21st Annual Native Plant Sale and EXPO
Open Sale Saturday, March 29, 2014 • 9am-2pm
On the campus of Whatcom Community College

Planting the Seeds for a Native Plant Tradition

One weekend every March, the Whatcom Conservation District organizes its biggest community event of the year. The District’s Annual Native Plant Sale has been providing low cost, native plants to the residents and visitors of Whatcom County for over 20 years! Since 1993, hundreds of thousands (yes that’s right!) of native plants have been sold to the community for use at the home, business, farm or even in local parks. Every year roughly 40 species of native, bare-root, conservation grade trees and shrubs plus potted perennials are available at a great price. Since it began in 1993 the purpose of the sale has been to promote stewardship of our natural resources and help get native plants in the ground.

Over the years, the sale has grown into a Native Plant and Environmental Extravaganza! Local specialty nurseries participate and sell unique species as well as provide great information on native plant gardening. Community groups also set up displays on a wide variety of topics involving salmon habitat recovery, bees, birds, mushrooms, noxious weeds, local business, conservation, and more.

The plant sale is the place to kick start your spring gardening. Whether a native plant enthusiast, back yard gardener, farmer, landscape professional, conservationist or just looking for a fun event to kick off your spring, the WCD Annual Native Plant Sale and Expo is the place to be.

As always, we strive to create a fun atmosphere and speedy check-out line! Food and entertainment are part of the event. Credit cards are now accepted.

ALL PROCEEDS OF OUR SALE SUPPORT WCD EDUCATION PROGRAMS.

Sprecher Family Invests in a Stream

Frank Corey
Resource Coordinator

In the summer of 2010, I was trying unsuccessfully to mediate a mitigation plan between the Butler Ditch District, the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife, and a landowner. The Ditch District had done some drainage maintenance work in Butler Ditch and Fish & Wildlife were asking for a 15 foot hedgerow planting along the stream to mitigate for the impacts. The landowner was selling the property and was not willing to allow any further work. Just as I thought the situation was hopeless I received a phone call from a potential buyer named Jeff Sprecher.

After explaining the situation to Jeff I asked if he would consider allowing the hedgerow planting along a short portion of his stream. He surprised me by saying yes; but only if I could plant a larger buffer along that stream and gardens, improving the pastures and now create shade. While some of the stream was well shaded by mature alders and maples the understory of the stream was 100% Himalayan blackberries. The blackberries were removed and native conifers planted. In total 2,332 native trees and shrubs were planted. However that year and every year the Sprecher’s have also been busy renovating the old farm house, planting orchards and gardens, improving the pastures and now adding to the barn and fields for sheep.

The highlight of the event was a kid’s 1k Smokey Sprint with over 30 of the cutest and most enthusiastic kids you could imagine. Following the kids run, the 5k racers wove through a combination of groomed forested trails and mowed open meadows around two large lakes. Use of the property was generously donated by ALCDA Intalco Works, the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the Custer Sportsmen Club. Another “highlight” was the start/finish line for the race, a highpoint on the property where three watersheds converge: Terrell Creek, Jordan Creek, and Cherry Point Coastal Creeks. Funding for the event was largely from an Environmental Protection Agency grant targeting water quality improvements in the Terrell Creek and Birch Bay Watersheds.

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In-Stream or Out - Getting to the Other Side

Larry Davis – Improving the Campsite through Service and Dedication

Larry was elected in December 2013 by the Washington Association of Conservation Districts (WACD) to a three-year term on the Washington State Conservation Commission (WSCC) to represent the 6th district. In his fifth year as a Whatcom County Commissioner, Larry has taken on many conservation roles at the state and federal levels. He brings to the Commission many years of successful public service and experience in policy development and organizational process.

His vision for the Commission is that it is viewed as the first and preferred point of contact on the role of sustainable conserva- tion for economic growth and quality of life. Larry would like to help the Commission to seize the lead in engaging a broader public dialogue on the importance of conservation to our quality of life and economic well-being.

