

Friday Harbor

Poetry Gardens

2023

Poets bringing poetry into our everyday world





POETRY



GARDENS

AT THE
TOWN OF
FRIDAY HARBOR
2023

Four outdoor collections
of poetry by
San Juan Islands authors

Friday Harbor Poetry Gardens
Poets Bringing Poetry Into Our Everyday World
2023

Published by the Town of Friday Harbor
and the Friday Harbor Arts Commission
Friday Harbor, Washington 98250

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Second Edition



*Poetry is a way of seeing and feeling the world
through another person's mind.*

The 30 poems in this book were composed by residents of the San Juan Islands. They were chosen from works submitted in the Town of Friday Harbor's second Poetry Garden contest. The poems are now on display at four outdoor Poetry Gardens located throughout the town for the public's enjoyment.

As you stroll between the gardens, enjoy all the forms of art that our community offers.



Link to the Poetry Gardens website

THE TOWN OF FRIDAY HARBOR, WA





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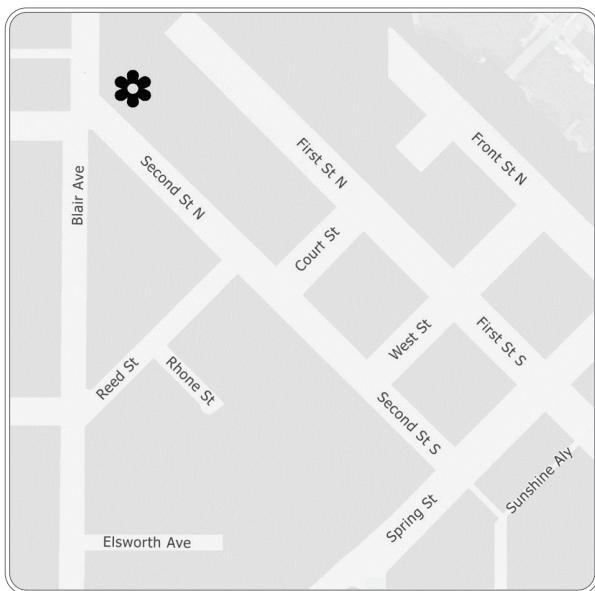
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SAN JUAN COMMUNITY THEATRE

On Second Street
at the intersection of Blair Avenue



Working Cedar

The fine, straight grains are like God:
Yielding to the blade of our honed visions,
Yet acquiescing to curves reluctantly.

When you go against the grain,
You must be so very sure.

But Heaven's light follows the carver's art!
There is no perfect way forward.
All we can do in this world,
As the curls fall away from us,
Is to hopefully arrive at beauty.

— *Ladd Thomas Holroyd*

Saving the Island Marble Butterfly

They are only found here and number so few
each could be given a name, like the orcas.
I have never seen one
except in pictures, and once in a dream...
fuzzy marbled wings of pale green and white
floating across an azure sky.
I do not know where to begin
to save the rainforests and the glaciers.
But I have learned how to prepare the soil
to sow rows of mustard seeds
in deer fenced fields,
how to count and catalog caterpillars
inch along yellow flowered stems to feed,
how to step carefully as they migrate through grasses
to pupate and spend most of their earthly life,
how to overwinter with hope
that come spring, a rare butterfly will emerge
to mate, to lay eggs, to fly beyond the fences
far away from the confines of a history book.

— *Marianne Tynan*

The Eagle

Sits still
Perched in wind ripped
Feathered tree.

A lone sentry.
Her long gaze to sunrise
And Rosario Strait.
A meal awaits.

Barely a nod of head
As white shadow moves,
Beak shows and doesn't show,
In rhythm to the tide.

She points to pink Mount Baker
Already sunning herself
As eruption rises
With time,
As does the wingspan of eternity, and a splash!
Eagle meets
Her morning fish.

— *Amber R. Lewis*

Color

Yellow mustard patch,
as if wind kicked the paint can
on the valley floor.

— Paul S. Walsh

Haiku Gardens 2

Could be silver pine,
an old growth cedar, those trees
that resist their names.

