

Inside: More on Overmarsh, Notes on Island Resilience, Growers' Circle tomorrow, and more!

THE ISLAND AGRARIAN

NEWS FROM SAN JUAN ISLAND GRANGE #966

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

Overmarsh Farm Commons Is Growing

By Amanda Zee

We're having an amazing first year at Overmarsh Farm Commons! With 24 garden plots and 34 participants, all of the land we prepared last fall is now being cultivated by island growers.

Thanks to the dedication of this incredible group, infrastructure is in place, the water system is flowing, and delicious food is being harvested. We're also looking forward to welcoming sheep onto the pasture soon and already



have ground covered to expand the growing area next year.

Greenhouse Complete

Thanks to generous community support

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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

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Not Too Late!

By Nancy Best

It's not too late to start some plants for winter harvest.

Late summer is your last chance to plant seeds for winter and spring harvest. But plant them this week or next!

Kale, bok choy, mizuna, mâche, leaf mustards, winter varieties of lettuce, Chinese cabbage, arugula and spinach all have a chance if seeded very soon.



McKnaught Kale

Several years ago, the Grange was given a large amount of McKnaught Kale seeds, and they are still germinating like a champ!

McNaught Kale has adapted to our islands over decades of growth here. Its story as I know it is that seed was brought to Waldron by Fred McNaught, a Scots-Irishman, who moved to Waldron perhaps in the 1950-60's, and it has been grown there ever since.

These kale plants have medium green, tender leaves that are excellent cooked or in salad. They manage our winter weather, take a freeze well, and come on strong in spring with new growth.

To obtain some kale seeds, please contact me at (360) 317 5912 or nancyb1122@gmail.com

Letter from the President

The *Island Agrarian* needs your help. Aply helmed by editor Candace Jagel since its inception in the autumn of 2022, it has grown into a beautiful, informative and inspirational newsletter for our Grange. And now Candace has announced that she would like to step down from her post. I truly appreciate the work she has done in building the *Agrarian* and wish her all the best!

The *Island Agrarian* grew out of our work at SJI Grange's Agricultural Support Committee, where much of this newsletter's contents originated. I think we should take this change in editorship as an opportunity to broaden its base and get more Grangers involved in its production. I want to build a team that is not part of another committee, but stands on an equal footing with the other committees. I am looking for writers, reporters, photographers, graphic artists, and columnists to carry the *Agrarian* forward. I want to see regular columns on Grange lore, gardening, and success stories in our great mission of island resilience and relocalization. If you would like to join that team, or have suggestions for the *Agrarian*, please send your messages to newsletter@sanjuangrange.org.

Ambitious? Possibly, but I believe there is a need for telling the story of the relocalization of the island that our Grange is uniquely able to tell. Our Grange's mission to support a resilient community of growers, makers and keepers is unique among membership organizations on San Juan Island. Nobody can present the mission of our Grange better than we ourselves can. BTW, have you ever wondered what a "keeper" is? It is a guardian and promoter of our local culture. It includes teachers, artists, musicians, librarians, writers, cooks, the makers of the less tangible, the growers of sustenance beyond food. You could be one of them!

Roger Ellison, 2025 President



Notices

IN-PERSON GROWERS' CIRCLE MEETING!

Grower's Circle will meet in person (first time since the pandemic!) with a meeting and tour of the Bee Positive operation at Scott Reynolds's home, 491 Telegraph Lane, Wednesday next week! The meeting will start at 8:30am (rather than the usual 8am).

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during last year's San Juan Island Cares Campaign through the San Juan Island Community Foundation at the San Juan County Fair, we were able to purchase and install a greenhouse. It's now built and ready to support early seed starts next growing season.



It takes a village or, in this case, a Grange.

Construction of the greenhouse at Overmarsh Farm Commons was recently completed with the help of stalwart volunteers, resulting in a beautiful, solid, and functional space in which to propagate plants.

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New Project: Community Heritage Orchard and Teaching Nursery

We're excited to report the successful conclusion of another fundraising campaign through the San Juan Island Community Foundation at this year's county fair!

The Community Heritage Orchard and Teaching Nursery project is rooted in preserving San Juan Island's fruit-growing heritage while equipping the community with fruit trees and hands-on skills.



