

At Sanborn Mills Farm, preserving the past and planning for the future go hand in hand!

Sanborn Mills Farm

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www.sanbornmills.org

Winter work . . .

While some animals - like bears and woodchucks - sleep all winter using up stored energy for when the light and warmth return, people on farms need to spend the winter working both outside and in.

There is snow to be plowed, horses & cattle to be fed and equipment to be repaired before spring. Our farm staff is busy repairing equipment for a new grain program starting with our disc harrow that dates from the early 1900s.



Ray Ramsey repairing our disc harrow.

After the horses plow the fields, the disc harrow will be pulled through them to break up clods of earth left by the plow. Other types of harrows include spike tooth and chain. Harrowing is one step in evening the ground for spring sowing. When sowing grain, it is especially important to have a smooth bed for an even depth in seed planting.



The new wooden bearing.

Our Farm Educator Ray Ramsey discovered the bearings that keep the discs rotating smoothly and evenly on the shaft of our harrow were completely worn out. Back in the day, metal bearings would have been costly, so the bearings in our disc harrow are made out of wood. Our carpenters have worked with Ray to make new wooden bearings that should keep the discs rolling smoothly next season and beyond.



The new bearing sits inside the housing that holds the shaft of the disc harrow.

Planning for our Sally Garden . . .

At Sanborn Mills Farm, we are interested in preserving traditional craft skills and - when possible - sourcing the materials right here on the farm. This goal connects us back to the days when the Sanborns relied on their ingenuity, hard work, and what they could grow and gather on the farm to survive and prosper.

For some time, we have been harvesting and milling wood to build with, but we are exploring expanding our efforts in other areas including growing willow for making baskets, fences, and furniture.



Willow patch in spring at Dunbar Gardens.

There are over 400 species of willow and some of them are suitable for making things. Different species of willow (Genus *Salix*) range widely in color - from reds, oranges, and browns to greens. The plants are most successfully started in the spring and once mature, the plants grow into a thick hedge and are pruned back to ground level (also called coppiced) in the winter so that they produce long, straight, and very flexible rods the next growing season. The roots are attracted to water so it is a bad idea to plant them near a septic system!



Willow rods harvested and sorted by color at Dunbar Gardens.

Willow is unique in that once soaked, the rods can be bent without cracking to create a tremendous range of forms. Additionally, willow contains acetylsalicylic acid, a traditional pain reliever. There are those that say "in the old country," a willow patch was referred to as a Sally Garden. Explanations on the origin of the expression are scarce but it seems that "Sally" is derived from the Latin "*Salix*."



Wendy Jensen working on a willow basket and using an antique iron as a center weight.

Folklore has it that Sally Gardens took on an association with romance. The idea is that one could set off for a local willow patch explaining that they needed a remedy for a headache, but disappear into the dense rods to meet a sweetheart away from the prying eyes of town folk. The poem by the Irish poet William Butler Yeats published in 1889, reinforces this notion.

Down by the Salley Gardens

*Down by the salley gardens my love and I did meet;
She passed the salley gardens with little snow-white feet.
She bid me take love easy, as the leaves grow on the tree;
But I, being young and foolish, with her would not agree.*

*In a field by the river my love and I did stand,
And on my leaning shoulder she laid her snow-white hand.
She bid me take life easy, as the grass grows on the weirs;
But I was young and foolish, and now am full of tears.*

A Sally Garden typically takes three years to establish, so we'll keep you posted on the progress of ours and on what we make. There are so many possibilities!



Willow patch in winter at Dunbar Gardens.



Garden gate & fences by Wendy Jensen.



Willow basket by Wendy Jensen.

Wendy is a master basket maker from Monterey, MA and will be teaching a basket workshop at Sanborn Mills Farm on June 30 using reed. [Click here](#) for more info.

References for this article and more information on willow:

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<http://slowplayers.org/2015/02/15/sally-gardens-g/>
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Harvesting expressions of Olde . . .

While we wait for "winter's back to break," we've been collecting some New England sayings that have some age and character to them. Our project began with a suggestion from carpenter Emma Woodward and grew legs when Jake Farmer who has a love of history and family stories did some research. We suspect you have some special family expressions too so please send us a note and we'll add them to our growing collection!

"He was so crooked, they dug his grave with a corkscrew."

"The mill stones of time grind slow but exceedingly well."

"It's hot as blue blazes."

"Don't get your hair in a braid."

"Tougher than woodpecker lips."

"She was madder than a wet hen."

"It's rarer than hen's teeth."

"He can't hit the broad side of a barn."

"He's slow as cold molasses."

"That guy can talk the ear off corn."

Email your contributions to: lynn@sanbornmills.org



Granite mill stone from our Grist Mill.



Our history fan & millworker Jake Farmer.

Join us at the Old House & Barn Expo . . .

The [Old House & Barn Expo](#) sponsored by the New Hampshire Preservation Alliance will be on March 24 & 25 in the historic armory at the Radisson Hotel in Manchester. Stop by and see our booth!

The expo is held every two years and features displays, demonstrations and lectures covering all facets of preserving and caring for your historic home or barn.

[Click here](#) for more information.



Algren & Sons booth at the 2016 Expo.



Richard Nylander of Historic New England gave a lecture on historic wallpapers at the 2016 Expo.

Oxen workshops start up in April . . .



If you are looking for a way to integrate draft animal power into your farm operation, our oxen workshops are the place to learn from experienced teamsters. *Oxen Basics for the Teamster and Team* starts off the season April 21 & 22. [Click here](#) for more info.

How to visit the farm . . .



Though we are not open for visitors on a daily basis, group tours can be scheduled from spring to fall. [Click here](#) for more information on how to arrange for a tour.

The best time to see the farm is during the annual [Open House & Water-Powered Mill Demonstration Day](#).

Photo Credits for this eNews:

The two images of willow growing and one of harvested willow rods leaning on a barn are courtesy of Steven Lospalluto and Katherine Lewis of Dunbar Farms, Mount Vernon, Washington. [Click here](#) for more on Dunbar Farms.

The image of a willow gate and fences is courtesy of Wendy G. Jensen. [Click here](#) for more on Wendy.

All other photos are by Lynn Martin Graton, SMF Programs & Research.



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A traditional New Hampshire farm and nonprofit organization dedicated to sustainability, creativity, and preserving folklife skills and agricultural knowledge so that the best of the past can help shape our future.

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