A quarter of a century and hundreds of thousands of native plants in the landscape. The District’s Annual Native Plant Sale has been providing low cost, native plants to the residents and visitors of Whatcom County for over 25 years! The plant sale is the place to kick start your spring gardening. Whether a native plant enthusiast, backyard gardener, farmer, landscape professional, conservationist, or just looking for a fun event to jump start 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! Since 1993, the purpose of the sale has been to promote stewardship of our natural resources and help get native plants in the ground. This event is family friendly! Check out our Watershed Explorer and pick up a free native plant for the kids.

This year we have about 50 species, more than ever before! We are pleased to offer a great variety of native bareroots, plugs, and bulbs in varieties never before seen at our sale. This year you can get camas bulbs, an evergreen penstemon, and Labrador tea.

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NOTES FROM THE FARM

Solving the Puzzle of Water Quality in the South Fork Valley
By Sean D’Agnolo and Hilary Graham

Hilary Graham and Sean D’Agnolo have been settling into the rhythms of their newly-acquired 12 acres in the South Fork Knoxack Valley. They have been working towards this exciting project they call Monkey Puzzle Farm, since they met 8 years ago. Hilary’s training includes volunteering on an organic farm in Maui, ecological restoration work in King County, and was the best mentor, any-where, and now she is Secretary of the Whatcom Farm Works program at CMFC. She began work with Monkey Forest’s post-harvest processing coordinator while starting Small Acres, a CSA and homestead near Nugent’s Corner, and currently works for the Cloud Mountain nursery. She became interested in food in Seattle while working at Bastille, a French restaurant known for their rooftop garden and local sourcing of ingredients. In 2012, he joined Hilary in both internships and also helped to start Small Acres while managing the education program at CMFC.

While at Small Acres they had some help from farm planner Chuck Timblin of the Whatcom Conservation District (WCD), to better understand how to best utilize the small pasture space to feed their goats through rotational grazing. At Monkey Puzzle Farm, with more goats and more land to graze, they enlisted WCD farm planner Katie Pencke, to develop a customized farm plan. In addition, they are working toward the same goals as the planning department, but an active group toward the ecological mitigation strategies that may be required at some point for future infrastructure.

Their property also borders a small creek & field drainage ditch, so in addition to helping them outline strategies for keeping their goats’ fertility in the farm’s systems such as manure storage and a wood-chipped sacrifice area, their property is eligible for the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). WCD will help get their new farm business up and running by paying rent on riparian buffers planted to native vegetation near the creek and pay for fencing to keep animals from grazing the restoration planting.

“However our homestead and farm business moves forward, we’re really glad to have access to the WCD, they are an incredible resource for new farmers and an asset to any farm business”, Hilary said of their experience. To learn more about Monkey Puzzle farms, send them a note at monkeypuzzlefarms@gmail.com.

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WCD farm planners are available anytime to meet with landowners who want to make sure that their farms are clean and not contributing to water quality problems. WCD habitat program technicians are also available to meet with landowners interested in planting stream buffers or to evaluate potential barrier to fish.

To learn more about the eligible Sound Horsekeeping practices, and apply for your free sign today, contact kpencke@ whatcomcd.org, 360-526-2381 x 105.

Sound Horsekeeping Recognition Program Comes to Whatcom County

The Sound Horsekeeping Recognition Program honors horse owners in Whatcom County who have taken actions to improve pastures, reduce mud, manage manure, and provide wildlife habitat on their property. These actions not only keep horses healthier and make chores more efficient, they also protect streams, creeks, and ultimately Puget Sound.

If you are managing your property in a way that protects horse health and the environment, you are probably eligible to earn our Sound Horsekeeping sign. This is a great way to share the benefits of your hard work with your neighbors. If you are a boarding facility or a barn that welcomes prospective customers know about your sustainable practices.

Here are some examples of practices that can help you earn the Sound Horsekeeping sign:

- **Reduce Mud** - install gutters and downsputs create confined areas, and add protective footings to confinement areas.

- **Manage Manure** - cover manure piles in winter with a tarp or roof, build a composting pile and store in a clean confinement areas regularly.

- **Improve Pastures** - keep horses off pastures in winter months, practice rotational grazing.

Hilary Graham and Sean D’Agnolo are working towards solutions to improved water quality with the Whatcom Conservation District.

