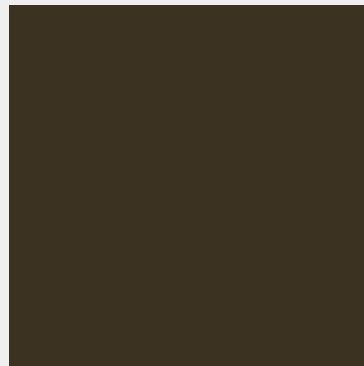


SAN JUAN ISLANDS AGRICULTURAL GUILD

2024 FARM Fund Summary Report

Over \$19,000 awarded to eleven San Juan County producers to increase agricultural production, support regenerative practices, and expand equitable access to healthy, local food.



Overview

The **FARM (Food, Agriculture, Relationships, Markets) Fund** is a program of the San Juan Islands Agricultural Guild (Ag Guild), a 501(c)3 nonprofit based in San Juan County, Washington.

Established in 2015 by the Orcas Food Co-op, the Fund developed into a countywide program under the management of the Ag Guild in 2020. To date, the Fund has distributed more than \$220,000 in grants and over \$19,000 in loans to local island producers.

The Ag Guild manages the Fund with support from an Advisory Committee comprised of farmers, partners, and local food system leaders. Additionally, the Fund is supported by the Ag Guild Board of Directors and staff.

The Ag Guild and advisors are committed to pursuing innovative ways to develop regenerative agriculture, increase the supply and availability of local food for San Juan County residents, and promote the financial viability of our island farms.



THANK YOU to our 2024 donors!

2024 FARM Fund grants were made possible by the generous support of the Pleiades Foundation, the San Juan Island Grange, and local donors.

For those in a position to give, we invite you to join this community of donors and contribute to the next cycle of FARM Funding. It's a great way to make a direct impact and support our farming community.

To learn more about the FARM Fund, please visit <https://sjiagguild.com/farm-fund> or email us farmfund@sjiagguild.com.

Purpose

Providing up-front capital to local farms

San Juan County producers have cited the need for **access to capital** as a leading challenge across numerous recent studies.

The **FARM Fund** addresses this challenge with small grants of upfront capital provided directly to local producers at the start of their growing season.

In **2024**, the FARM Fund awarded **\$19,144 in grants to eleven farmers** across four islands (an average of \$1,740 per farmer). Eight awardees are beginning farmers with less than ten years of experience and are having difficulty in raising capital to expand.

Projects funded in 2024 included propagation house improvements, field cultivation equipment, root cellar construction, deer fencing, solar water pump system, and compost facility improvements.



Serving a community need

Recipients of the SJIAG FARM Fund **give back** to the community with donations of nutritious food through equitable food access programs, educational opportunities for students and fellow farmers, and events to help island neighbors connect with their local food system.



Photo: Nootka Rose Farm

Priority

The FARM Fund prioritizes innovative projects that:



Strengthen and develop regenerative agriculture



Increase food production and supply, and



Expand equitable access to local nutritious food

Awards are made for projects that are well-conceived, achievable, and will positively impact the current growing season.

2024 FARM Fund Advisory Committee and Staff

- Lauren Bigelow (Executive Director, Ag Guild)
- Kristen Rezabek (SJC Health and Nutrition Program Coordinator)
- Ande Finley (Ag Guild Board Member, Transition Lopez Island)
- Rebecca Moore (WSU Extension Ag Program Coordinator)
- John Roulac (Agroforestry Regeneration Communities)
- Angie Shephard (Shephard Family Enterprises)
- Elaine Kendall (San Juan Island Grange)
- Kristen Annim (FARM Fund Coordinator, Ag Guild)



2024 Awards

In March 2024, the FARM Fund solicited proposals for farm improvements that will increase food production in San Juan County using regenerative practices while supporting equitable food access. Producers throughout the county were invited to apply for grants of up to \$2,500. The Fund had \$19,788 to distribute.

Twenty-four farmers submitted grant proposals for \$800 - \$2,500, with a total of \$53,796.77 in requested funds. A seven-member committee ultimately chose to fund 11 high-impact projects that will regenerate our local ecosystem through agriculture and unlock new economic opportunities for island farmers. Eight of the 11 awardees were beginning farmers with less than 10 years experience farming.

