

PART V

Crops

Major Crops

Because of the importance of livestock, dairy and poultry farming, a major part of San Juan County's cropland is used for growing feed crops. Over 55 percent of harvested cropland in 1954 was used to grow hay and silage and another 26 percent was in feed grains. These crops were used to sustain 8,620 sheep, 3,970 cattle, 1,000 hogs, 85 horses, 24,000 chickens and 280 turkeys kept on farms. Clover and timothy mixtures grown for hay were the most common crop with 2,050 acres harvested in 1954. The second and third ranking crops were alfalfa, 1,050 acres and barley, 880 acres. Other important crops were wild and other hays, 835 acres, oats, 820 and wheat, 250 acres. Crops of less than 200 acres were fruits, berries and vegetables.

Crop Trends

Major crop trends in San Juan County have been a decrease in total acreage of land in crops since 1939. In 1939 there were 10,340 acres of cropland

Total Acres of Land Harvested, 1954: 7,108 Acres

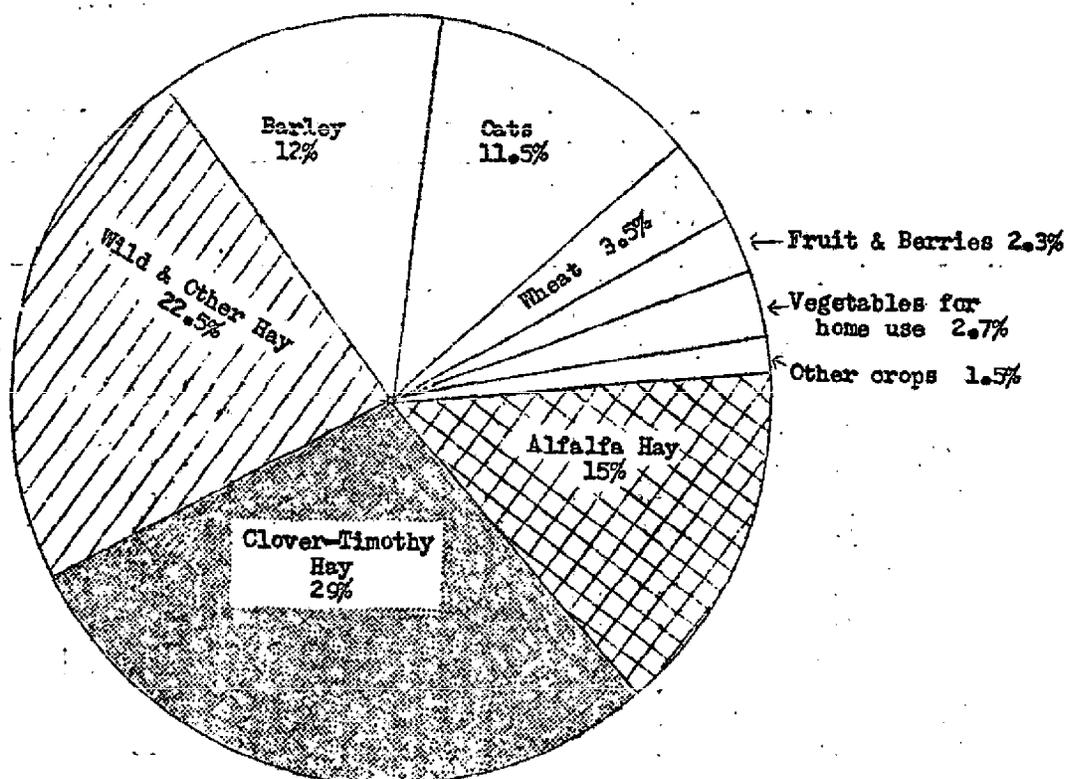


Figure 9.- Percent of Total Cropland in Leading Crops
San Juan County, 1954
(Based on U.S. Census of Agriculture, 1954)

harvested compared with 7,100 in 1954. During this period nearly 3,000 acres were taken out of crops and put into permanent pastures or woodlands. A number of cultivated or harvested crops have been decreased in acreage since 1939. These include clover and timothy hay, wild hay, wheat, fruit, berries, potatoes and vegetables. Crops which have been expanded in acreage since 1939 include alfalfa, barley and oats. Crop trends indicate a general effort of island farmers to be self-sufficient in feed crops.

