19th Annual
Native Plant Sale and EXPO

Open Sale Saturday, March 24, 2012 • 9am-2pm
On the campus of Whatcom Community College

Pre-Order Sale Friday, March 23, 9am-3:30pm

The native plant sale is not only a place to get low-cost native plants, it is also a gathering of master gardeners, native plant enthusiasts and conservationists. Customers of the native plant sale are as varied as the county’s landscape. A farmer may be getting trees to install a windbreak on their farm. A forest landowner may be stocking up on young conifers to plant the next generation of their woodland. A neighborhood association may be acquiring evergreen shrubs to beautify their green spaces. A backyard gardener may be buying flowering shrubs to attract pollinators to help pollinate their small fruit trees. We all benefit from the thousands of plants installed every year in Whatcom County soil. Our sale is dedicated to supplying Whatcom County residents with a diverse selection of bare root native trees (over 40 species), shrubs and rooted perennial. We strive to create a fun atmosphere and speedy check-out line!

From Bareroot to Forest

Often times we see those small bareroot trees at the Annual Native Plant Sale and think, what could those amounts to? It must take forever for those tiny plants to grow into trees that would fill a forest. Well, Lance and Julie Toomey of the Lake Terrell Watershed show us that those small trees can grow into a forest in no time at all. Lance and Julie have been reforesting their 40-acres using trees purchased at the Annual Native Plant Sale since it began in 1993. They have purchased and planted over 2,000 native trees and shrubs on their property, so many that they are running out of room! Some of the first trees they planted are now achieving heights of 30 feet and most of those trees are still growing strong! Through their commitment to reforestation they have created a backyard value refuge and benefit to wildlife and water and air quality are improved. Lance and Julie Toomey enjoyed by all of us. Thank you Lance and Julie for supporting our plant sale through the years and making our environment a better place to live!

WCD Seeks Board Supervisor Candidates

Whatcom Conservation District is seeking board supervisor candidates for one publically elected position and one position appointed by the Washington State Conservation Commission. Board supervisors are public officials who serve without compensation and set policy and direction for the Conservation District. An eligible candidate must be a registered voter and may be required to own land or operate a farm. Supervisor commitments include monthly board meetings, committee meetings and special events.

If you are interested in applying for the appointed position, please contact WCD for the necessary paperwork. You can call (360) 354-2035, ext.101 (Mon.-Fri. 8a-4p), contact us by email at wcd@whatcomcd.org, or come into our office for additional election procedure details. The candidate filing deadline for the elected position is February 14, 2012 by 4 PM. If you are interested in applying for the appointed position, please contact the WCD or visit the Conservation Commission website at www.scc.wa.gov or contact them at (360) 407-6200. Applications must be received by the Conservation Commission no later than March 31, 2012.

Larry Davis Recognized as “Young Tiger” by the Washington Assoc. of Conservation Districts

At its annual meeting in November, the Washington Assoc. of Conservation Districts (WACD) bestowed the 2011 Wayne Reid “Young Tiger”. Award upon Larry Davis. This prestigious award is reserved for a district supervisor or associate supervisor who has served for less than six years in that capacity and has made an extraordinary effort to assist their district to meet its goals and objectives in a short period of time.

Immediately upon becoming a Whatcom Conservation District Supervisor in 2010, Larry embraced his position with zeal and energy, volunteering to serve on a multitude of federal and state committees that facilitate the delivery of conservation on the ground. A few include:

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Shellfish Initiative Targets Polluted Whatcom Waters

On December 9, 2011 Governor Gregoire announced a new “Washing-
ton Shellfish Initiative” to promote clean water and create jobs in the State’s aquaculture industry. This includes es-
tablishing a Pollution Action Team (PAT) comprised of local, state and federal agencies to clean up streams and rivers contaminated with fecal coliform bacteria (FC). This bacterium is often associated with other pathogens that can cause ill-
ess and death. FC can get into the river from failing septic systems and animal defecating in or near the water. Typically, the highest levels of FC in the river are detected after heavy rainfalls. Eating shellfish, fruits and vegetables exposed to polluted water presents a significant health risk.