2024 FARM Fund Grant Recipients

Farm Name	Grant Amount	Island	Project
Crozier Farm	\$1,797.62	Orcas	Propagation house improvements
Ferry Boat Seeds	\$2,402.00	San Juan	Weeding equipment
Lum Farm	\$1,500.00	Orcas	Solar pump system
Mama Bird Farm	\$2,500.00	San Juan	Deer fencing
New Hannah Farm	\$1,593.50	San Juan	Seeding equipment
Nootka Rose Farm	\$927.00	Waldron	Berry netting structure
Orcas Moon Farm	\$2,500.00	Orcas	Compost facility improvements
Seagate Farm	\$1,000.00	San Juan	Root cellar construction
Still Light Farm	\$2,000.00	Lopez	Propagation house improvements
Sunnyfield Farm	\$2,390.00	Lopez	Bottles
West Beach Farm	\$534.35	Orcas	Compost cover

Total Awarded: \$19,144.47

Recipient Reports

2024 FARM Fund award monies were distributed to awardees in May 2024, and projects were to be completed by March 31st, 2025. All eleven recipients completed their projects on time and on budget.

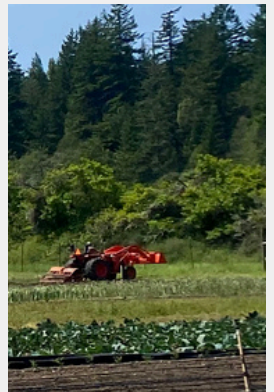
Recipients submitted final reports to the Ag Guild describing their projects, the impacts their projects will have for their farm, and challenges and successes they faced in carrying out their projects.



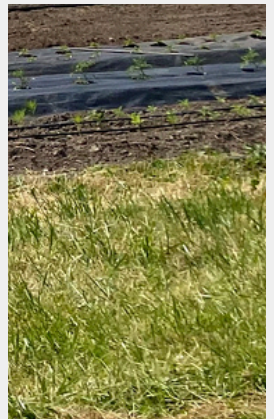
Increasing agricultural production in San Juan County



Strengthening regenerative practices



Improving equitable food access



Crozier Farm and Orchard

Producer Name: Rachel Bishop
Island: Orcas
Project: Propagation equipment

Grant Amount: \$1,797.62
In-Kind Producer Match: \$2,970.08
Total Project Cost: \$4,767.70

Narrative Report

Crozier Farm and Orchard is a 22 acre mixed organic family farm and farm stand. We sell eggs, honey, fruit, meat and vegetables through our farm stand, and directly to local community members, businesses, and restaurants. We are using regenerative farming practices with an internal farm nutrient cycle to return nutrients to the soil and approaching carbon neutral through more than 90% solar driven operation with PV power production and electric farm equipment (including fully electric tractor).

In this project we completed equipment requirements for a regenerative, sustainable/no- waste seed starting and plant propagating facility to expand our supply of local organic plant starts for our vegetable gardens and farm stand. This included purchase and implementation of durable/ reusable Winstrip Seed Trays for seed/plant starts, and drip irrigation for the seed/plant propagation operation in the propagation greenhouse and organic garden beds to improve water conservation, plant vigor, labor efficiency, and reduced plastic waste, fossil-fuel consumption and off-farm inputs.

Project Successes:

The Winstrip Tray System eliminates overwatering, reduces disease, and produces the high quality seedlings that resist transplant shock utilizing a tray design with lateral air strips and open cells that also aid plug removal.

Additionally, the trays are durable and reusable with expected service life of decades, and compact storage off season, in contrast to the commonly used thin blown-plastic single use seed/plant trays.

Crozier Farm and Orchard (continued)

The drip irrigation and greenhouse mist system with auto-timer for the propagation greenhouse and adjacent organic vegetable beds was found to increase plant vigor, seedling survival rate, and reduce labor.

These improvements significantly increased conservation of water used for irrigation through transition from overhead broadcast watering, to micro drip water application.

