



South Douglas News

South Douglas Conservation District

Winter 2021

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

SPRING CHIPPING COMING IN MAY

We will be offering another FREE chipping event in early May. You will need to sign up ahead of time so we can schedule the route. This is for South Douglas CD residents, which is roughly the lower half of Douglas County. In the past we have chipped from Waterville to Rock Island. The specifics of the requirements are on our website. If you have just a small pile that you can get rid of in your garage can, please do so. (It is free to landowners but we pay for it with a grant and need to watch our dollars.) Note that the chips will be left with you.

We would like to devote one day to Badger Mountain residents. We tried last fall, but the first snow prevented us from accomplishing that. We have four signed up, so we will be going "up the hill." As one of the few forest stands in Douglas County, it is an area that could use some fuels reduction. This (did I mention free?) service could help protect buildings and forest settings. Talk to your neighbors to spread the word. We also have a cost share program for fuels reduction on your property. Need some help?



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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.

2021 Tree and Shrub Sale—See page 2

POSTAL CUSTOMER
LOCAL



2021 TREE AND SHRUB SALE

Native and adapted trees, shrubs and wildflowers will be available for pre-order. Catalogs can be mailed out to you, or you can go to our website and see our catalog online. You will have to print out an order blank and mail it to the office before the deadline, March 22. Pickup will be at the Lion's Den at the Waterville Fairgrounds April 3 from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. We will be following Covid-19 guidelines. Most likely you will drive up, give us your name, and we will get your order for you and bring it to your car. Hopefully, we will be able to social distance and have a couple of impulse tables for you.

Carolyn Kelly



Behold the lovely milkweed plant
It can do what others can't
Providing the food that royalty needs
It's the diet for Monarch feed
Milkweed is all the babies eat
Upon the leaves the larvae feast
So as you plan spring gardens now
Plant some milkweed for Monarch chow!

That's right....while monarch butterflies will gather nectar from a variety of pollinator plants, they only lay their eggs on milkweed leaves. If you have milkweed and Monarchs, you might soon see the eggs as little white spots on the underside of the leaves. Monarch eggs are small, roundish, and off-white. There are, unfortunately, lots of small, roundish, and off-white things that turn up on the underside of milkweed leaves, so until you identify your first Monarch butterfly egg, keep looking and when you see one, you will know. Within a few days, the tiny caterpillars hatch and begin to eat. The newly hatched baby caterpillars are **very** fragile. Do not touch them! Their primary interests are eating and pooping. (They are babies, you know!) As they eat and grow, they will shed their skins a few times – they are molting. In a few weeks, they will have already formed a chrysalis (pupae) which will be cleverly hidden from you. Within about a month, the whole cycle is complete, with new Monarch butterflies hatching.

Monarchs are rapidly disappearing from the landscape, and they need our help to survive! The milkweed plant is critical for their life cycle. Milkweed is also a great pollinator plant for other species, so planting a few helps out a lot of little critters. Milkweed is available at our sale.

GETTING READY FOR SPRING



“Spring Clearing is for the Birds!” Don’t forget to clean out your bird houses before nesting season. While some birds reuse their nests (we have a Say’s Phoebe that has returned four years) to prevent diseases, you should clean out the boxes each year. Fungus, bacteria and other maladies can linger inside. Even insects and rodents can take up residency and leaving the old nesting material can be inviting to pests. Once a year is the minimum, after each brood is optimal, but it can be tricky to know if the birds are through nesting or not. Get your gloves, a bucket, water and bleach out (one part bleach to nine parts water) Clean out the old nest, scrape out any gunk and give the box a good scrubbing. Get into all the corners. Completely rinse and dry.

Put the box back up and you are set. We will have blue bird houses for sale at our Tree Sale.

With the Covid restrictions, many people have been working in their gardens this past year. Even vegetable seeds have been in short supply. It will soon be time to get back out and work in the yard and garden. Think about your neighbor who may be older or less able to work in the yard. Go over and offer to help in the garden to get it ready. Masks and social distancing will make it easy to enjoy getting outdoors.

Have you considered removing some lawn and replacing with pollinator plants? You don’t have to remove all the lawn—they are good at storing carbon and stimulating photosynthesis. But they are lacking in diversity, require watering, fertilizing, weeding and mowing. Lawn is good for paths, playing games or relaxing outside. But you might want to consider removing some of the lawn for a pollinator garden, or vegetable or flower gardens or shrubs or trees. Diversity is crucial for promoting wildlife—even bugs and birds are important for our environment. The how-to could take up this entire newsletter. There are lots of sources on the Internet. Habitat Network has lots of ideas for removing lawn and promoting wildlife in your yard and garden.



Cascadia Conservation District is offering a series—Native Planting 101 via Zoom, Monday evenings. Go to their website at CascadiaCD.org for the details.

Our workshop—“Birds, Bees and Bats” has been put on hold until we can meet in person. Watch this newsletter for information.

KESTREL BIRD BOX

BY MIKE LESKY

The Kestrel, otherwise known as the sparrow hawk, is a small bird of prey. This bird is a predatory bird that feeds on small rodents, gophers, other birds, snakes, insects and even small domestic cats.

This is the American Kestrel. I am sure you have seen these birds around your house, farm, or orchard. They are very acrobatic in flight, and can turn on a dime and hover like a helicopter in mid-air. This is used to wait out mice that are running in grass or a wheat field. Upon seeing the mouse come out of the cover, this bird of prey will set its wings back, just like a F-15 fighter jet and dive straight down to catch its prey in its talons. Kestrels are curious birds; however, they will not let you or other animals get close.

As you can see, they are incredibly beautiful bird. The Kestrel in the wild lives 5-7 years. In captivity, this life span expands to 17-20 years (easy living).

The bird is protected by the State of Washington as a bird of prey, and it is also protected by a federal listing in the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. The Migratory Bird Treaty Act is an agreement between five countries: USA, Russia, Great Britain, Canada and Mexico. Under this agreement, there are thousands of migratory birds species that are protected. Birds of prey, such as hawks, falcons and owls are protected under this act, though they do little migration.

Why should you try to promote habitat and nest boxes for the Kestrel? Simply put, just by seeing them brings enjoyment to any day. From a practical point of view, they can help keep mice and other pests at bay on your property. The Kestrel adds not only a piece of nature to your land, but it also adds a splash of color to your fence, trees, house, roof or barn.

If you are interested in attracting these beautiful birds google NRCS Kestrel box and it will take you right to some plans.



South Douglas Conservation District

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