

Sowing Seeds of Hope for Survivors of Sexual Abuse

SAFE San Juans (SAFE) is working with the San Juan County Land Bank's Salish Seeds Project to sow seeds of hope during Sexual Assault Awareness Month (April). Staff from SAFE San Juans have been placing Salish wildflower seeds in specially designed packets with art and messages of hope for those who have suffered from sexual abuse – this year's goal is to hand out 2000 seed packets. It is the perfect collaboration for two organizations whose goal is to help restore and provide hope.

The Salish Seeds Project is a partnership between the Land Bank and San Juan Preservation Trust dedicated to restoring native wildflowers and grasses in the San Juan Islands. Plants and seeds of species native to island grasslands, oak savannahs, and rocky meadows are produced at a nursery located at Red Mill Farm in San Juan Valley.

SAFE San Juans is a local non-profit agency dedicated to supporting survivors of domestic violence (DV) and sexual assault/abuse (SA) while working to reduce abuse. With offices in Friday Harbor, Eastsound and Lopez Village, SAFE's confidential and free services include 24/7 crisis support, safety planning, advocacy (legal, medical, financial, etc.), emergency safe shelter, support groups, and professional counseling/therapy for survivors.

SAFE and the Salish Seeds Project chose *Prunella Vulgaris* as the native wildflower through which to acknowledge the suffering of those who have been sexually abused, and to honor the strength survivors show in coming back from their trauma. *Prunella Vulgaris* is a perennial in the Lamiaceae (mint) family. It appears in the gardens, meadows and roadsides of the Pacific Coast in late Spring/early Summer and is known as "Self Heal". Its blue-violet to white flowers are a favorite of bumblebees and butterflies, and they favor open settings like fields and gardens. Its common name derives from wide use as an herbal remedy for throat ailment; however, the native peoples of the Pacific Northwest used it for a wide range of purposes. The Salish and Quinalt peoples used Self Heal as a skin medicine; the Haudenosaunee as an infusion for shortness or heaviness of breath, and the Niitsitapi as an eyewash to keep eyes moist in harsh winds. A tribute to the inner strength shown by sexual assault survivors, this beautiful perennial returns year after year to usher in a new season of life. As is true with many survivors of abuse, patience is called for since the flowers bloom in the plant's second year.



The art and messages SAFE shares on the seed packages point to hope beyond suffering and hope for growth. Just as the Salish Seeds Project staff can assist anyone with plant selection and planning for projects, staff at SAFE San Juans are available to help anyone who needs to talk about abuse they have suffered (or are suffering).

Seeds are available beginning April 1 at SAFE's three offices or at other participating locations around the county. Information on where to pick up your seeds can be found on SAFE San Juans website (www.safesj.org)

If you have experienced Domestic Violence or Sexual Abuse, SAFE's advocates and therapists can help you. For information go to www.safesj.org, visit a SAFE office in Friday Harbor, Eastsound, or Lopez Village, or call 360-378-8680. If you are in a DV or SA crisis, SAFE advocates can be reached 24/7 on SAFE's crisis line by calling 360-378-2345.