— *Tara Mesalik MacMahon*

Life On The Ferry

Chattering voices,
words blur into noise.

Heads bob, mouths open, faces express,
some smile, some look sad, children run laugh and cry.

Lovers walk hand in hand, whispering in each other's ears.
A girl reaches her small hand toward her mother.
A father bends to pick up his smiling son.

A woman massages her friend's shoulders
while talking with people in neighboring seats.

A father wraps his arms around his daughter,
she sits on his lap quietly looking out the window.
Two women saunter in their thick jackets, earrings, and haircuts.
A girl bounces on her seat, singing, while playing cards.

A man lumbers from side to side,
hands in pockets, head down.

I finish my coffee, listen and watch
life on the ferry.

— *Jeff Otis*

Prehistoric Now

Dense piles of slithering serpents along the shore.
Vacant teepees standing silently next to woolly mammoth tusks,
stretching into the long sun of late afternoon.
Evidence of ancient forests, with bark skins still clinging
to the trunks of sun bleached conifers.
A lone feather, a reminder of who once flew here.
My beach walk, suddenly, a prehistoric landscape, full of stories.

— *Wendy Smith*

Serenity

I walk the long beach
and watch the sea
flow gently into shore
translucent
eternal
always certain of the way

— Judith Azrael

The Sea

Listen to the sea . . .

from a rock ledge above Haro Strait or
the sandy beach of Griffin Bay . . .

As the tides ebb and flow

and waves ripple and splash,
hear the rhythm of the centuries . . .

— *Emily Geyman*

The Sea Breathes Out the Gentlest of Sighs

Salmon fins muddle
the surface, schools swimming home.
No net-sets today.

— *William Weissinger*



SPRING STREET LANDING

At the Port of Friday Harbor below Downriggers Restaurant



Pastel Morning

Dawn comes gently
rousing slumberers.
Grays, last to bed,
first to waken,
followed by pastels.
Cotton candy pink
and powder blue.
Apricot and lemon creme.
Washing sleep
from the skies.

— *Nita Couchman*

Wilding Wonderment

How does the moon scurry across the heaven's arc, spreading feathers of white worn on wings of wilding wonderment?
When her face fades into the unknown ghost of darkness, where is the spotlight bright then?
Who will see the hidden hole in the sky?
How will we know how to breathe?
Who will show us how to rise,
how to stand in the half-
carved sphere alone
from here
or there,
and be
seen?

— *Sandora Hedrick*

Only Trees Can Provide

What I want now is to be quiet
enough to hear the fox's mating song,
the symphony of mushrooms growing under the porch,
the house wren whistling me away from her nest.

I don't want words
telling me about the orchestra of life.
I want to pick up the heartbeat
of winter grasses slowed for the season,
to thrill to the war cry of anemones
bravely bursting from wet earth.

I crave a silence
only trees can provide whose branches
grow so slowly their trunks are surprised
by their size.

— *Lynne Mercer*

How the Field Lies

How the field lies
under cobalt skies
the gaff-rigged pine grove
at its mooring nearby.

— Madeleine S. Butcher

In the Gloaming

The sheep have all left
the spring fields, drifted like clouds
over that dark hill

— *Marianne Tynan*

Haiku Gardens 1

The sun does all the
talking, while the rain slumbers.
But the mud has ears.

— *Tara Mesalik MacMahon*

September Lace

Like fresh footprints floating
across a dew-covered meadow,
a dozen delicate spiderwebs
hover
just above the ground.

This pathway of trembling lace
beckons butterflies, bees
and my imagination to follow,
hoping
to hover, too.

— *Ed Wilson*

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Gratitude

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FOR THEM, SUCH . . .