In the 2009 annual report by the WSCC, Larry was quoted, “Becoming a conservation champion is one of the many personal values crystallized in my mind why conservation is so important: No planet, no civilization. One indisputable thing the Commission has learned is that we are the planet on which we live. In my lifetime, Earth is the only planet we will have the privilege of calling home. It is our collective obligation to do our part to take care of our corner of home, for ourselves and for future generations.”

Four years later, “Those words still keep me centered in my focus to improve the camp- site of healthy land, air and water.”

All of this Larry does on a volunteer basis while working full-time. Larry lives in Custer with his wife, Carolyn. Carolyn is a fourth grade teacher in Lynden who was recently recognized in May by the Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association as educator of the quarter.

Thank you and Congratulations to Larry and Carolyn for supporting and promot- ing the message of conservation and good stewardship.

Spring 2013 Amphibian Count

Pacific Chorus Frog

Amphibians are being counted in our county. The Whatcom County Amphibian Monitoring Project (WCAMP) came into being to do just that. Because amphibian species worldwide are in decline, this project hopes to gain more information about amphibian spe- cies and numbers here in Whatcom County. This project uses a “Citizen Science” approach to collect baseline information.

A network of citizen volunteers partici- pates in field surveys and collected data from mid- May to mid-September 2013 (this type of approach en- ables the collection of a large amount of data, as well as instills a sense of stewardship and education.

In-Stream crossings may be rendered impassable. Many streams in Whatcom County are not as clean as they look. Fecal coliform bacteria, pesticides, sediment, petroleum products, and heavy metals are all common contaminants found in our streams. There are many sources for these pollutants including urban sources like pavement and roof runoff and agricultural sources such as salt runoff. We must have clean water in our streams for crop irrigation, for fish to live, for kids to play in, and for healthy shellfish downstream. Everyone who lives or works near a stream must be a steward of the water resource. Sometimes an opportunity arises to make improvements to a farm property that helps to improve water quality while also improving efficiencies on the farm. Stream crossings are just such an opportunity.

Two major in-stream farm road crossings in Whatcom County were replaced by bridges in September of 2013. Sometimes called hardened crossings, in-stream crossings are places where farm vehicles and livestock cross through a streambed that was improved with compacted rock or concrete. Although once common, this type of crossing is not ideal because vehicles can contaminate the water with grease, oil, and heavy metals. There is also a very real danger of a major discharge from cargo such as pesticides or manure. Dur- ing high or even normal water levels, these crossings may be rendered impassable.

Recognizing this as a problem and hav- ing resources to help, District staff contacted two landowners: Shaminder Mallhi of Eagle Mountain Farms which straddles Fishtrap Creek north of Lynden and Kevin Sterk of the Sterk Dairy of Whatcom County which straddles Tenmile Creek south of Lynden. Both landowners agreed that their in-stream cross- ings could and should be upgraded.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) was able to fund bridges to replace the in-stream crossings with their Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Partnership. Contracts were signed in the summer of 2012. Both landowners decided to take advantage of the experience at the Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association (WESA) and agreed to let their staff handle permitting, contact- ing, and installation. Construction was com- pleted as planned this past fall. Fishtrap and Tenmile Creeks both flow unobstructed and clean below the new bridges with little risk of contamination from vehicles. Both land- owners also report a good experience and are very happy to have year round access to their farm fields.

Our entire community benefits from these farmers willingness to improve their own prac- tices and from having programs like these that make help possible. Thanks to Eagle Mountain Farms and the Sterk Dairy for being such out- standing stewards of their water.

Larry Davis

Growing Veterans: Growing Stewardship, Leadership, Community and Food, Locally

By Chris Brown

Director of Growing Veterans

Have you heard about Growing Veterans yet? They are a 501(c)(3) nonprofit project led by military veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan who are creating personal and professional develop- ment opportunities for their fellow veterans while harnessing their skills to strengthen local food systems. With millions of dollars poured into training our nation’s military, veterans enter civilian life with many skills that are untapped by the general workforce. Skills like leadership, teamwork, decisiveness under stress, attention to detail, and organizational operations and development are all included. Coincidentally, there are also skills that Growing Veterans is finding to be very helpful on the farm and in strengthening local food systems.