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Hrutfiord’s Fish Friendly Farm

Don Hrutfiord runs a beef operation along with his wife Mary and son Chris near Drayton Harbor, just south of Blaine. Shellfish beds in Don Drayton Harbor have been repeatedly closed over the years due to fecal bacteria contamination. Since the Hrutfiord farm includes a unnamed stream that flows directly into the harbor, Don and family chose to be early adopters of farm planning services offered by the Whatcom Conservation District (WCD) way back in 1996.

To protect water quality, the Hrutfiord installed gutters on their barn, began managing pastures, installed a winter work heavy area use, and built livestock fencing to establish a stream buffer. The Hrutfiords also worked with volunteers to plant native trees and shrubs along their reach of stream. Today that stream buffer looks like it has always been there with good shade over the water. In 2016, the State of Washington Department of Transportation replaced a culvert on Blaine Road, bordering the Hrutfiord property, with a new and much larger fish passable structure. This work was part of larger effort to replace all culverts in State highways that prevent salmon from migrating upstream to spawn. Following up on this work, Melissa Ekel from the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife knocked on Don’s door and asked to walk his family’s property to assess the fish habitat upstream of the new passable culvert. Don and Melissa found that with a few more fish passage barriers upstream and downstream of the highway. Fortunately, WCD secured a pool of funding from the Natural Resources Conservation Service to remedy barriers on private land, and another $3000 grant to help install improvements to the farm which will positively impact local water quality.

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Emily snuggles with a day old Katahdin

rain gardens, underground pollution filters, and more. These projects are specifically designed to remove phosphorus from runoff before it reaches the lake. High phosphorus levels cause harmful algae overgrowth in Lake Whatcom, resulting in many water quality issues.

If you live in the Lake Whatcom watershed, visit our new website at www.lakewhatcomHIP.org to find out if your property is eligible for the HIP program and learn about specific resources available to you. Please note that HIP is only available to a portion of the Lake Whatcom watershed at this time.

For more information about phosphorus and other water quality issues in Lake Whatcom, visit the Lake Whatcom Management Program page at www.lakewhatcom.whatcomcounty.org.

Proactive stewardship in the Lake Whatcom Watershed not only improves the health of the lake, but it fosters a healthy community and future for all who live there.

Please call Jenny Coe, HIP Coordinator, at 360-526-2381 x106 or e-mail jcoe@whatcomcd.org with questions.

Every Year CREP Continues to Grow

Here’s What Has Happened Since 2000

- 425 Projects
- 2,858 Acres Restored
- 213 Miles of buffer
- 1,671,487 Native trees and shrubs

For more information about CREP, please contact Wayne Chaudiere, Frank Corey, or Emily Hirsch at (360) 526-2381.

Who Is That Coming to My Farm?

Meet Your Team

Corina Cheever
Farm Planning Coordinator since 2011

For the past six years, I have transitioned through many positions here at the District and through all of them have enjoyed the different aspects of landowner and community interactions, from learning dreams and goals on site visits to teaching in classrooms to sampling the variety of manure application equipment. In 2014 I completed a bike trip across the Southern US touring swamps, rangeland, deserts, mountains, and eventually the California dairy land. This trip inspired me to continue working to facilitate the balance between maintaining healthy animals, quality resources, and protecting water quality. I really enjoy my job and being part of a team of staff who are innovative, enthusiastic, and dedicated to making a difference in the community we live in.

Katie Pencke
Small Farm Planner since 2016

It is our role to facilitate an exchange of ideas and resources between rural landowners and livestock managers in Whatcom County. We seek to preserve agricultural land and promote the skilled land managers and livestock farmers among us to create a culture of natural resource stewardship. Our goal is to facilitate a community of conservation to steward the natural resources which support our rural agricultural existence.

As a livestock farmer myself, I try to imagine what would be helpful to me if I was seeking the free and confidential services of a conservation district small farm planner.

Emily Hirsch
Habitat and Farm Planner since 2011

Working at WCD lets me get out on the land I love. I have always connected with the trees, water, and earth. I love that, for my job, I get to connect with people too, especially those growing our food. I get my pork from my co-worker Katie, my beef from a farmer in Ferndale, and in the summer my veggies come from all over the county including my own newly dug garden. My desire to be connected to what I eat gives me the deepest appreciation for what the small farming community brings to the (my dinner) table.