We plan to:

- ◆ Teach grafting, propagation, and pruning
- ◆ Plant a demonstration orchard
- ◆ Grow 30 scion mother trees and 20 rootstock mother trees for ongoing propagation
- ◆ Distribute free fruit trees to the community
- ◆ Teach small-scale orcharding
- ◆ Plant a heritage community orchard

As the saying goes, "The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second-best time is now." We are speedily catching up now!

In the face of climate change and increasing food insecurity, it is critical to build infrastructure for a

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resilient island food system. A teaching orchard and nursery will ensure ecological and educational benefits for generations of islanders.

This project reflects the Grange's long-term vision of regenerative agriculture, community empowerment, and cultural preservation at Overmarsh Farm Commons. It will be a model for teaching essential food-growing skills while honoring the island's rich agrarian past and cultivating a self-sufficient future.



Learning to grow food together is a key component of the Overmarsh Farm Commons project

How You Can Help

Through the San Juan Island Community Foundation SJC Cares campaign at the fair this year, we raised \$3000 to support the community orchard and nursery! Thank you to all who donated and to the community foundation, which featured the project at the fair and matched the first \$1,000 raised.

It's not too late! Please consider making a year-end donation and helping to spread the word. Donate [here](#) or send a check to the Grange with "Overmarsh" in the memo line.

Come Visit Us!

Overmarsh will be participating in the San Juan Island Farm Tours this year on , Sunday, September 28, 12-4pm. Please come! We'd love to see you at the farm!



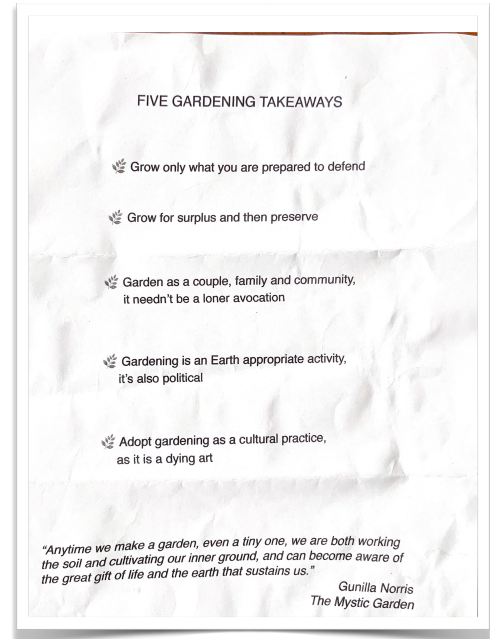
Next in the Resilience Series

By Kevin Connolly

Join us every Third Thursday for our San Juan Island Grange monthly lecture series on "Island Resilience."

The June lecture was delivered by local gardener and educator Keith Keyser, who spoke on "Four Season Gardening: Readyng Your Garden Now to Provide for Your Winter Table." Keith explained how to rotate your garden beds to ensure fresh produce through the winter months. The event was attended by 50 people, who also enjoyed catering from Katrina's Secret Kitchen.

July's lecture featured Madrona Murphy, botanist and lab manager for local conservation research cooperative Kwiaht. Madrona's lecture focused on "Heritage Apples



Lost local orchards yield their mysteries to Madrona!

and Wild Hybrids: Bringing the Past into Our Fruitful Future." Listeners learned how locally-adapted and diverse fruits can help us be more resilient in the face of changes.

The monthly lecture series on "Island Resilience" will return with a bang on the third Thursday in September with a panel discussion of water and island resilience. If you know a speaker who is familiar with local water issues (rain catchment, desalination, groundwater, ponds / reservoirs, etc.) who might present for 10-15 minutes, please let me know at ktconnolly@hotmail.com

Grange Seeks Manager for Successful and Growing Farmers Market Booth

Well, we've done it now. We have outgrown our ability to manage all our vendors and their sales with a volunteer booth manager, so we are seeking a paid contractor to take on this work.

This position requires a varied skill set, from quick and cheerful cashiering to an eye for product display, accurate bookkeeping, report writing, money handling, and social media. We estimate 440 hours annually at \$35/hour.

We are advertising this position through the Grange membership, but Grangers may feel free to pass this information on to non-members.

We hope to have the position filled for the



September 6 farmers market, so the application deadline is August 22. For details, see the "Scope of Work" [here](#).

Send letters of interest with resume to:

sanjuangrange@gmail.com