Project Challenges:

We had previously purchased and installed a high efficiency greenhouse glazed with triple-wall polycarbonate and solar powered fan exhaust system, but we lacked the funds at the time to purchase and install the appropriate irrigation and misting system to support this plant propagating facility.

Installation of irrigations systems can feel intimidating due to numerous small parts that make the system work. We discovered the DripWorks sells a Row Crop Drip Irrigation Kit with all the essential parts that greatly reduces time, effort and mistakes in ordering the required parts to install the system.

Impact of the Grant Project on our Farm Operation

Collectively this project significantly increased our production of vigorous organic plant starts for our farm and our local community, while reducing the farm's plastic waste stream, facilitating a more efficient labor input, and conserving water used for irrigation.

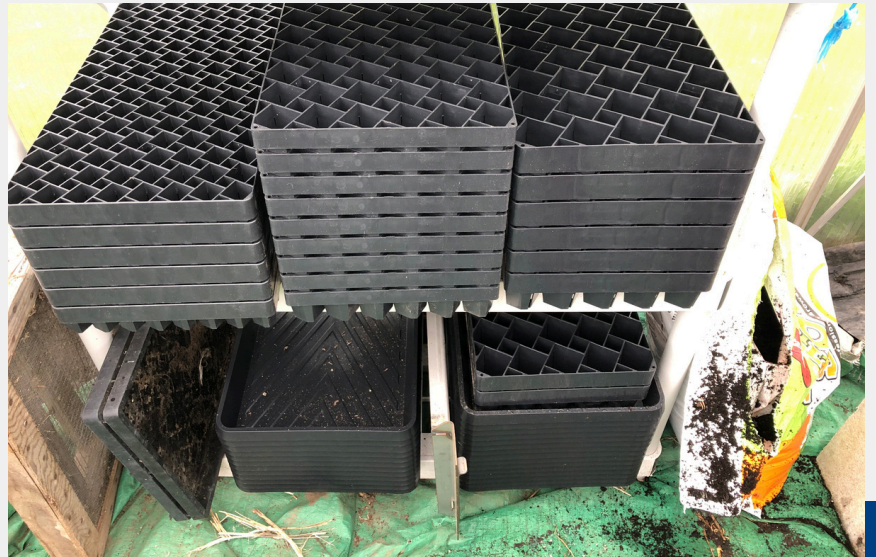
Initial germination and survival of our seed starts during propagation and field planting have increased by more than 20% - significantly increasing our efficiency labor and cost efficiency. We all feel much better using the Winstrip seed trays, after years of living with piles of fragile, nearly single-use blown plastic seed trays that cluttered our farm and were fed in to the waste/landfill stream. As farmers, we are relieved of the guilt of our previous dependence on the blown-plastic disposable trays. Thank you!!!

Crozier Farm and Orchard (continued)

Cost Summary

The cost of the drip irrigation and Winstrip seed trays was \$1851.75 (receipts submitted). The grant was for \$1797.62, which covered the cost of materials, supplies and equipment for the drip irrigation and Winstrip seed trays minus \$54.13 which we cost shared from our farm account. We cost shared the additional materials expenses (\$2770.08) and labor (\$200 = \$25 x 8 hrs) for installation for the plant propagation facility (polycarbonate greenhouse) and labor for installing the irrigation/misting system.

Our thanks to the SJI Farm Fund for this grant. We now have the infrastructure complete for our plant propagation greenhouse facility and increased survival of the plant starts in the adjacent fields, with additional plant starts available to our wider community at the Crozier Farm Stand.



Project Status:

Complete

Ferry Boat Seeds

Producer Name: Brook Brouwer
Island: San Juan
Project: Cultivation implements

Grant Amount: \$2,402.00
In-Kind Producer Match: \$226.25
Total Project Cost: \$2,628.25

Narrative Report

Funds were used to purchase a cultivation frame with finger weeders and sweeps for mounting on our BCS walk behind tractor and an additional set of finger weeders for mounting on our Oggun cultivating tractor. We completed the purchase and assembly of these implements in spring of 2024 and utilized them during the growing season to cultivate over 8 different seed crops and research trials. These implements proved to be useful additions to our farm and we anticipate that we will continue to expand their use for many years to come.

