



# Forestry

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY  
EXTENSION

## WSU North Puget Sound Extension Forestry E-Newsletter – Large Print Edition

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**Editor's note:** You're not imagining things—you did indeed just get a newsletter a couple weeks ago. This is the second of two December

newsletters, because it wouldn't all fit in just one issue. In the new year we will return to our more quarterly frequency.

## **Forester's Notes**

Christmastime is a lot of fun with a little girl. I enjoy watching my daughter play with her new toys and dolls, and I'm happy to join in when she wants me to (dads should be man enough to play Barbies, right?). There are inevitable parent-child conflicts, especially during these times off from school. I can't provide 24/7 entertainment, and there are limits to how many sweets and how much TV time I'm willing to allow. This, of course, is for her own good, but you can bet that she does not see it that way. Whether there will be yelling, screaming, and crying depends a lot on my wife and me and how we react. As parents we learn (sometimes slowly) that yelling and threatening to ground the kids from doing anything until they're 68 is not necessarily effective and, depending on the child's developmental needs, may be counterproductive. Besides, the "consequences" often end up being worse for the parent than the child.

What helps me in these situations is to really think about where she is developmentally and try to work with instead of against those natural child development processes. Trying to tackle problems in a head-on way results in a battle of wills that only ends when one yields or both break. Relationship damage always results. Instead of coming against her, if I can come alongside her and work with her development processes I'm in a much better position to steer her toward a positive outcome.

It struck me that what I'm trying to master with parenting is similar to what I try to teach with forestry: work with instead of against natural processes. After all, parenting and forestry are both acts of

stewardship. They both focus on the next generation and on guiding growth and development such that there is a trajectory for success beyond our lifetimes. They also come with similar moments of frustration, discouragement, humility, learning, wonder, amazement, and satisfaction—sometimes all in the same day.

Working better with natural processes and learning how to mimic those processes, are where I see a lot of advancements in forest science over the past 30-40 years. The forest management approach that characterized much of the latter part of the twentieth century was agronomic in nature. We grew trees like we grew row crops, because that's model we knew. Clear-cut areas left nothing behind, and even the slash and debris were removed or burned to establish a clean slate like a freshly-plowed field. Planting was done on a grid with ten-foot centers. The planting stock was uniform—all the same age and all with similar genetics having come from the same seed orchard. Planting was done as a monoculture, usually Douglas-fir.

What I am describing here is of course an overgeneralization. It's also not meant as a criticism. We got really good at growing wood to provide the nation with homes, paper, books, and much more, and many important needs were met. Rather, I'm making an observation of how different modern forest practices have been compared to natural disturbances and regeneration. I also want to highlight what we've learned and how forestry has evolved in recent decades.

Nature's regeneration methods are messy. Under natural conditions, a stand-replacing disturbance usually leaves behind a lot of material such as snags, downed logs, and other debris. There are often patches of trees that survived the disturbance. This creates a variety of different microsites. Seeds of different species with diverse genetics blow in and germinate in a random spatial patterns, and they would germinate over a period of several years until canopy closure. This diversity of species,

genetics, germination times, spatial arrangements, and microsites helps young stands to differentiate into different crown positions, allowing some individuals to dominate while others became overstocked and suppressed. This is critical for a stand to self-thin, which is where trees that are smaller and weaker due to a genetic or other disadvantage get out-competed and die, allowing the dominant trees to grow bigger and stronger. Thinning, whether natural self-thinning or a forest management operation, is what allows a stand to continue to grow and develop.

One of the concepts that has developed over the past few decades is variable retention harvest, in which parts of the harvested stand, including live trees, snags, and downed logs, are left behind to better mimic a natural disturbance and enrich the new stand with diversity. Another concept is variable density thinning. An evenly-applied thinning prescription reduces density and competition, but it simplifies stand structure. Variable density thinning better mimics the natural variability of self-thinning, which results in areas of different density and the formation of gaps.

It can be a struggle to meet your objectives when working against rather than with natural processes. It can take added effort and expense and may never reach the goal. One example is trying to thin a stand by taking the bigger, stronger trees and leaving the weaker ones. This poor and ecologically-damaging practice is counter to natural development patterns. The concept is often sold to landowners under the guise of the environmentally-friendly-sounding term “selective logging,” and it is a way to make a quick buck now while sacrificing the long-term health and vitality of the forest.

Another example is trying to grow Douglas-fir in an area of laminated root rot. Too often the patterns of root disease are not recognized on the landscape and no record is kept of them. Douglas-fir is replanted on

top of these areas, feeding it its host and growing the disease. In contrast, nature mitigates the presence of infected material through windthrow that leverages some of the decaying root balls out of the ground rather than making a chainsaw cut and leaving all of the stump and root system in the ground to perpetuate the infection. Nature also fills in root-rot openings with resistant species like cedar and maple. The result is forest diversity and some checks and balances on the disease. I like to tell people that laminated root rot is nature's way of telling you to grow some cedar.