Getting to know you, at your kitchen table with coffee or French toast and not across a counter is so personally and professionally rewarding. It truly enhances my experiences living in this wonderland we call home.

Kris Haider
Dairy Farm Planner since 2017

While I didn’t grow up on a farm, my extended family has deep connections to farming, and after studying ecology and conservation going into the agricultural sector was a clear choice for me. Agriculture is essential; we ALL depend on the farms around us. Yet, agriculture has a huge impact on the landscape and the natural resources we also rely on. These things don’t have to be at odds though, and as a farm planner, I get to support farmers in doing the important work they do while protecting our natural resources. It’s a great job!

Native Landscaping Opportunity with HIP

Get inspired this spring! Some properties within the Lake Whatcom Homeowner Incentive Program (HIP) are eligible for the Do-It-Yourself (DIY) Native Landscaping program. Enter your address at www.lakewhatcomHIP.org to see if your property qualifies and attend a workshop to get started. 2018 workshops are scheduled for April 10 and 14. Space is limited, be sure to register in advance.

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Whatcom Conservation District

Announcements & Events

Whatcom Conservation District Supervisor Election

Notice of Election

An election for one seat on the Whatcom Conservation District Board will be held on Tuesday, March 13, 2018 at the District’s office at 6975 Hannegan Road, Lynden. Polls will be open between 9:00 am and 6:00 pm. All registered voters residing within Whatcom County may vote in person at that date, place, and time or by mail. Mail-in ballots are only available upon request, which must be made no later than 4:00 pm on February 7, 2018.

Contact Us

Requests for mail-in ballots, candidate filing materials, or other election information and procedures can be made online at www.whatcomcd.org/board-elections, by phone (360) 526-2381 x 101 or at the District office.

Please note: Official election information will be posted ONLY on the Whatcom Conservation District website.

Whatcom Conservation District (WCD) Notice of Appointed Position Available

WCD is seeking candidates for a Board position appointed by the Washington State Conservation Commission. All CD supervisors are public officials who serve without compensation and set policy and direction for the WCD. Applicants for appointed positions must be a Washington State registered voter, but do not have to live within the district to apply and may be required to own land or operate a farm. For more information, or to obtain an application form, please contact WCD at (360) 526-2381 or visit the Conservation Commission website at www.scc.wa.gov. Applications and supporting materials must be received by the Commission no later than March 31, 2018.

Associate Supervisors Announcement

The Whatcom Conservation District (WCD) is soliciting applications for Associate Supervisors to assist the WCD Board of Supervisors in ensuring that District programs effectively meet the priority natural resource needs of Whatcom County. Who is a good candidate to be an associate district supervisor? Someone who has an awareness of local conservation issues, interest in development management strategies, and is willing to contribute their time. Interested? Come meet the board at any of the upcoming meetings (1pm on the second Thursday of the month) or contact us at wcd@whatcomcd.org.

Upcoming Events

2018 Spring Training - Master Composter Recycler Program
March 1 - April 5, 2018; Thursdays - 6:00pm – 8:00pm, plus field trips as scheduled
WSU Extension Office, 1000 N. Forest Street, Bellingham
WSU Whatcom County Extension Master Composter/Recyclers are stewards of energy transformation who educate the community about cycling local resources, building soil, and growing food. To become a Certified Master Composter/Recycler, applicants must complete 30 hours of training and 30 hours of volunteer time as a community educator. Tuition includes classroom and construction materials, discussion with experts, and field trips. Registration fee is $90 (scholarships available).

More information, please email mcr@wsu.edu or call (360) 778-5814.

Master Gardener Annual Plant Sale
2nd Saturday in May, 9:00am-2:00pm
Hovander Homestead Park, Ferndale
Each spring Master Gardeners of Whatcom County start working on their biggest fundraiser of the year. They gather plants from their home gardens, divide hearty perennials, transplant trees, and shrubs into pots, plant thousands of tomato seeds (heirloom and unique varieties) tend to the thousands of tender plants that are donated for the sale. It is the hard work of these volunteers who create a unique sale with plants at reasonable prices. Save the date!

For more information, please contact Beth Chisholm at (360) 778-5811 or beth.chisholm@wsu.edu.