The Nooksack River and Drayton Har-
bor watersheds of What-
com County have been
vexed by bacteria pollu-
tion for decades. Bacteria
levels in the Nooksack
River were reduced signif-
icantly in 2005 and hun-
dreds of acres of shellfish
beds were reopened to
harvest. However, levels of
FC are on the rise. This causes concern to
the Lummi Nation that
they may be closed for harvest again.

The Lummi rely heavily upon the Portage
Bay shellfish harvest area at the mouth of the
river for commercial, ceremonial and sus-
tenance purposes. There has been no
similar improvement in Drayton Harbor
where discharges from California and Dakota
rivers frequently and persistently contain levels of pathogens too high for safe
shellfish harvest and safe family
recreation.

Farmers who withdraw water out of
the creek for crop irrigation are also con-
cerned about water quality. Shellfish and
crop farmers want to provide assurance
to consumers that their food products
are safe. Evidently, the Governor and
other leaders strongly agree as Whatcom
County has been selected as the place
where the PAT will start first.

Managing Your Farm for Clean Water

Whatcom County is prized for its
beauty, abundance of wildlife and pro-
ductive farmlands. This is due in large
part to the watersheds that feed and support us.

Water Resource Inventory Area
1 (WRIA1) has conducted in-stream
analysis throughout Whatcom County
for over 10 years. Starting in 2004, water
quality data has been taken monthly at
25 stations throughout the County (see Map) by the Northwest Indian College.
Most of the stations are located along
impaired or sensitive watersbodies within
intensive farming areas. Levels of fecal
coliform bacteria are often referred to as
“edge” indicators because they allow us to assess the impact from livestock, wildlife
and human sources. The Department of
Ecology (DOE) sets limits on safe levels of
FC exposure to shellfish harvest areas
and direct human exposure.

How does your watershed look?

This map shows the FC impact level in
the monitored watersheds of Whatcom
County. Updated monthly using real-time
data, the map can be found on our web-
site: www. whatco-md. com/watershed-
health-assessment. Once there, click on
your location and a box with your water-
shed information will pop up.

If your watershed is yellow or red, assess your own practices to see if you are a contributor. In most cases simple
changes in your management can make big impacts.

What can you do to help?

If you live in an impaired water-
shed, here are some ways you can help
protect water quality:
• Keep manure piles covered and don’t let them drain to a waterbody.
• If you do live in an impaired water-
shed, use water wisely:
• • Increase the use of water from treated sources
• • Treat your septic system
• • Treat your well

For more information on CREP, contact Sonya Schaller
at 360-354-2035, ext. 3.
Whatcom County farmers are renowned for the red raspberries, blueberries and seed potatoes they grow, and for dairies where some of the highest producing cows in the world are maintained. Drive down any north county road in mid-summer and you behold a rich mosaic of contrasting colors, shapes and textures created by the wide variety of crops produced here. Less obvious to the eye are the crops farmers grow to protect the environment. Unlike conventional crops that are harvested to produce an income, these crops are planted to protect water quality. They harvest nutrients, sediment and pathogens and improve habitat conditions for fish and wildlife. They include cover crops, hedgerows, riparian forest buffers, field borders, filter strips and conservation cover. Different environmental opportunities call for different environmentally protective crops to meet specific challenges. Not all agricultural producers choose to plant these protective crops, but we are fortunate that many do. Use this guide to help identify these crops and gain an appreciation for the environmental benefits they provide as well as the farmers that have chosen to grow them.

Cover Crops
What are they: Grasses, legumes and other herbaceous plants established for seasonal cover and conservation purposes.