Whether a veteran is working on the Grow- ing Veterans farm helping with food production, or doing a regional research study comparing soil qualities on farms around Whatcom and Skagit counties-veterans involved with Growing Veterans are using the skills they’ve gained in the military to support our local food system and simultaneously create regional aware- ness around issues pertaining to food, as well as veterans who are transitioning home. Veterans who are going to school at our local colleges or universities under the GI Bill are also focusing their coursework in ways that develop Growing Veterans’ operations, as well as their own resumes. Similarly, Growing Veterans serves as a host site for Post 9/11 veterans who want to serve in Fellowships through the national non- profit, The Mission Continues. Fellowships are designed similar to internships in that they are catered to the individual veteran’s future goals and combined to fit in with Growing Veterans’ organizational development.

While most of the veterans involved are Post 9/11 era veterans, they also have local veterans of the Korean, Vietnam, and Bosnian wars who are involved in the project's development by networking with local farmers and businesses and getting the Growing Veterans crew the resources they need to support their operations. Having grown over $60,000 in market value pro- duce last season on their 3 acre farm, Growing Veterans has goals to double their income next year through an increase in farm production as well as a major push for private donations and grants. If you’d like to taste the fruits of their labor, sign up for Growing Washington’s Com- munity Supported Agriculture (CSA) program next season! Information about the CSA and their Food Boxes can be found here: http://www.growinglewashington.org/foodbox/. They are also hoping to support local farm- ers by connecting them with local veterans via their website’s Drop Offs. If you have a volunteer, internship, or employment opportunity that you’d like to have a local veteran fill, fill out the short Drop Off form and they will post it on their website! You can follow what they are up to or get involved by visiting their website (grow- ingveterans.org) or finding them on Facebook.

With support from the Whatcom County Enhancement Association (NSEA) and the Washington Association of Conservation Districts (WACD) growing Veterans and the Sterk Dairy for being such out- standing stewards of their water.

Larry Davis

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The Saturday before Earth Day in April 2013 may have been windy and gray but for those along the South Fork of the Nooksack River, it was a momentous day. As the site of a celebration of ecosystem restoration, and our partners and donors.

Pies and The Woods Coffee. We thank all of our partners and donors.

The Series occurs monthly and open to all ag producers. All past talks are recorded and a progr....

Helping Producers Protect Water Quality through Education

• Dairy Squadron - See above. 
• Microbes and Manure Spreading Advisory - A real-time map that shows the three-day forecast. (http://www.whatcomdairy.org/ma曼联manureSpreading)
• Application Risk Management (ARM) - A program that gives farmers a field level and seasonal analysis on risk associated with manure application to specific farm fields, as well as guidance to mitigate the risk of pollution to surface and groundwater.
• Publications and Links - Online webpage of references that is continually updated with new material.

The Tenmile Creek Clean Water Project

Submitted by Lee First Pollution Prevention Specialist, North Whatcom Conservation District

RE Sources for Sustainable Communities

An exciting citizen-driven project is under way in the Tenmile Watershed. The project’s goal is to reduce fecal coliform (FC) pollution in this watershed. The Tenmile Creek Clean Water Project is being led by the RE Sources’ Baykeeper team and funded by the Rose Foundation. Over 40 community members attended the first meeting, many volunteering to be committee members. The committee meets monthly, provides oversight to the project, reviews monthly FC bacteria sample results, and is crafting a work plan to lower FC levels.

At the first meeting of the stakeholder committee, a number of questions were asked that the Baykeeper Team will work to address before the next meeting. What to look for in addition to FC bacteria? How should we measure FC levels? How do we protect the fish from the pollution requirement? That year they planted a little over an acre.

These changes and the habitat diversity engendered have made KB Ranch a bird haven! Secretive wood ducks swim near the edge of the pond where they can swiftly take to the air when changing shrubs, barn owls, true to their name, reside high in the barn; an opportunistic heron can usually be spotted patiently stalking its prey. Bullock’s orioles suspend their debirs laden nests from the limbs of the tall cottonwood by the house. Even in winter the hedgerows are alive with a motley assortment of avian activity. During the height of the spring nesting season, Bill tries to see how many different species he can count in just half an hour. His personal record: 281! That’s in one half hour!