Yet another example is when uniform plantations are left alone and not thinned. Their uniformity can inhibit self-thinning, and the stand stagnates and becomes unstable. These neglected legacies of past management can be found throughout the area. They are characterized by really tall, skinny trees with tiny crowns and a dark, lifeless understory.

Whether it's our forests or our children, sometimes we just expect too much. In the case of forests, so much nature has been lost on the landscape that we tend to want to cram as much as possible into our little corners of the world. You can't stockpile trees or wildlife, though—the land can only support so much. Forcing overpopulation is counterproductive to the healthy, thriving forests that we desire.

As you consider your own forested property, think about what natural development processes are at work. What patterns do you see on the landscape? Then consider whether your management choices are working with or against these processes. Are you trying to grow a certain tree species in an environment that is just not suitable given moisture levels, light levels, and/or disease presence? Are you keeping things unnaturally dense? Will your objectives be met? Is nature your partner or your adversary? By working with natural processes you can use them to your advantage and be in a better "steering" position to

set your forest on a trajectory toward achieving your core objectives. As an aside, there are some positive steps we take in stewarding our forests that can seem like we are working against nature. I'm thinking specifically of battling invasive species. Just because a plant grows successfully on its own, though, does not mean it is healthy or natural. Invasive species disrupt natural processes.

The idea of working with rather than against can benefit us in many facets of our lives. It can help our forests and our children grow. It can also help us in how we relate to one another. We see firsthand the damage that an "us vs. them" mentality inflicts, yet we cannot seem to break out of that mode. If we always take an adversarial position and approach every conflict with a trajectory toward a head-on collision, all we will ever see in front of us is an adversary. If we try to come together side-to-side, though, we can all see the prize that lies ahead.

Kevin W. Zobrist  
Associate Professor, Extension Forestry  
Serving the North Puget Sound Area

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## **2018 Funding Outlook**

Our regional Extension Forestry program is funded by a variety of sources, including WSU, USDA, counties, other agencies, grants, and program registrations. Where our programs are held geographically depends on county funding support. Funding for 2018 is stable in Island, King, and Whatcom Counties. Funding is increasing in San Juan and Skagit Counties. In Snohomish County, though, the majority of our

funding for 2018 has been lost due to county budget decisions. The Snohomish County Surface Water Management (SWM) department has stepped up to allow us to offer one important program in Snohomish County in fall 2018. We greatly appreciate SWM's ongoing partnership and their support for education, training, and assistance for forest landowners. All our other planned activities for Snohomish County have been curtailed, though, due to the loss of county support. Watch for continued and growing programming in the other counties, though. Read on to see what we have coming up in those locations.

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## **Staffing changes**

One of our two program coordinators, Ian Fawley, left in August to pursue a fantastic opportunity. I thank Ian for his service and contributions and wish him well in this exciting new phase of life. Having limped along with the position vacant for several months, I am very pleased to announce that our new coordinator, Brendan Whyte, will be starting on January 2nd. Brendan is an Army veteran and is completing a Master's degree in forest ecology at the University of Washington. Brendan brings great enthusiasm and a strong skill set to the program. You'll be able to meet him at all of our upcoming events.

Kelsey Ketcheson continues to serve as our other program coordinator. Kelsey has been doing double-duty for the past few months. She is the solid rock of this program, and a rock star when it comes to Forestry Extension work. I thank Kelsey for everything she does for this program and for forest landowners in the region.

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## 2018 Winter and Spring Coached Planning Online, Whidbey, and Vashon



Is your forest a recognized Stewardship Forest? Do you have the sign and the matching hats? Do you want to know why people say this is the best class they've ever taken? Would you like to walk through your woods with new eyes and learn about everything that is going on in your forest? Join one of our 2018 Coached Planning classes coming up this winter and spring.

Coached Planning is our flagship program. This comprehensive, university-based forestry class will help you get the most out of the land you love. Whether you have just a few acres of woods or a large forest tract, if you have trees on your property, this class is for you.

### Topics covered include:

- How do you know if your trees are healthy? What should you do if they aren't?
- What types of trees do you have? Does your forest look like a "mess"?
- Are characteristics of your property attracting or repelling the wildlife you enjoy? What can you do if wildlife cause damage?
- When should you worry about trees being hazards?



- How do you know if your trees need to be thinned, and how do you go about it?
- Are invasive and noxious weeds taking over your underbrush? What are the risks and what can you do about it?
- What kind of soil do you have and how does that affect what grows?
- What is the risk of wildfire on your property?