Hay and Silage Crops - Wild Hay, Clover-Timothy, Alfalfa

Throughout the history of agriculture in the San Juan Islands the most important crop from the acreage standpoint has been hay. Wild hay from prairie areas and new clearings was long a large acreage crop but has been decreased to less than 400 acres in recent years. Improved hay of the clover and timothy mixture type was increased to a high point of 3,000 acres in 1941 and then was decreased to 1,900 acres by 1955. In the last census there were 93 farms harvesting over 2,020 acres. In the 1930's much of the hay cropland was rotated into alfalfa and this practice was increased in the 1940's. Alfalfa acreage fell off to 1,050 acres by 1954. In that year 86 farms harvested a crop of 2,120 tons. Alfalfa, clover and timothy are grown on all the farmed islands, reaching its largest acreages on Lopez and San Juan Islands. Dry, summer climate and rolling terrain make hays of all types a well adapted crop. In recent years hay meadows and grain fields have been cut one or more times for

Table 16.- Clover-Timothy Hay and Alfalfa Hay
Acreage, Yield and Production
San Juan County, 1939-1955

Year	Clover and Timothy Hay			Alfalfa Hay		
	Acreage (acres)	Yield (tons per acre)	Production (tons)	Acreage (acres)	Yield (tons per acre)	Production (tons)
1939	2,300	1.7	3,900	1,000	2.1	2,100
1940	2,900	1.2	3,550	1,100	2.0	2,200
1941	3,000	1.6	4,800	1,200	2.7	3,210
1942	2,600	2.1	5,400	1,470	3.0	4,430
1943	2,500	1.9	4,800	1,700	2.9	4,930
1944	1,860	1.9	3,500	1,750	2.1	3,600
1945	1,850	1.5	2,800	1,700	2.0	3,400
1946	1,810	1.7	3,000	1,750	2.4	4,200
1947	1,700	1.7	2,910	1,690	2.1	3,500
1948	1,800	1.8	3,240	1,720	2.5	4,300
1949	1,700	1.7	2,900	1,600	1.9	3,100
1950	1,600	1.0	1,640	1,600	1.3	2,100
1951	1,700	1.3	2,210	1,540	1.5	2,310
1952	1,800	1.8	3,200	1,460	2.1	3,000
1953	2,400	1.1	2,640	1,580	1.5	2,400
1954	2,050	1.4	2,900	1,050	2.0	2,120
1955	1,900	1.5	2,760	1,130	1.9	2,170

Source: U.S.D.A., AMS, Estimates Division
State of Washington

green silage. There has been a slight increase in the acreage of green oats cut for hay. Livestock farmers have increased efforts to produce their own needs for hay.

Grain Crops: Barley, Oats, Wheat and Other Grains

Production of feed grains for local use is a common practice on over 50 farms. Generally grown in small fields in rotation with clover or alfalfa grain acreages have varied from year to year. Grain feeding of sheep, hogs, beef cattle and poultry has been increased recently in all island farming districts.

Barley became the most important grain crop in the mid-1950's, leading oats slightly. In 1954, 55 farms grew 800 acres of barley for grain. Barley acreage was increased from 210 acres to 880 acres between 1939 and 1955. Yields have ranged from 35 to 40 bushels per acre since 1950.

Oats, for grain, has traditionally been a leading feed crop. Acreage was at a peak of 1,360 acres in 1944 but was at a low of 750 acres in 1955. In most cases, oats were planted as a nurse crop for clover or alfalfa. In the last Census year oats were harvested on 49 farms. Oat yields have increased in the San Juan area generally exceeding 50 bushels per acre in recent years. About 20 farms grew oats for green hay or silage in 1954 and in recent years 100 to 170 acres of oat hay have been harvested for feeding sheep and cattle.

Table 17.- Wheat and Barley: Acreage, Yield and Production
San Juan County, 1939-1958

Year	All Wheat			Barley		
	Acreage (acres)	Yield (bushels per acre)	Production (bushels)	Acreage (acres)	Yield (bushels per acre)	Production (bushels)
1939	880	23.1	20,330	210	37.0	7,770
1940	780	19.5	15,200	280	34.0	9,520
1941	590	33.9	20,000	350	35.0	12,250
1942	350	38.0	13,300	490	36.0	17,640
1943	380	14.5	5,500	480	34.0	16,320
1944	580	38.8	22,510	440	29.0	12,760
1945	500	18.6	9,310	450	31.0	13,950
1946	450	38.0	17,100	430	39.0	16,770
1947	440	21.0	9,220	480	33.0	15,840
1948	370	22.5	8,330	630	35.0	22,050
1949	350	17.8	6,230	710	33.0	23,430
1950	270	19.7	5,310	740	38.0	28,120
1951	180	24.9	4,480	690	36.0	24,840
1952	410	24.3	9,950	600	37.0	22,200
1953	500	31.5	15,740	670	35.0	23,450
1954	250	35.6	8,910	800	34.0	27,200
1955	240	31.6	7,580	880	40.0	35,200
1956	60	43.0	2,580	760	63.5	48,260
1957	140	45.3	6,340	1,040	40.5	45,760
1958	140	33.9	6,440	1,000	25.0	25,000

Source: U.S.D.A., AMS, Agric. Estimates Division
State of Washington

Wheat growing has declined in the San Juan Islands from 880 acres to less than 200 acres since 1939. In the most recent Census year, only 17 farms reported wheat as a crop and 1954 acreage was about 250 acres. Grown in small fields nearly all wheat is of the winter type sown in the fall. The crop is sold or used locally for livestock and poultry feed.