Successes:

Equipment was obtained and assembled by the end of May 2024. We utilized the cultivation frame with BCS to help with weeding over 8 different seed crops including dry beans, various flowers, arugula and native grass transplants. It was adaptable and easy to use, allowing for cultivation of crops ranging in size from ~600 row feet to ~1/4 acre.

We utilized finger weeders mounted on our Oggun cultivating tractor to weed 6 different crops. The finger weeders were highly effective at controlling weeds when soil, weed and plant conditions aligned. Having two pairs on our tractor effectively reduced cultivation time for multi row crops and allowed for very rapid weeding.

Challenges:

Timing is critical for mechanical cultivation. Due to weather and staffing limitations we missed some early season (May and June) cultivation windows. In particular this limited our ability to use mechanical cultivation for our large (>1/4 acre) seed crops because the weeds were too large and needed to be hand weeded. As we increase our familiarity with these tools, and train additional staff, we anticipate being able to utilize these tools for early season weeding of our larger crops.

Ferry Boat Seeds (continued)

Row spacing needs to be very precise for mechanical cultivation. In some situations, uneven row spacing of transplanted crops limited our ability to use two sets of finger weeder mounted on our tractor. In this situation we were still able to cultivate one row at a time. To address this challenge in the future we will continue working on the precision of our transplanting and row spacing.

The clearance of BCS and cultivation frame limits the height of crops that can be cultivated. Depending on the flexibility of the plant, crops over ~1 ft could be damaged by passing over the top, so cultivation was limited to time period when crops are small.

Overall these weeding tools were very beneficial during our 2024 growing season and we anticipate that they will help us scale up our production of organic seed in 2025.



Project Status:

Complete

Lum Farm

Producer Name: Eric Lum

Island: Orcas

Project: Pasture solar pump system

Grant Amount: \$1,500.00

In-Kind Producer Match: \$5,578.50

Total Project Cost: \$7,078.50

Narrative Report

Challenges and successes of our project:

The challenges we faced with this project were about weather, farm labor shortages and time. The weather was amazing for pasture growth in 2024. We focused on harvesting hay, and did not need the additional pasture for grazing. Now that our solar pump trailer is finished, we are just waiting for the rains to subside and the ground to dry enough to access the well. Once we can drive onto the pasture, we will be able to set up the system and have water for the herd.

We were able to purchase the needed materials with the funding right away, but our main farm worker was diagnosed with a long term illness and was not able to continue working. This meant that Eric shouldered not only the additional farm work, but also meant that he was solely responsible for the grant project. He completed the project in fits and starts, whenever he had extra time. It involved designing, welding, light construction, and electrical work.

While we are a year behind in implementing this system, we are ready for the new season and looking forward to having a reliable, consistent water source for our grazing cattle.

How the grant project will affect our operation into the future:

This pump system will be a game changer for us with our rotational grazing system. We can move the pump to different grazing leases, place the pump into the water supply and keep the trough filled using solar power. This will save many many hours of time and fuel used in trucking water to the herd. It will enable us to consider other grazing leases that may become available to us.

Lum Farm (continued)

This solar pump trailer is portable and large enough to carry all the necessary supplies for a self contained herd watering system. With the additional rolls of irrigation pipe, we can set up the system a fair distance away from the grazing animals. This will save time and labor, as we can graze a smaller area, move the herd to fresh grass and effectively graze multiple fields without also moving the whole watering system as well. A win for the cattle and the farmer!!



Project Status:

Complete

Mama Bird Farm

Producer Name: Mara Lawrence
Island: San Juan
Project: Deer fencing

Grant Amount: \$2,500.00
In-Kind Producer Match: \$3,500.00
Total Project Cost: \$6,000.00

Narrative Report

Challenges and successes:

This was not a very challenging project for us. Just time consuming and took doing, but once we did it, it all went pretty well. We had all the equipment to make the project work smoothly. We have chainsaws for clearing land and an excavator for grading the soil. We purchased the materials and hired our employee Pat to help us pound T posts in.

This grant will affect our operation in the future by giving us more deer fenced land to grow food and flowers in without the concern of deer getting in and eating our hard work and pooping on our product!