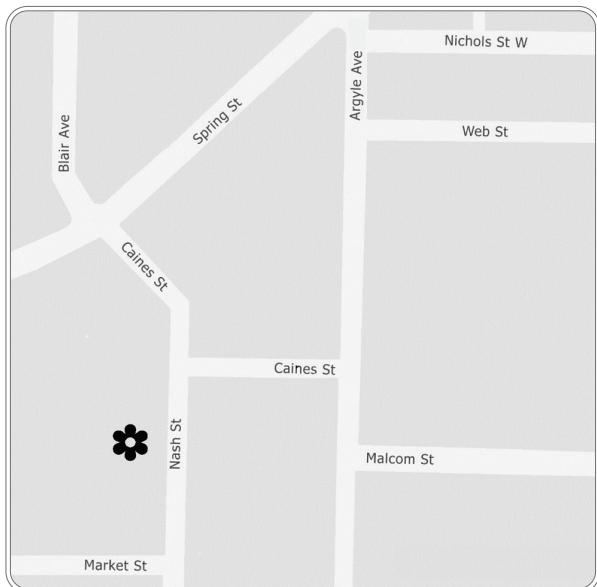
— *Tara Mesalik MacMahon*

Tara Mesalik MacMahon, “Gratitude” from I Sing the Salmon Home. Copyright ©2023. Reprinted with permission of Empty Bowl Press.



MULLIS COMMUNITY SENIOR CENTER

On Nash Street
near the intersection with Caines Street



Silence

Silence sits at the tip of my tongue
a hummingbird's pause
between buds and busy beaks
while fresh fragrance wafts wildly on wind.

It lingers at the edge of the meadow
awaiting the first curl of lark,
curtain call of a robin reeling
in the peached dawning light.

I linger at the edge of stillness
to hear the song of the sublime
tinting the tops of hills to horizon
tenderly tracing this moment's pearl.

Silence gathers at the edge of night
where the trees meet the moon
and wandering owls wonder
“Am I Alone?”

The answer boldly bounds
from the still-point standing
in the silence sitting
at the tip of my tongue.

— *Sandora Hedrick*

About Longing

*Longing, we say, because desire is full
of endless distances. — Robert Haas*

We also say that we are haunted
by our longing to migrate home.
Jealous, we are, of the elegant
Trumpeter Swans that come each winter,
called by the banks of Zylstra Lake,
to swim across her immutable
surface—the endless invitation —
free to lift off and to land safely
home again.

— *Susie Foster Hale*

Rumors

The word gets around town
faster than a wild breeze
swirling on the sea
set in motion feelings
that rise like waves of heat
from warm summer pavement
A call to empathetic ears
brings silky smooth platitudes
and unwanted counsel
while time is the best
subduer of pain
and conqueror of days

— *Keri Talbott*

Tracks

I remember waking to a Townsend warbler's warble,
swish-er swishing its tinkled chatter; the smell, too,
a ripened seaweed cocktail.

There are many who don't know or care, can't ever
imagine life without edges. What it's like to have
salivating fangs pondering you, hungry.

The sand molded to my sleep, imprinted my pumping
heart, pulsing with the tang of iron and nutrients.
Who but a mosquito or wolf know that I am worthy?

My dreams didn't catch its sniffs, but the beach caught
its prints, as did my sleep sack. In the morning a wet
nose spot glistened on my bag where my knee slept.

— Lowell Jones

Our Final Test

Wise men have followed the North Star
Lovers have wept at the moon
Nomads whose footsteps we ponder
Did wonder of heaven above
Babes' breath a promise of springtime
Laughter sweet songs from the young
Summer spent and gone with its sunshine
To be pined with aging tears
Winter beckons all with her eyes closed
No escaping all footsteps seek a rest
Golden years lost upon by the failing
Sleep prevailing—our final test

— *Cynthia Rogers*

*Cynthia Rogers, "Our Final Test" from A 21st
Century Poet I. ©2007, ISBN 0-7951-8835-8.
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A Garland of Thyme

On days
such as this,
may the hands
of a child
weave a garland
of thyme
for your hair.

May you,
in return,
weave a garland
of rhyme,
so the child
will recall
you were here.

— Ed Wilson

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Surprise

I hear but can't see.

