



South Douglas News

South Douglas Conservation District

Summer 2019

Assisting cooperators to adopt, implement and promote conservation practices which encourage good land stewardship and the protection of natural resources.

CONSERVATION IN THE CITY

When you think of Conservation Districts, do you think farms and orchards? Actually all land that you see outside your window can benefit from conservation practices. In your neighborhood, your conservation district can provide assistance with wildlife habitat, weed identification and control, pollinator plant suggestions, small farm assistance and Firewise assessment and fuels reduction.



When Conservation Districts were established in 1939 in Washington State the main focus was on rural lands. While that emphasis is still strong, the continuing urbanization of Douglas County motivates us to reach out to city and town dwellers. If you have a conservation or natural resource concern let us know. You don't have to be a farmer or rancher. Maybe you have questions about organizing a community garden or planning a Firewise Community. We can help. Give us a call.



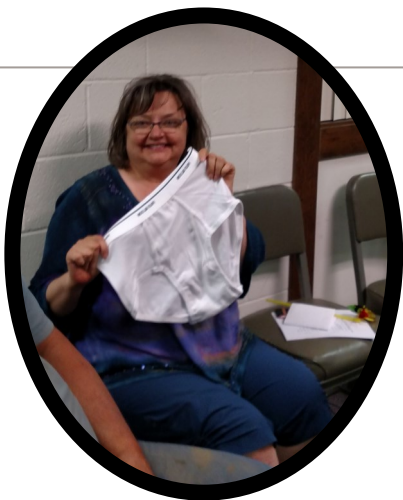
SPRING CHIPPING DAY

Spring chipping was done in Waterville and East Wenatchee as well as several rural sites. It is important to get rid of those fuels, particularly when it gets dry in the summer. We are planning on a fall chipping day as well. Watch the fall newsletter for information. It is usually done in November when most fire danger is past.

LOCAL
POSTAL CUSTOMER

Free Firewise Assessments

We can come to your property and evaluate your fire risks and strengths. The 15-30 minute review can alert you to simple things you can do to reduce fire hazards. Call us and we can schedule an appointment.



The Soil Your Undies Challenge

Carolyn Kelly

Chewed-up, ripped, torn, threadbare, riddled with holes, completely, utterly soiled--the undies in Douglas County are falling to pieces. And that's just the way farmers like it.

Whether you're on crop ground, range, orchard or forestland or a backyard gardener, the quick and dirty way to test your soil is by burying organic matter (cotton undies for example) and digging it back up after 60 days. The more the undies are deteriorated, the healthier your soil.

Your undies won't break down in just any soil. Healthy soil contains billions of microbes that consume the cotton. In fact, one teaspoon of healthy soil contains more microbes than there are people on the planet. In addition to chowing down on organic matter like cotton, they also help soil resist erosion, cycle nutrients, and store water.

The challenge is no substitute for lab testing, but it's an interesting way to start thinking about what's going on with the microbes in your soil. What are they up to? How quickly can they eat your shorts?

Put your soil to the test!

1. **Plant** a pair of new, cotton underwear horizontally about 3 inches deep in the site you're curious about. Don't forget to mark the spot you planted. (You don't want to lose your shorts!)
2. **Wait** at least 60 days. This gives your soil microbes time to do their magic. Then dig the undies back up.
3. **Share** your results by sending us a photo of your "harvest" and a little info about your operation.

If you farm, big or small, soil microbes are your best friends. But the hungry microbes in your soil need food, shelter, and variety in order to thrive, just like us. You can take care of your microbial friends by following these four steps:

1. Avoid soil disturbance wherever and whenever possible.
2. Maximize soil cover with living plants and residue.
3. Maximize biodiversity by growing a variety of plants and managed integration of live-stock.
4. Maximize living roots in the soil throughout the year.

Take the challenge. Submit before/after photos and a few details about your operation to:
e-mail southdouglasscd@conservewa.net .



BENEFITS OF TREES IN THE CITY

While trees and shrubs are mainly planted for their beauty or provide shade, there are many other benefits.