We are so grateful for this contribution to our farm! Thank you!



Project Status:

Complete

New Hannah Farm

Producer Name: Zach Chan
Island: San Juan
Project: Seeding equipment

Grant Amount: \$1,593.50
In-Kind Producer Match: \$908.55
Total Project Cost: \$2,502.05

Narrative Report

Everything went according to plan. We were able to use the dibble boards and drop seeders as soon as they arrived. My crew and I collected data to compare our original seeding methods to the new system (using our nifty new tools). Turns out that our time savings (73%) were very close to the advertised 75%. I'm sure we'll get faster with more practice!

Use of Funds

We placed our order with Paperpot.co on the 29th of April 2024. They applied a special discount that brought the total cost of our project down to \$1,593.50 (compared to the \$1,719.80 we were awarded).

Because we were under budget, we sent a check to the Ag Guild with the remaining funds (\$126.30).

Successes

- Both the dibble boards and drop seeders have worked as advertised, though the drop seeders required more of a learning curve than expected.
- The drop seeders have reduced our seeding time by 73.5%* (compared to hand-seeding)
- The new dibble boards reduced our dibbling time by 50% (compared to our original method) for both hand-seeding and drop-seeding of 72-cell trays and 128-cell trays.

*For crops that can be seeded with the drop seeder.

Challenges

- Calibrating the drop seeders was a bit cumbersome, but we eventually learned how to decrease friction between the top and bottom plates.
- Static can develop on the drop seeders, causing small seeds to stick to the plates. We are still experimenting with techniques and products (like staticide) to mitigate this issue.

New Hannah Farm (continued)

Lessons Learned

- If there isn't enough seed on the plate, it might be faster to seed flats by hand — when you order your seeds, make sure you buy extra seed so you don't run into this problem!
- Hydropriming spinach seed is possible, but the seed must be given enough time to dry completely — otherwise, the damp seed will stick to the plate and won't drop.
- The drop seeders are SO efficient that our seeding days switched from being a group activity to a one-person job. This was also out of necessity because only one person could operate the drop seeder at any one time.

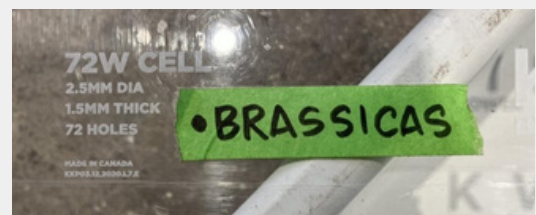
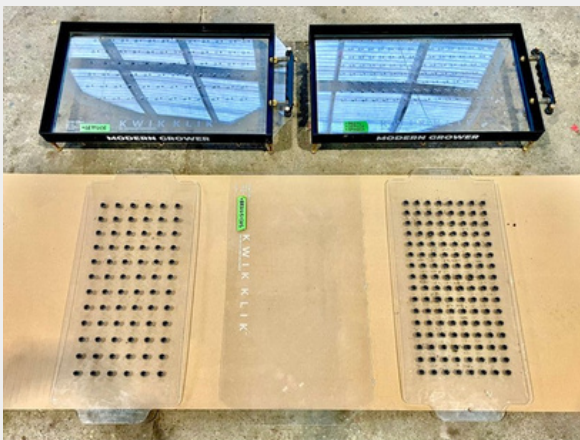
Looking Ahead

We will be redesigning our seeding stations and procedures to leverage the efficiency of the drop seeders.

Photos & Videos

In addition to some very compelling photos of clear plastic, I've included a video with demonstrations: [KWIK KLIK Drop Seeder: Speed Demo](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AqzDFzaZ-Hk>



Project Status:

Complete

Nootka Rose Farm

Producer Name: Linnea Magraw-Bensel	Grant Amount: \$927.00
Island: Waldron	In-Kind Producer Match: \$585.00
Project: Berry netting structure	Total Project Cost: \$1512.00

Narrative Report

In April 2024, our farm on Waldron Island, Nootka Rose Farm was given a grant of \$927 to build a frame over our raspberry patch to carry bird netting. We had applied for \$1,389 but said the minimal amount we needed was \$927, the estimated cost for the PVC pipe to build the frame.