The Tenmile Creek Clean Water Project

For almost thirty years Bill and Angela Brown have made KB Ranch their home. Located just off Hananegg Road, roughly half way between Lynden and Bellingham, the land was almost entirely in pasture when they moved in. Today, they continue using most of it to graze their small herd of brood cows and calves and flock of ewes and lambs. Then, the most distinguishing feature of the land was a seasonal stream, a tributary to Ten Mile Creek running roughly down the middle of the farm and a small pond.

Other than still raising cattle and sheep, just about everything else about their farm has been transformed. During the mid 1990s, they sold the northern parcel with the original farmlands and built a new place not far from the pond. Where others might have seen a stream running down the middle of their farm as a hindrance and liability, Bill and Angela saw an opportunity, they fenced off both it and the pond to restrict livestock access. Their objectives in doing this were three fold: it divided their pastures into smaller, more manageable units (they were early adopters of rotational grazing); which enhanced overall forage growth and harvest efficiency, it helped protect water quality, and both are avid gardeners, protecting the stream and pond provided them with new territory to plant and grow their favorite flowers.

In 2007 they took another step towards protecting water quality and enhancing the salmon habitat. They enrolled 2½ acres into USDA’s Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). The program, at no cost to the Browns, added over 1,000 trees to the area along the stream corridor, installed additional fencing, and improved a stream crossing. They wanted to enroll even more land, but only water deemed fish accessible was eligible for CREP funds. So they thought to be present on the southern half of the farm. In 2011 they got their wish to plant more when CREP rules changed allowing them to plant a narrower buffer called a hedgebelt, with the fish presence requirement. That year they planted a little over an acre.

Some native birds rely on fruit and berries for a major part of their diet for at least part of the year: Sooty (Blue) House, Rufous Hummingbird, Barney’s Vird, Varied Thrush, American Robin, Swainson’s Hawk, Swainson’s Thrush, Cedar Waxwing, Western Tanager, Black-headed Grosbeak, Bullock’s Oriole, House Finch, and Spanish Sporran.

The throngs of fruit and berry producing plants are an important source of nectar for Rufus and Anna’s hummingbirds. Challenge yourself. See how many different birds you can identify and think about what you can do to attract more birds to your yard.

Bill and Angela Browns’ KB Ranch

A Farm Made for Cattle and Sheep – and Birds and Salmon Too

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For more information on the Livestock Program, contact Corina Cheever, Chris Clark, Nichole Emberton or Chuck Timblin at (360) 354-2039, ext. 3. Updated with new material as it becomes available (Example topics include Digesters, Facility Management, Testing, Nutrient Application, and Regulations)

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Whatcom Conservation District seeks board supervisor candidates

Whatcom Conservation District is seeking board supervisor candidates for one publicly elected position and one appointed position. Board supervisors are public officials who serve without compensation and set policy and direction for the Conservation District. Supervisor commitments include monthly board meetings, committee meetings, and special events.

Elected Position

An eligible candidate must be a registered voter residing within Whatcom County and may be required to own land or operate a farm. The candidate filing deadline for the elected position is January 31, 2014 at 4pm. For more information, or to receive the necessary paperwork for the elected position, please contact WCD for the necessary paperwork. For election procedure details, please contact WCD at (360) 354-2035 ext.101 or visit the Whatcom Conservation District website at www.wcd.org. The last day to request a mail-in ballot is February 10, 2014 by 4:00pm.

In March 2013, Dick ran unopposed and was reelected through WAC 135-110-370 by Whatcom County 4-H Youth Development is actively recruiting and training volunteers to compete in a team setting, meet and network with other youth, and learn more about your local ecosystem. Individuals interested in learning more should contact WCD at (360) 354-2035 x3 or visit the Whatcom Conservation District website at www.wcd.org.

Local Leader recognized as “2013 Employee of the Year” by WADE

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Dick Yoder, Supervisor

Dick Yoder and Larry Helm, Supervisors

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