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FREE EVERY THURSDAY



Photo by Scott Melnick

Ready for some shellfish?

BOW — While the advent of the fall football season signals an end to many of the area's favorite crops, those who love shellfish can find it deliciously available all year around just around the bend on Chuckanut Drive at the Taylor Shellfish Farm. Recently featured on the Discovery Channel's ever-popular show "Dirty Jobs" and feted in the national press as having the best oysters in the country, the retail store is open every day to lucky local residents. *For more on your favorite bivalves, see p. 8.*



GET THEM WHERE THEY'RE FRESHEST

Shellfish grown at Taylor's are shipped around the world

'A pleasant walk, a pleasant talk, Along the briny beach.'

Lewis Carroll
'The Walrus and the Carpenter'

"O oysters, come and walk with us!"

The Walrus did beseech.

by **SCOTT MELNICK**
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It's been a local icon for many years, but most people know little about the Taylor Shellfish Farm located along Chuckanut Drive just south of the Whatcom/Skagit border in Bow. It was first actively

The farm has about 20 employees and produces a large variety of shellfish, spread out over its 1800 acres of tideland. The assortment of shellfish includes Manila clams, Pacific oysters, Eastern oysters, Kumamoto oysters, European flat oysters and geoduck clams. There is also a retail store on the location for people to get the freshest shellfish available. Before Taylor Shellfish took over the company, the only shellfish raised there were Pacific oysters for shucking.

gravel for clams. This gives the seed something to attach itself to, and in the case of the oyster shell it gives the oyster seed a host from which they can start forming their shell.

ate. Taylor Shellfish spends a great deal of effort in educating the local population on what they can do to help.

awareness of water quality issues," said Bill Taylor, president of the company.

The company's seed sales throughout their locations provide

Oyster seed starts out in holding tanks on the shore on a bag of shells. After a few months, when the seed has grown to about the size of a fingernail, the bags are moved to the bay and spread out over the beds. There are usually about 40 oysters per bag. From this point it takes approximately three to four

The main sources of pollutants are upstream water run-off, either from agricultural or manufacturing production along the Samish River. Another problem they face comes from storm drain run-off, or old septic systems that may fail or leak.

"It's a challenge for us in all of our growing areas, Samish included.

"We work closely with communities in Edison and Blanchard to get their septic systems fixed," said Bill Dewey, who handles media relations for the

Shellfishing in Samish Bay provides about \$1.1 million in revenue for all the companies located there.

All the shellfish at the farm start as larvae, or "seed,"

as it's referred to in the industry. The seed for Taylor Shellfish are produced at hatcheries at other locations.

The seed is so small that 10 million oyster seed can fit in a typical cottage cheese container.

The process for raising the seed to adult shellfish varies slightly from species to species, but for the most part it involves spreading the seed on incoming tides, along a bed of bagged oyster shells, or pea

years for the shellfish to reach maturity, depending on the size of the shellfish desired.

The shellfish produced at the farm are shipped throughout the country and the world. The geoduck clams in particular are a favorite in Japan and other Asian countries.

One of the most important difficulties that the farm faces is cleanliness of the water: without a clean bay their facility cannot operate.

company and was the former site manager at their Samish location.

Another way the company helps promote clean waters is through their seed sales and through events like the Samish Bay Bivalve Bash, featuring the Low Tide Mud Run, where contestants get to compete in a 250-yard dash through the mud at low tide. The next Bivalve Bash is scheduled for July 14 of next year.

"The idea is to have some summer fun on the beach while raising



Top: Taylor Shellfish Farm, Above: Sorting the mussels

photo by Scott Melnick

seed for local and hobby shellfish farmers, giving the company the opportunity to reach even more people with their education.

Despite their efforts, the southern area of the bay is sometimes in danger of being listed as prohibited for shellfishing. Within this past week, the area was declared open, after a summer of on-again, off-again.

If you're interested in learning more about Taylor Shellfish Farms, seed sales, or just want to pick up some of the freshest shellfish available, you can contact the farm at 360-766-6002, or visit their store on Chuckanut Drive next to the Oyster Creek Inn. Tours of the location are also available. *WI

@ www.taylorshellfishfarms.com



The geoduck (gooey-duck) clam is the largest burrowing clam in the world

photo by Scott Melnick

worked as a shellfish farm starting in the 1880s by Japanese immigrants. The farm was sold to the Steele family in 1921, and then sold to Taylor Shellfish Co. in 1991.

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