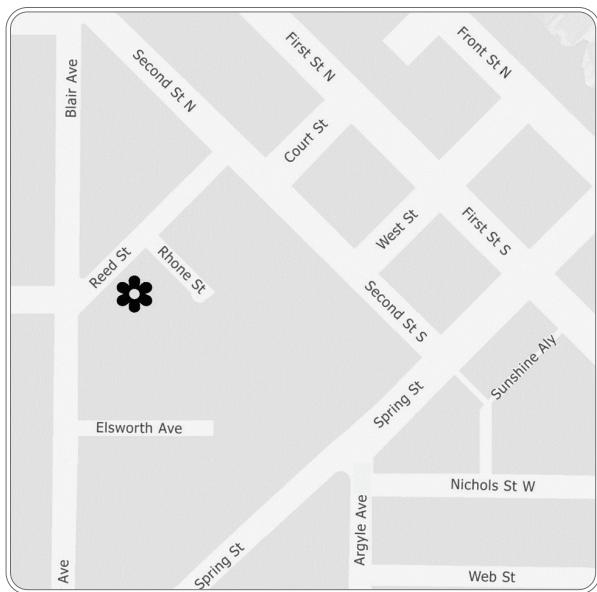
Oh, my, there's the humming bird
inches from my heart.

— *Paul S. Walsh*



REED STREET

Beside the U.S. Post Office



A November Afternoon

Finally,
the two bird feeders
hang still —
like slender scales of justice —
after the heresy of wind.

— Susie Foster Hale

Fresh Snow

Egg white meringue
airy and light
dribbles from spruce boughs,
frosts the deck
where chickadees
etch delicate runes
with their dainty feet

— *Nita Couchman*

The First Things

The first thing's first: a swallow rounds
the column and, flicking into a curve,
catches the dying sunlight on
one crescent of its slanted wing;
and once again we know,
against the evening's cobalt shadow,
that in proportion we have each received
some sliver of that radiant plumage,
some bending version of
that swallow's wing which dips, and plucks
an instant's harmony in us.

— *Eliza Bishop Steinbacher*

Field

Cows in deep pasture,
black-brown rectangles,
move slowly forward,
heads plunged
into tall grass on wide hooves
they do the work of time before man,
before the naming of things
before Rothko, before Giotto,
before the cave walls, they've roamed
and grazed, heedless of time and bees,
their grave weights holding fields in place,
they move inexorably forward
with heavy skulls and massive necks,
leaving paths and bones and rivers,
making rich black earth, heaving mountains,
holding down the land.

— *Madeleine S. Butcher*

News of the Week

A raft of geese had gathered in glorious
babble and grunt, lifting in a lazy 'V'.
Spotted towhees are active, repeating
their oddly sweet, oft told stories.

Delicate white Indian plums are blooming,
disrupting the dull brown—the first unfurling
of flags proclaiming we are about to turn
a celestial corner.

I'll leave it at that. That's the top noteworthy
items of the week, the breaking news flash,
and all we really need to know.
That's it.

— *Lowell Jones*



AUTHORS

Judith Azrael's writing appeared in about 60 magazines and anthologies and is archived at Western Washington University. Published books include *Fire in August*, *Fields of Lights*, *Antelope are Running*, *Apple Tree Poems*, and the story collection *Wherever I Wander*.

Eliza Bishop Steinbacher is a poet, editor, lecturer, yogini, and truth seeker. She has published a chapbook, *One*, and a full length book, *Prostration of Love*. She teaches yoga and meditation retreats throughout the USA and Europe. (www.elizabishop.com)

Madeleine S. Butcher, former dancer and film editor, lives on San Juan Island where she takes long walks, teaches Pilates, and writes poetry. Her work appeared in the *California Quarterly*, *West Marin Review*, and the anthology *Grateful Conversations* (Moonrise Press, 2018).

Nita Couchman is a daughter, sister, wife, mother, grandmother, and friend. She finds inspiration for her writing from the natural world and from the limitless wonders waiting to be discovered. Nita lives with her husband, Steven Jehly, on Orcas Island.

Susie Foster Hale is a poet, essayist, and educator living on San Juan Island for over 30 years. She has been published in literary journals including *Shark Reef Literary Magazine*, *Soundings Review*, and the *Blue Heron Review*. Hiking with her little dog, Rascal, is her greatest joy.

