LCLT has engaged the services of grain expert **O.J. Lougheed**. O.J has been researching grain history, varieties, seed production, and low-input farming since the 1970’s over three continents. He sold wheat seed to a farmer on Lopez Island in the early 1980’s.

O.J has a BA in Liberal Arts from The Evergreen State College with an emphasis on Agricultural History, Peasant Studies, and Pre/Post-industrial Farming, with a life-experience focus on Russia and the small grains.

**Contact:**
Lopez Community Land Trust  
E: LCLT@rockisland.com  
T: 360.468.3723  
w: LopezCLT.org

Your support keeps these projects moving forward. LCLT is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. Federal ID number 91-1469975.

Please mail donations to: Grain Project  
P.O. Box 25, Lopez Island, WA 98261

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Should grain be grown in the islands for local use, whether for livestock or home consumption, or should grain be an imported product like coffee, bananas, citrus, etc.?

The Grain Project is exploring the renewed production of grain from open-pollinated, non-GMO, and PVP-free, modern and “heritage” varieties for the purpose of food security in the islands. With the increasing cost of oil and thus distribution of food goods, it is time to examine increased self-reliance strategies for island residents. There are four areas that the LCLT is exploring regarding grain:

1. seed bank or library
2. island appropriate seed
3. island appropriate equipment
4. farmer and consumer awareness

Photo: “Red Fife Wheat”, Margaret Tinton, Waldron Island
The Issues

Currently, proprietary seed accounts for 82% of the commercial seed market worldwide with Monsanto and DuPont being the largest global seed companies. Increasingly grain is being genetically modified to be resistant to various herbicides such as “Roundup,” enabling weeding to be done chemically.

“No-till” farming means farming with large amounts of herbicides and pesticides, which is neither sustainable nor healthy. Recent research has raised alarming issues about “Roundup” causing serious medical problems in pregnant women when ingested in even small amounts of drinking water.*

1) For this reason, the Grain Project is exploring the medium-term storage of “heritage,” non-GMO and PVP-free seed for use by local farmers. Such a seed bank or seed library would require a dry, cool, rodent proof, humidity controlled environment.

New grain varieties are increasingly being Plant Variety Protected (PVP) and patented, leaving open-source seed difficult to find. This is particularly true of “heritage” seeds and indigenous crops worldwide. Additionally, PVP seeds can legally only be saved for a farmer’s own use, but not sold or shared with others for seeding purposes.

* www.ehponline.org [search Roundup]

2) It is not yet clear which varieties grow best in the islands. Some current grain varieties produce plants too short for combines even in a dry year; longer straw varieties are needed on the island, and are often more drought resistant. Because Lopez Island is one of the driest locations in the bioregion, it is a logical place for grain research and seed production. Seed that is not PVP or GMO is increasingly a valued commodity in today’s marketplace, and would add another economic engine for the islands.

3) Appropriate equipment depends on what grain varieties are grown and at what scale. LCLT has discovered more equipment on Lopez than was thought available, but most of it is old. There is a need for additional small scale grain equipment, including hand scythes, sickles, homemade thresher, seed cleaners, and small flour mills.

4) At this point many farmers are interested in growing only enough grain for home use and for their livestock. The Grain Project is exploring options for meeting consumer needs by working with local farmers to produce grains sustainably and on an increasing scale.

Photos: “Barley Harvest”, Linda Hudson, Lopez Island