In recent years only a few farms have grown other feed grains such as rye and field corn. Acreages of these grains have been less than 10 acres in the early 1950's.

Table 18.- Oats and Potatoes: Acreage, Yield and Production
San Juan County, 1939-1956

Year	Oats			Potatoes		
	Acreage (acres)	Yield (bushels per acre)	Production (bushels)	Acreage (acres)	Yield (tons per acre)	Production (tons)
1939	690	38.0	26,220	60 1/2	7.2	432
1940	820	34.0	27,880	NA	—	—
1941	910	44.0	40,040	NA	—	—
1942	1,000	44.0	44,000	NA	—	—
1943	1,170	48.0	56,160	NA	—	—
1944	1,360	43.0	58,480	40 1/2	3.8	145
1945	1,110	37.0	41,070	NA	—	—
1946	1,000	42.0	42,000	NA	—	—
1947	940	45.0	42,300	NA	—	—
1948	990	36.0	35,640	NA	—	—
1949	1,010	45.0	45,450	10 1/2	7.3	73
1950	1,150	44.0	50,600	NA	—	—
1951	1,000	46.0	46,000	NA	—	—
1952	1,300	58.0	75,400	NA	—	—
1953	830	56.0	46,500	NA	—	—
1954	820	49.0	40,180	5	9	45
1955	740	56.0	41,440	5	8	40
1956	NA	—	—	5	8	40

1/ Based on Census of Agriculture. NA - not available.

Source: U.S.D.A., AMS, Agric. Estimates Division
State of Washington

Vegetables and Potatoes

Vegetable and potato growing, primarily for local markets and home use has declined in the 1950's. Home vegetable gardening declined from 259 to 192 farm gardens between 1949 and 1954 according to Census enumerations on farm gardens. Commercial vegetable acreages went down from 3 to 2 acres in the same period. Farm gardens included fractions of acres of snap beans, sweet corn, onions, tomatoes, cabbage and lettuce. A portion of this production went into local fresh market retail outlets. Less than \$500 worth of vegetables were marketed from local farms according to the last two Censuses. Frozen and canned vegetables and some fresh vegetables are shipped in from the mainland to supply towns and resorts.

Potato acreage has steadily declined in the last 20 years. In the 1939 Census 60 acres of potatoes were enumerated compared with about 5 in 1954. There were 67 farms reporting potatoes grown, indicating that potatoes, like truck crops, are grown in home gardens for home use and that commercial quantities of potatoes are shipped in from mainland regions.

Tree Fruits

Fruit farming has declined in the San Juan Islands since 1910. In earlier decades of settlement there were numerous small commercial orchards of apples, cherries, pears and prunes planted. Fruit was sold to ships visiting the islands and some was shipped to mainland cities on Puget Sound. There was an early prune drying industry on Shaw Island. In the most recent Census there were only 65 farms which had fruit orchards of 20 trees or more. Fruit orchards containing plantings of 20 trees or more amounted to only 167 acres for the entire county. The most common species of fruit grown in small home orchards and in a few commercial orchards are apples, prunes, cherries, pears and peaches. There are noncommercial plantings on a few farms of other tree and vine crops such as filberts, walnuts and Concord grapes. In recent years commercial fruit has been of minor importance, total annual sales ranging between \$9,000 and \$12,000. Fruit consumed on the farm is, however, an item of real income value to numerous families in the islands.

Table 19.- Bearing Fruit Trees
San Juan County, 1890-1954

Year	Numbers of Bearing Trees				
	Apples	Cherries	Peaches	Pears	Prunes & Plums
1890	12,722	307	93	699	1,640
1900	72,408	3,555	1,326	4,806	23,429
1910	76,731	3,417	60	5,657	8,404
1920	49,874	2,280	223	8,724	5,772
1930	21,547	4,935	28	8,999	2,673
1940	10,763	4,521	31	6,020	1,951
1950	5,059	1,019	105	1,821	922
1954 1/	3,396	226	66	135	477

1/ Includes trees only in orchards of 20 trees or more.

Sources: Washington Tree Fruits, Washington Crop and Livestock Reporting Service, U.S.D.A. and Washington State Dept. of Agriculture, Cooperating, 1952.
U. S. Census of Agriculture, 1954.

Berry Crops: Strawberries, Raspberries, Boysenberries

Berry farming is on a minor scale in the San Juan Islands. The most recent Census enumerated less than 10 farms which harvested commercial berries. Strawberries were grown for sale by seven farms with a total of 5 acres in 1954. Commercial raspberries grown on five farms amounted to about an acre. There were a few small commercial plantings of Boysenberries and blueberries. Local production is practically all for local fresh markets and for local households who freeze and preserve berries. There has been some limited shipment of berries to fresh markets and processors in Skagit and Snohomish Counties.