Environmental benefits:
- Reduce soil losses from wind and water erosion
- Help conserve residual soil nitrogen
- Increase soil organic matter and improve soil health
- Protect groundwater by taking up residual nutrients
- Provide feed for migratory waterfowl
- Potential opportunity for a double-crop of pasture, slage or grain

*(top) Annual (Italian) ryegrass over seeded in slage corn when it is only in the third to fourth leaf stage of growth (this form of cover crop is referred to as a “relay crop”).
*(right) Spring barley planted between rows of raspberries.

Riparian Forest Buffers
What are they: Areas adjacent to and up-gradient from water courses and water bodies that are predominantly trees and/or shrubs.

Environmental benefits:
- Provide an increased level of the same benefits as hedgerows because they are wider.
- Well-established Riparian Forest Buffer is “free to grow” after five years of maintenance.

Field Borders
What are they: A strip of permanent vegetation established at the edge of a field or around the perimeter of a field.

Environmental benefits:
- Keep water cleaner by reducing sediment and pathogen delivery to ditches
- Reduce costs of maintaining ditches
- Reduce entry of pesticides and nutrients to surface water
- Can be managed to provide food and cover for wildlife

Field border between blueberry rows and a roadside ditch.

Filter Strips
What are they: A strip or area of herbaceous vegetation situated between crop land and environmentally sensitive areas.

Environmental benefits:
- Provide increased levels of the same benefits as Field Borders because they are usually wider.
- Filter strip between slage corn and a hedgerow.

Conservation Cover
What are they: Permanent plant cover (usually a mixture of perennial grasses) that is grown between rows in blueberry fields, ornamental nurseries, Christmas trees, orchards and vineyards.

Environmental benefits:
- Reduce soil erosion
- Increase water infiltration
- Reduce soil compaction
- Reduce dust which helps protect crops from spider mites
- Conserves cover between rows of blueberries.

Hedgerows
What are they: Trees and shrubs densely planted in straight rows to achieve a natural resource conservation purpose.

Environmental benefits:
- Stabilize slopes
- Reduce sediment build up in ditches
- Help maintain lower water temperatures
- Reduce spray drift
- Reduces weed/canopy growth
- Enhance fish and wildlife habitat
- Provide habitat for beneficial organisms like pollinators and pest predators

*(top) Hedgerow along Scott Creek. *(right) A single species hedge, next to a filter strip. *Cook Ditch, improvements water quality and reduces ditch maintenance.

A strip of permanent vegetation established at the edge or around the perimeter of a field.

WSU Whatcom County Extension Community First Garden Project

According to the USDA, around 15% of the world's food is now grown in urban areas. City and suburban agriculture takes the form of backyard, roof-top and balcony gardening, community gardening in vacant lots and parks, roadside urban fringe agriculture and livestock grazing in open space. Whatcom County is part of this movement and Washington State University Extension (Extension) has a program that assists the community. Throughout our county more people are growing their own food in urban and community settings. Urban and beginning gardeners benefit from our local farms and businesses that provide knowledge, supply equipment, soil amendments, seeds, etc. The Community First Garden Project (CFG) was started by Extension in 2008 through a grant from The Mary Reynolds Foundation. This program has helped to fund and support 8 community gardens and continues to provide opportunities locally.

The CFG Mission: To help expand local access to community gardens, improving self-sufficiency and local food security with nutritious, fresh produce; provide opportunities for environmental education and stewardship of land; and to help create neighborhood gathering places, while fostering cooperative, community-building relationships within neighborhoods.