By May of 2024 the cost of the pipe had gone up considerably to \$1,170 plus tax. However, we carried through with the project in mid-June, putting together the frame over the raspberry patch in about 8 hours of total labor (in-kind) and installing the bird netting over the frame to prevent birds from eating the ripening berries.

Even though we were awarded less money than we had hoped, the extra \$700 unplanned expense to implement this infrastructure project, was worth it. It was a productive berry year with almost no bird damage in the berries.

The frame is not winter windproof so we must take it down in the fall and set it up in the spring each year. If we want to continue to grow berries our only alternative is to cover them with netting. This framing structure is the best one we have come up with. The frame will last many years and it is easy to pick the berries under the netting. The smooth frame does not damage the netting as it is pulled across the frame to cover the berries. This should reduce the need to replace the netting as frequently.

Nootka Rose Farm (continued)



Project Status:

Complete

Orcas Moon Farm

Producer Name: Jennifer Pietsch Grant Amount: \$2,500.00
Island: Orcas In-Kind Producer Match: \$231.00
Project: Compost system improvement Total Project Cost: \$2,731.00

Narrative Report

Successes we are celebrating include:

- Acquiring the chipper and learning how to operate it.
- Successfully clearing trees and shrubs from around the compost structure.
- Relationship building by asking for help, construction of a working gutter set up.
- Learning about and understanding recipe for compost including the proper temperature and mix of green versus brown ingredients
- Received our soil tests back as a benchmark reading to work from.
- Holy cow we learned a lot about working together and how to effectively troubleshoot unexpected problems
- We made our first bit of compost!
- We are very excited to finally get a chance to make our compost fully operational

Challenges we faced include:

- The timeline for acquiring a chipper and water tank. The water tank in particular was slow to arrive. The cost of the tank increased from our original estimate.
- The weather, there was no rain.
- Time, what initially seemed straightforward at the outset, took more time than anticipated when bumps in the road occurred.
- The gutter: we purchased the gutter from Island Hardware and Supply. None of the pieces were designed to fit together. This problem was not unknown to the yard workers. After many trips to the hardware store we were able to figure out a way to make the mismatched pieces work (gutter connectors, downspout, elbow pieces). We tried to troubleshoot this by sourcing the mismatched pieces on the mainland.

Orcas Moon Farm (continued)

- The overhang on our compost facility was not easy to access as it hung under the roof overhang. The facility is built into a rise with a steep hill behind it. Finding a way to get the ladders to be stable was very difficult.
- The downspout needed more support than we expected and was something we needed to problem solve.
- The chipper
- I wish we had purchased a more powerful chipper in order to chip garden waste of a larger diameter.
- Keeping receipts- we were not good about this

How will the grant project affect our operation into the future?

This is a gamechanger! We collect manure from our pastures daily and have not up until now had a very effective way to compost it. Alpacas manure does not produce heat. In order to achieve the maximum benefit from it we need to compost it with other materials and have a way to keep it moist enough to compost.



Project Status:

Complete

Seagate Farm

Producer Name: John Latimer

Grant Amount: \$1,000.00

Island: San Juan

In-Kind Producer Match: \$16,419.60

Project: Root cellar construction

Total Project Cost: \$17,419.60

Narrative Report

What were the challenges and successes of your project?

The challenges for the root cellar were the weather and drainage issues at the beginning of the project. Later on, it became obvious that we underestimated the total cost of doing the root cellar. It ended up costing about twice as much as originally anticipated, specifically due to higher excavation / earthwork costs and more materials needed.

The successes included learning more tricks of building with earthbags. It was also satisfying to finish the whole project within the time we planned. We have already used the root cellar for both our own farm's fruit and vegetable storage and also storage for the San Juan Island Grange. Several Grange members have also asked us to show them how to build with earthbags so they can do projects on their own farms and homesteads.

How will the grant project affect your operation into the future?

The grant has allowed us to already store fruit and vegetables in the root cellar for longer storage time and preservation. As our farm and fruit / vegetable production grows, we will be able to preserve the produce better and for a longer time until it can be sold here on the island. We have also publicized that Grange members can utilize our root cellar if they need cool storage space for their own fruit and vegetable storage. This is a valuable community asset available to the island since there is no other cool storage available here on San Juan.

