



PROCLAMATION

A PROCLAMATION by the City of Bainbridge Island City Council, Bainbridge Island, Washington, that honors and recognizes Akio Suyematsu, a Bainbridge Island farmer, whose life work and strong efforts to establish a sustainable farming ethic on Bainbridge Island, inspired the creation of the Bainbridge Island Farms Overlay District, and a local farming management program at the City of Bainbridge Island.

WHEREAS, on July 31, 2012, Akio Suyematsu, born on a small farm in Port Madison, Bainbridge Island, passed away surrounded by his family and friends, ending an early era of Island homestead farmers, while beginning a new chapter in farming cooperatives established by a unique partnership between Akio Suyematsu and the City of Bainbridge Island;

WHEREAS, on October 30, 2011, Akio Suyematsu, the last Japanese American farmer on Bainbridge Island, and a living link with the Island's farming tradition, celebrated his 90th birthday with family, farmers, farm interns, and friends; and

WHEREAS, Akio Suyematsu, was a local farming legend, who was a pioneer of organic and sustainable farming methods, and will always be remembered for producing the finest Island strawberries, raspberries, and pumpkins; and

WHEREAS, local farmers credit Akio Suyematsu's vision, knowledge, and work ethic for keeping the Bainbridge Island farming tradition alive by leading through example; putting in long hours with no complaints and working side by side in the fields with the next generation of farmers and young farm interns; and

WHEREAS, Akio Suyematsu sold land to Gerard & Joann Bentryn below market rate with the stipulation that no houses could be built and the land was to be conserved for farming; and

WHEREAS, in 2001, Akio Suyematsu sold part of his beloved farmland to the City of Bainbridge Island with the right for him to farm it for the rest of his life and with the expectation it be kept in perpetuity as working farmland; and

WHEREAS, in 2006, Akio Suyematsu was featured prominently in "The Earth Knows My Name," a book about immigrant farming families by Yale University scholar Patricia Klindienst; and

WHEREAS, in 2010, Friends of the Farms, a Bainbridge Island farming advocacy group, named an annual farming preservation award after him, and he was the first recipient of his namesake award, The Akio Suyematsu Award; and

WHEREAS, the Suyematsu Farm established in 1928, has become the longest, continuously operating working landscape in Kitsap County and is now known as the Suyematsu/Bentryn Farm, a cooperative venture of several farms and farmers including Bainbridge Island Vineyards & Winery, Bainbridge Island Farms, Butler Green Farms, Laughing Crow Farms, Perennial Vintners, and Paulson Farms; and

WHEREAS, Akio Suyematsu's legacy shall give new generations of Bainbridge Islanders an understanding of the Island community's farming heritage, its history, and the importance of growing food local;

NOW THEREFORE I, Debbi Lester, the Mayor of Bainbridge Island, on behalf of the City Council, proclaim August 19, 2012 as

"AKIO SUYEMATSU DAY"

in the City of Bainbridge Island and encourage all citizens to join me in this special observance, by remembering Akio Suyematsu's many contributions to the heritage, preservation, and continuation of farming on Bainbridge Island.

SIGNED this 15th day of August 2012.

Debbi Lester, Mayor