What Extension Does: In the past 3 years, 12 mini grants have been provided to eligible garden groups. Helping develop a plan and goals, Extension works with groups who have a willingness and commitment to help others in need and help themselves to become more self-reliant. The grants cover items like soil, lumber, tools, seeds, starts and more. In the spring of 2011, 48 raised beds, 3 hoop houses and a variety of other structures were built. All built by volunteers working together to create their garden. The program also creates networks for gardeners to learn from each other, borrow tools, grow seed starts, host work-shops, etc. The food grown by families is shared and surplus food is donated to food banks. This project provides opportunities for neighbors to work side-by-side tending their garden plots while building a sense of self-reliance. There are many ways to start a community garden and several things you’ll want to consider before you ever dig the first hole. Please contact Beth Chisholm if you are interested in starting or joining a community garden. Visit the WSU Extension web page and check the garden map at www.snipurl.com/cfgmap.

Beth Chisholm, Master Gardeners & Community First Gardens
beth.chisholm@whatcom.edu (360) 676-6736 http://whatcom.wsu.edu/ag/gardening/cfg/

*This article has been edited for space. For the full text visit, http://whatcomcd.org/node/105.
**Whatcom Conservation District Supervisor Election Notice**

The WCD will hold its annual Supervisor Election from 9 am to 6 pm on Tuesday, March 13, 2012, at the WCD Office, 6975 Hananneg Road, Lynden, WA. Come vote in person!

Voting by mail: Registered voters that are interested in participating in the District election may request a mail-in ballot (absentee ballot). Please use the ballot request form located on the District’s website at www.whatcomcd.com. Mail-in ballot requests must be submitted before 4:00 PM on February 29, 2012. And, to be counted, all ballots must be postmarked by the day of the election, March 13, 2012.


WSU Skagit and Whatcom County Extensions are participating in a conference to be held simultaneously in 15 counties in throughout the State. Women face unique challenges in growing viable businesses in farming and ranching. Come connect with other women farmers, share experience, knowledge and resources. If you are interested in attending one of these workshops, please send your contact information to dkollock@wsu.edu and you will be notified of all upcoming news and details. Please type “Women in Ag” in the subject line. You can also call (509) 684-2588 or visit the website for more information: Womeninag.wsu.edu

**Fresh Food in Schools Summit, March 8, 2012**

The Washington Sustainable Food and Farming Network is conducting a full day conference on Monday, March 8, for educators, school food service staff and parents interested in Farm to School. Come network and attend workshops aimed at educating and creating the connections that are vital to having a successful farm to school program. You can get more information by contacting Rita Ordonez at (360) 336-9694 or rordonez@wsu.edu.

**4-H Super Saturday, March 10, 2012**

Super Saturday is a community wide event sponsored by 4-H Youth Development. There are workshops for youth in a wide variety of topics. Super Saturday will take place at Meridian High School March 10, 2012. For more information visit our website: http://whatcom.wsu.edu/4h/Events/super_saturday.htm

**Whatcom County Youth Fair, April 6-7, 2012**

The youth fair takes place at the Northwest Washington Fairgrounds in Lynden and is a fantastic place for youth to practice leadership and learn new skills related to their interests. To see more information on youth fair visit: http://whatcomcountyouthfair.webs.com/

**Join the 4-H Natural Resource Stewardship Revolution**

Visit our website at http://whatcom.wsu.edu/4h/rnsr where you will find over 25 outdoor, science-based activities focused on our local natural resources and the people that sustain them. Activities are designed for ages 10-16. For more information contact Michael Wallace at 676-6736, x.41

**Interested in Becoming a 4-H Leader?**

4-H Leaders nurture leadership, citizenship and life-skills in Whatcom youth and teens. To learn more about how to donate your time as a youth development volunteer please contact Mike Wallace at 676-6736 x 41. Project Leader Training in January, General Club Leader Training in April.

**Larry Davis Recognized as “Young Tiger” continued from page 1**

Elected member of the WACD board of officers and directors (representing the ten county Northwest Area); Chairman of the Northwest Agricultural Work Group; Member and prioritizes for financial assistance through the US Department of Agriculture Environmental Quality Incentives Program); and, a member of statewide technical advisory committee that advises the state office of the federal Natural Resources Conservation Service. Larry is a member of WACD’s Administrative Efficiencies Task Force (advising the Washington State Conservation Commission on the efficient and effective use of taxpayer dollars).