- * Planting trees and shrubs returns developed areas into a more natural environment for wildlife and birds.
- * Trees modify the environment by moderating climate. Radiant energy from the sun is absorbed or deflected by leaves on deciduous trees in the summer but only filtered by the deciduous branches in the winter. The larger the tree, the greater the cooling effect. Trees can deflect wind from structures and protect your house from winter storms.
- * Air quality is improved. Leaves filter the air we breathe by removing dust and other particles. Leaves can absorb ozone, carbon monoxide and sulfur dioxide and release oxygen. Two medium sized trees can supply the oxygen required for a single person for a year (USDA—E Gregory McPherson 2010).
- * Trees can provide privacy, reduce glare and reduce street noise. (When the city removed several large trees in Waterville, it sounded like the traffic was coming into the office!)



Of course you need to be aware of “the right tree in the right place.” But a little research or inquiries to the conservation district or others can guarantee you are planting the right tree.

Are you walking along the Apple Capital Recreational Loop Trail? - Carolyn Kelly

Humans play a big part in seeds dispersal today. Yes –you could be a carrier! Seeds stick into socks, shoes, and other clothing. Vehicles and lawn machinery can get seeds and plant parts caught underneath. Transported soil, animal feed, and uncleaned seed can contain weed propagules. I observed this directly after someone kindly gave me a load of free soil for a planting berm. Instant morning glory invasion. We are particularly adept at weed dispersal because we travel frequently and over long distances.

So, those are the basic ways that weeds spread their kin around, not just in a yard, or a neighborhood, but many miles from home. One of the best ways an individual can address the spread of weeds is to control them on their property *before* they leave home. Oh, and check your socks and dog’s fur. Red arrow points to seed heads carried home on shoes.



Douglas County Agriculture Exhibit

Each year South Douglas sponsors a contest at the NCW Fair. Located in the horticulture building, we hope to teach fairgoers about agriculture and give local students a chance to use their imagination while earning some extra money.

The poster must tell a story about ag in North Central Washington. The theme could be about growing crops, marketing, equipment, conservation practices or anything to do with agriculture. Past posters have highlighted the wheat industry on the Waterville Plateau, old time equipment, the emerging grape industry and where our agriculture products are marketed throughout the world. Three classes Junior (grades 3-5), Junior (grades 6-8) and Senior (grades 9-12) each have a \$100 first place award. Complete rules are on page 32 of the NCW Fair premium book.

See you at the Fair!



Are you getting your entries ready for Fair? The NCW Fair (August 22-25) and the Chelan County Fair (September 5-8) will be ready to take your vegetables, fruit, sewing projects, canning, crafts, chickens, baking—the list goes on. Local fairs are a great place to meet old friends, learn about agriculture, and just have fun.



COST SHARE PROJECT—WINDBREAK

South Douglas spends 75% of our total funding on cost share projects. A co-operator comes to the district with a project. We look at it, making sure it meets our requirements, then agree to fund it up to 75% of total project. Past projects have been dams and terraces in dryland wheat fields, irrigation upgrades, livestock waterers, compost facilities, soil testing and fuels reduction.

And windbreaks.

In Douglas County the winds can blow hard. We all know the benefits of a good windbreak: decrease the force of the wind, reduce soil erosion, improve crop yields, protect from heat and cold. They can protect roads and buildings

from drifting snow. They provide wildlife habitat and can be a source of wood. One of my favorites is standing on the inside of a windbreak and listening to the leaves rustling.

Outside of Waterville, Lowes built a new house. In the middle of a wheat field. With no wind protection. They came to us and we provided a plan for a windbreak to protect the house and farmstead. Four

double rows of poplars, Austrian Pine, Siberian Pea Shrub and common Lilac were laid out with drip irrigation placed for consistent watering. It will take a few years to be effective but Noa (upper left) and Colton (lower right) will remember the day they planted their windbreak.



South Douglas Conservation District

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Please Remember to Recycle

How do we get the word out? You may know a veteran who is looking for work. You may be a farmer, looking to semi retire. Maybe your farm mechanic has more work than he can complete alone and needs help.

The Vets on the Farm program works to pair farmers who need help with veterans who are looking for work, designed for veterans transitioning back into civilian life. Areas of interest include but are not limited to small scale production agriculture, livestock management, equipment maintenance and custom farm work.

South Douglas Conservation District is starting a new program in Douglas County. Spokane CD has a strong growing program. All Conservation Districts in Washington State hope to develop the program. Look for information on our website.