Emily Geyman felt "at home" on her first visit to San Juan Island with no idea then that she would become the high school counselor or ride her horse in County Fair barrel races. Living in a magnificent, unique environment for 51 years has made this island her treasured home.



Sandora Hedrich finds the many facets of the natural world, embracing all life, the inspiration for her photography and poetry — moving from seen to unseen, tangible to ephemeral, the magnificence waiting just under that leaf, around the corner, or in a passing smile.

Ladd Thomas Holroyd is a poet and musician living on San Juan Island for the past 25 years. He graduated from the University of Washington in 1991 with a degree in Ethnomusicology and has published poems with Floating Bridge Press in Seattle.

Lowell Jons grew up in a small Iowa farm community and, after college, worked for Olympic National Park. He found his second home here and settled into this neck of the woods for life. Adventure is his second nature, including his poetry, and he invites you to come along for the ride.

Amber R. Lewis, a retired nurse, lives on Decatur Island overlooking Rosario Strait and Mt. Baker. From her cabin's high bank porch perch, she glimpses eagles soaring by. A nearby nest provides sweet inspiration; a poem of baby eagle's first flight is only a pen stroke away.

Lynne Mercer moved to San Juan Island in 1974. She has seen a lot of changes. Some of the trees are gone. Some are a lot bigger.

Tara Mesalik MacMahon lives in Friday Harbor with husband, Paul, and rescue dog, Hector. She is a Pushcart Prize nominee and 2020 Open Country Press Chapbook Contest winner (*Barefoot Up the Mountain*) with recent publications and honors from *Jabberwock*, *Nimrod*, *Poet Lore*, and Red Hen Press.

Jeff Otis has written about observations of life and matters of the heart since his high school girlfriend broke up with him 50 years ago. Through this blessing in disguise that only his dog was aware of at the time, he's discovered what a wonderful mystery life is.

Cynthia Rogers was born and raised in the Yakima Valley and moved to San Juan Island eight years ago with her husband and best friend of fifty-plus years. As a cancer survivor, her most important life lesson is that to live life is to love life; just kick back and enjoy the journey.



Wendy Smith is a gemologist, jeweler, and writer on San Juan Island. Her love for writing started with journaling while backpacking around Europe in the late 80's and has evolved into blogging as *Gems: a tour guide* and writing poetry when inspired by the world around her.

Keri Talbott's 35 years on San Juan Island have given her a deep appreciation for the arts. She's inspired by the talent and encouragement the community has shown her as it has helped her foster interest and appreciation for the arts in her two daughters.

Marianne Tynan, a certified marine naturalist, acupuncturist, artist, poet, and amateur nature photographer, was inspired by her involvement with the Island Marble Butterfly Habitat Expansion Project through her work at the San Juan Preservation Trust.

Paul S. Walsh and his wife, Valarie, have been islanders for over 20 years and are avid amateur astronomers. He is a regular with the library's open-mic writers group and, though retired, works as a volunteer web master for traumatic brain injury organizations around the country.

William Jay Weissinger is a stone sculptor and writer. His poetry and fiction have appeared in journals and in regional anthologies. His nonfiction articles have been published in *Sail Magazine* and other publications. He lives on San Juan Island. (WeissingerStudios.com)

Ed Wilson and his wife, Kristen, moved to Orcas Island in 1990 from Kansas City, where Ed was an advertising writer, producer, and creative director. On Orcas, Ed began to study and write poetry with friends. Now poetry is a treasured part of his life.





ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Poetry

is a way of seeing our world through another's mind.

The Town of Friday Harbor's **Poetry Gardens** have been created as a way of bringing poetry into our daily experiences. The poems within this booklet were selected in a contest held for islanders of all ages living in the San Juan Islands.

You will find the Poetry Gardens at:

- Mullis Community Senior Center on Nash Street near the intersection with Caines Street
- Reed Street beside the U.S. Post Office
- San Juan Community Theatre on Second Street at the intersection with Blair Avenue
- Spring Street Landing at the Port of Friday Harbor below Downriggers Restaurant



Link to the Poetry
Gardens website
and ebook