After receiving the award Larry said, “I’m honored to have been considered worthy of the award. It was unexpected recognition for simply attending to a responsibility to conservation. This is the only planet I will ever know. I just want to contribute toward improving the campsite.”

**WCD Hosts 2012 Regional Envirothon**

On Wednesday, April 18, 2012, WCD is hosting the NW Regional Envirothon at Tennant Lake in Ferndale. The event includes high school teams from Whatcom, Skagit, Snohomish, and King Counties. This annual natural resources competition is an opportunity for high school youth to demonstrate their knowledge and problem-solving skills about the topics of aquatic ecology, forestry, soils/land use and wildlife, as well as a current issue. The current issue for 2012 is Nonpoint Source Pollution/Low Impact Development.

Envirothon is a great opportunity for students to compete in a fun setting meeting people who work in environmental-related careers and to have a good time while learning more about environmental topics. Please contact Kate Lamson at WCD (klamson@whatcomcd.org or 360-354-2035, ext.119) if you have a group of interested students and would like to participate in this exciting event.

**The District Hires New Employees**

**Work Study Intern – Kate Lamson**

Kate joined the District in September 2011 as a work study intern from Whatcom Community College.

She earned her Bachelor’s degree in Forestry at Western Washington University. Kate worked for Skagit River Systems Cooperative as a Natural Resource Technician and is a fantastic place for youth to practice leadership and learn new skills related to their interests. To see more information on youth fair visit: http://whatcomcountyouthfair.webs.com/

**Voluntary Stewardship and Whatcom County Water Quality**

By Lindsay Taylor, RE Sources North Sound Baykeeper Team

One of the things I love about living here in Whatcom County is the abundance of water. We’re lucky to have so many beautiful lakes, a mighty river, and hundreds of creeks. We’ve got more than 200,000 residents, nearly 80,000 cows and 3 species of threatened salmon. We depend on the water flow and the clarity of our streams. For these reasons, and so many more, it is important that we protect our waterways and the clear cold water that moves through them.

Both the new VSP and the old Critical Areas Ordinance encourage stakeholders to develop and utilize watershed and farm plans that provide a framework for water resource management decisions and actions. Collaborating in this capacity to respond to community concerns about water issues is important, because the reputation of Whatcom County agriculture depends on abundant clear water.

RE Sources believes in working together as a community of residents, farmers, fishermen, environmentalists and recreationists to find creative solutions to our water quality problems. We support the protection of the critically important environments that keep our waters fishable, drinkable and free from contamination. Whatcom County agriculture is built on a legacy of clear blue water, and if we can find ways to take full advantage of our environmental protections and the incentive programs for farmers and other land owners that are already in place, we can meet on common ground: protecting both our common waters and our way of life as an agricultural community.

*This article has been edited for space. For the full text visit, http://whatcomcd.org/node/106*

**CAPR Says “Opt-Out” continued from page 2**

of the regulatory system is linked to the input of the problem. Gradual recognition of these inter-related problems has led to watershed planning, where the geographic scope of the effort is set by natural systems themselves, rather than government boundaries or parcel boundaries, and the product is a holistic and comprehensive management plan both fair and effective. These efforts succeed only when adequate capital is invested and when they operate “bottom up,” providing landowners with maxi- mum input and direction to the plan.

Late to the watershed planning party, the state Farm Bureau sat down with its long-time opponents, enviros and state agencies, to establish a program called Voluntary Stewardship. The program is poorly conceived, under-capitalized, and will transfer more power over local land use planning to the state. There is no need. Watershed planning in Whatcom County is ongoing on both a basin-wide and drainage-level scope. Rather than re-inventing the wheel at great risk, we should put more effort into keeping the existing wheels spinning. Opt out.

*This article has been edited for space. For the full text visit, http://whatcomcd.org/node/106*