos: John Latimer



Madrona Murphy and Russell Barsch of
Kwiaht (seated) and Lori Brakken of the
Seattle Tree Fruit Society

A big thank you to volunteers Bruce, Harold, Julian, Kevin, and John for this wonderful community event. For more Grange events, be sure to follow us on Instagram @sanjuangrange or on Facebook!



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

Overmarsh Update

By Bruce Robinson

While we have moved into the dormant season, the Overmarsh project is still growing strong. Plans are developing for opening the garden and grazing sites for food production in the spring. On Wednesday, December 11 at 7pm, the Overmarsh steering committee will meet with people who have completed a Request for Land on the Grange website.

The meeting will begin with a brief overview of the project. Applicants will then get to meet each other, share their past agricultural experiences, and summarize how they envision being involved with the project. A discussion of regenerative agricultural principles—a central tenet of the project—will follow, along with thoughts of how work at the farm will be shared.

If you are interested in land at Overmarsh Farm or for more information, go to www.sanjuangrange.org and click on "Overmarsh Farm Commons."

On the ground, our initial plantings at Overmarsh are thriving. In November, as the wind repeatedly lifted tarps at the farm, the winter vegetables showed their resilience, flexing in the mighty gusts.

The kale, broccoli, chard, cabbage and collards have gone from spindly 6-inch starts in September to robust 16-inchers. In the spring, we expect the onions and garlic to follow. Hopefully, these plants will provide lots of produce for the Grange booth at the farmers market next summer!



Photo: Bruce Robinson

Letter from the President

Dear Grangers,

The year is coming to a close, and your Grange is looking ahead to 2025. We elected new officers at the November meeting (see page 7) and will be installing those officers at the December 4 regular meeting.

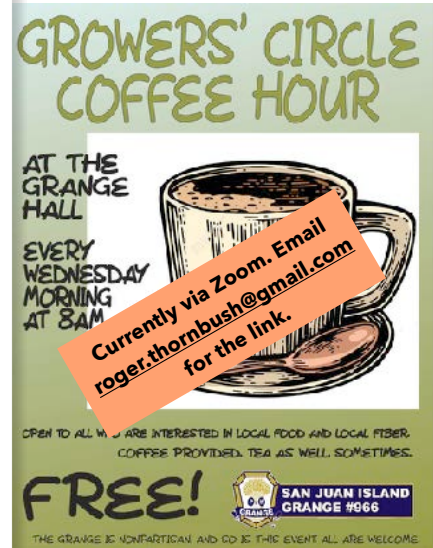
We still have several important year-end tasks ahead of us. Vice President Jessa and I are working on organizing the committees and creating a budget process for next year. Look for details via email and in the January 2025 newsletter.

The most important task now is to get our approximately 250 members renewed and in good standing for 2025. As you probably know by now, new Grangers join throughout the year, but all members have to renew their memberships to be in good standing by the end of December. For those who joined late in 2024, the renewal will be automatically granted to December 2025. For most of us, though, we will be asked to pay the annual dues of \$68 per individual. You may also choose a family membership for \$136 for up to two adults and children up to the age of 23. Once we reach a critical mass of family memberships we will launch a Junior Grange program. Or you may choose to be a Life Member for \$500, which means you are paid up and in good standing forever more!

It's easy to renew online with a short questionnaire and a payment link. You will be asked whether your contact information has changed and whether you want to serve on one (or more!) Grange committees. It can be very rewarding, working with your fellow Grangers towards a common purpose.

To renew now, you may click on the link to the right or paste this URL into your browser: <https://forms.gle/wBPTJMy7qNCzmDb6>

Roger Ellison, 2024 President



**Overmarsh Farm
Presentation and Q&A**
December 11, 7pm
at Grange Hall

Guided Tour
December 15, 1pm
at the farm

**Renew your grange
membership now!**
Click on this link
to go to the online
form. It's easy!



Overmarsh Farm COMMONS

FARM AND GARDEN LAND AVAILABLE
COMMUNITY GARDEN PATCHES
FAMILY PLOTS
MARKET GARDENS
COLLABORATIVE FARM

PRESENTATION and Q&A
GRANGE HALL, December 11, 7PM
AND, IF WEATHER PERMITS:
GUIDED TOUR
AT THE SITE, DECEMBER 15, 1PM

SANJUANGRANGE.ORG

Growers' Circle Digest

By Roger Ellison

Here is the link to the meeting, every Wednesday at 8am.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88391550890?pwd=RU1LMTlqSFYzbENyb0JycmMvVXIQU09>

Greetings, Growers!