Seagate Farm (continued)



Project Status:

Complete

Still Light Farm

Producer Name: Lucilena Jones

Island: Lopez

Project: Propagation equipment

Grant Amount: \$2,000.00

In-Kind Producer Match: \$951.20

Total Project Cost: \$2,951.20

Narrative Report

Our grant funding was for infrastructure improvements for our propagation house, specifically the grow lights. We are moving seedling production over from T&D Farms to our property for the production of vegetable starts for Sunset Builders Supply and the San Juan Islands Food Hub.

Project Challenges and Successes

The nursery at Still Light Farm is up and running, turning out hundreds of seedlings each week. At this early stage in the season, we've potted up over 1,500 vegetable starts and herbs and have made three deliveries to Sunset totaling over 500 plants. The plants are thriving in the propagation house, benefiting from the excellent lights and consistent temperatures.

Infrastructure improvements have been extensive and are ongoing. We put up two new greenhouses on the farm. One is sheeted in plastic and will have tables installed in it this week. It is unheated and will hold plants that are ready to be hardened off and sent out. The second house will have shade cloth on it and hold plants that require cooler temperatures.

Inside the main propagation house, we installed a central table that serves as a "greenhouse within a greenhouse." It has grow lights and heat mats on it and kept seedlings warm during the cold snaps early this winter. It now holds cold-sensitive crops such as tomatoes, eggplants, and peppers, ensuring they don't drop below 60 degrees.

The grant project has been very successful. The plants are stocky and healthy, and our heating needs have been minimal. Our main challenges are those facing any nursery: maintaining hygiene, finding enough space for all the plants, and keeping up with seeding and transplanting.

Still Light Farm (continued)

Future Impact

We hope to grow our nursery work in the future, increasing our wholesale sales to fellow farmers and expanding the selection of plants we grow. This funding has given us a jump start on the nursery infrastructure, defraying some of the upfront costs as we expanded our growing space.



Project Status:
Complete

Sunnyfield Farm

Producer Name: Andre Entermann
Island: Lopez
Project: Bottles

Grant Amount: \$2,390.00
In-Kind Producer Match: \$1,088.73
Total Project Cost: \$3,478.73

Narrative Report

We needed to get in the next quantity bracket to save money so this \$2500 really made it possible to order the volume.

Our project was a bit too simple to have successes and challenges. Well, getting the bottle boxes from Seattle took two creative trips, but otherwise all was straightforward.

The grant project makes our future operations able to spend money elsewhere.



Project Status:

Complete

West Beach Farm

Producer Name: Kathy Morris

Island: Orcas

Project: Compost cover

Grant Amount: \$534.35

In-Kind Producer Match: \$0

Total Project Cost: \$534.35

Narrative Report

I purchased a breathable waterproof compost cover from compo-tech. It was easy to purchase, the staff was very helpful.

I learned about this company from a podcast called "The Composter" hosted by Jane Mearner from Earthcare farm in Rhode Island. If there is one helpful piece of advise to give other farmers in San Juan county who love composting would be to check out this very helpful and practical podcast. I also love the cover, it has kept my compost moisture level appropriate.

The only downside is that the compost is sucking up water from below which is a reason I wanted the concrete pad to put my curing compost on. I hope I can figure a way to get this done this summer. I have been really fortunate to have the support from farm fund in building my compost system.



Project Status:

Complete



Conclusions

All eleven 2024 FARM Fund recipients completed their projects on budget and on time. Producers expressed deep appreciation for the financial support for on-farm improvements that will enable them to increase production and employ more regenerative practices.

Awardees emphasized not just the tangible but the motivational boost this support brings them at the start of their growing season. They described the long-term positive impacts their projects will have in terms of farm efficiencies and resiliency—which, in turn, strengthens our broader local food system.



The FARM Fund is actively seeking philanthropic gifts to fund future grant cycles to support our farming community. Giving to the FARM Fund is a great way to directly impact the farmers in our community! To learn more about the FARM Fund, please go to sjiagguild.com/farm-fund or email farmfund@sjiagguild.com.