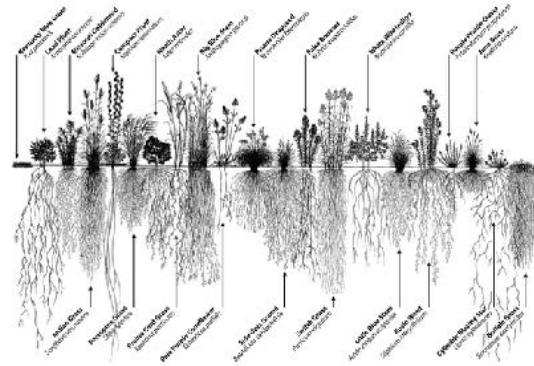
On November 6, we talked about the passage of the Land Bank REET renewal. The Grange had come out in favor of renewal and had a stake in the outcome because of our upcoming land lease with the Land Bank.

Is there a way to upcycle political yard signs in the garden? [Here are a couple ideas, including using them to smother weeds.](#)

Speaking of smothering weeds, how can we prep the garden to overwinter? [Here are a few answers.](#)

Should we pull or cut off weeds and spent vegetable plants? The group

tended toward cutting off and leaving the roots, in order to keep the soil structure and the [rhizosphere](#) intact.



Alice described her banana tree's blossoms. [They are edible!](#)



You can eat banana blossoms! Who knew?

On November 13 we talked about our favorite seed catalogs:

- Annie's Heirloom Seeds [Annie's Heirloom Seeds | Hundreds Of Heirloom, Organic, and NonGMO Vegetable and Flower Seeds](#)
- Pine Tree Garden

Seeds [Pinetree Garden Seeds - Superseeds.com](#)

- Baker Creek Seeds [Bring Your Garden to Life with Rare and Heirloom Seeds](#)

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Grower's Circle Digest continued

- Adaptive Seeds [Adaptive Seeds - Diverse, Open-pollinated, and Organic Seed](#)
- Resilient Seeds [Resilient Seeds - Resilient Seeds](#)
- Deep Harvest Farm [Deep Harvest Farm - Organic Seed from the Pacific Northwest](#)

How about an electric wheelbarrow? Grower Elliot Burch has one. Ask him how he likes it! Here is an article about several models: [The 6 Best Electric Wheelbarrows of 2024 - Best Electric Wheelbarrow Reviews](#)

Those may be overdoing it a bit for most gardeners. I bet Elliot's is more reasonable.



How can we start seed without using plastic? Elliot described a wooden tray with removeable wood dividers that uses no plastic at all. Other Growers

described soil blockers: [Soil Blockers & Soil Blocking Supplies | Johnny's Selected Seeds](#)

And newspaper pots: [How to Make Newspaper Pots for Seedlings - Growfully](#)



On Nov. 20, Elliot raised an interesting discussion

topic for next week: priorities for what we should produce on our island. He gave the example of bottled vinegars and shrubs versus high-nutrient and high-calorie vegetables.

How to clean a rusty weeding knife: [How to Remove Rust from Tools: 6 Methods That Work](#)

On November 20, we talked about the weather. Many parts of the mainland were without power because of wind damage, but we on the island fared much better. We talked about resources for weather and local conditions:

- San Juan Island Road Reports on Facebook
- Ventusky.com
- Windy.com

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Growers' Circle Digest continued

And while we were on the subject of local knowledge:

- Growing Food at Home in the San Juan Islands on Facebook
- Weed 'em and Reap...a San Juan Island Garden Group on Facebook
- Preparing the soil for onions. Yes, onions need extra nitrogen. [The Importance of Nitrogen in Your Onion Crop | Onion Patch](#)
- [How to Overwinter Onions — Territorial Seed Company Blog](#)

Some growers suggested that onion starts can be transplanted in November. Does anybody have a reference to share?

Deer will crawl under your fence! We talked about bottom wires to improve a

deer fence, or maybe this: [Deer Fence // The Wireless Deer Fence is the best way to KEEP DEER OUT](#)

Lastly, we discussed this important topic: **What should be our gardening/farming**

priorities? High-value produce and value-added foods or calorie- and nutrient-dense staples? Should we be growing the things that will keep us economically sound or growing the things that will keep our families fed? What are the crops that can do both?



2025 Grange Officers

Congratulations to those elected! When you see them on the street, please thank them for their willingness to serve.

President: Roger Ellison

Vice President: Jessa Madosky

Program Director: Kevin Connolly

Steward: Alison Longley

Assistant Steward: Harold Arsem

Lady Assistant Steward: Marc Santos

Chaplain: Nirmela Arsem

Treasurer: Boyd Pratt

Secretary: Rachel Brooks

Gatekeeper/Greeter: John Latimer

Ceres: Sherri Phelps

Pomona: Laura Jo Severson

Flora: Alice Deane

Executive Committee:

Bill Severson (through 2025)

Doug Rowan (through 2026)

Patty Garcia (through 2027)

Family Living Director:

Charlene Amsden

Musician: Mike Cohen