**Save money, too:**

As part of this class we will "coach" you in the writing of your own simple forestry plan that may qualify you for property tax reductions or conservation cost-share grants.

***Registration is now open for these upcoming 2018 Classes:***

- **Online – Winter 2018:** Thursdays starting February 1st. For details and registration, visit <http://forestry.wsu.edu/nps/events/cponline/>.
- **Whidbey Island – Spring 2018:** Tuesdays starting March 6th. For details and registration, visit <http://forestry.wsu.edu/nps/events/cpwhidbey/>.
- **Vashon – Spring 2018:** Mondays starting March 26th. For details and registration, visit <http://forestry.wsu.edu/nps/events/cpvashon/>.

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## 2018 Invasive Weed Field Practicums Bellingham, Kent, and Mount Vernon

Is ivy pulling down your trees? Are blackberries taking over your newly planted trees? Do you have stubborn holly in your understory? Are dreaded species like knotweed and Scotch broom popping up on your property? Invasive weeds not only inhibit the growth of or even kill your trees, they cause significant ecological harm by taking over ecosystems, crowding out native species, degrading wildlife habitat, and increasing erosion. Controlling these noxious invaders is a challenging but essential task for landowners.



At this field practicum, you will learn to identify and control some of the most common invasive weeds that cause economic and environmental damage in forests, including: holly, ivy, blackberries, knotweed, reed canary grass, butterfly bush, Scotch broom, and more. The practicum will cover chemical and a wide variety of non-chemical control options.

### **Field-based, hands-on learning:**

These practicums are completely field-based and centered around hands-on learning. After safety briefings, you will don protective gear (provided) to watch demonstrations and then do hands-



on practicing of multiple control techniques, including hand-pulling, root digging, using a weed wrench, sheet mulching, foliar herbicides, cut stump treatments, and stem injection. You will learn about safe use

of herbicides, including what products to use for specific weeds, where to get those products, how to read a label, proper safety equipment, avoiding environmental damage, pesticide laws, tank mixing, calibrating a sprayer for the proper application rate, and clean-up.

### **Take advantage of super-low registration costs!**

These programs are partially funded by a one-time grant, allowing us to offer these with much lower registration fees than we will be able to in the future.

#### ***Registration is now open for these 2018 practicums:***

- **Bellingham – May 5, 2018**  
[http://forestry.wsu.edu/nps/events/weeds\\_whatcom/](http://forestry.wsu.edu/nps/events/weeds_whatcom/)
- **Kent – June 2, 2018:**  
[http://forestry.wsu.edu/nps/events/weeds\\_king/](http://forestry.wsu.edu/nps/events/weeds_king/)
- **Mount Vernon – September 15, 2018:**  
[http://forestry.wsu.edu/nps/events/weeds\\_skagit/](http://forestry.wsu.edu/nps/events/weeds_skagit/)

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## 2018 Conservation District Plant Sales

The conservation district plant sales are just around the corner. This is an excellent opportunity to stock up on native trees and plants. Take special note of the pre-order deadlines to make sure you're able to get what you want. Here are the local districts that have announced their 2017 sale dates:

### King Conservation District

- Currently accepting pre-orders
- Pre-order pickup and walk-up sale: Saturday February 24th
- More information: <http://www.kingcd.org/programs-native-walk-up-sale.htm>

### Snohomish Conservation District

- Pre-order deadline: January 29th
- Pre-order pickup and walk-up sale: Saturday February 10th
- More information: <http://www.theplantsale.org/>

### Whatcom Conservation District

- Pre-order deadline: March 12th
- Pre-order pickup: Friday March 23rd
- Walk-up sale: Saturday March 24th
- More information: <http://www.whatcomcd.org/plant-sale>

### Whidbey Island Conservation District

- Pre-order deadline: January 31st
- Pre-order pickup: Saturday February 24th
- More information: <https://www.whidbeycd.org/plant-sale.html>

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## **Other Educational Opportunities**

### **Country Living Expo**

The 2018 Country Living Expo is coming up on January 27th at Stanwood High School. The expo offers numerous classes on livestock, gardening, food preservation, bees, spinning, quilting, cooking, baking, welding, building, cider making, leather crafting, business planning, weaving, furniture, pest control, and much more. Registration is now open. Classes are first come, first served and fill up fast, so register early to get your first choice of classes. For information, class descriptions, and registration visit:

<http://extension.wsu.edu/skagit/countrylivingexpo/>.

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## **Women Owning Woodlands Network (WOWnet)**

Ladies – did you know that we have a local chapter of the national Women Owning Woodlands Network? This informal peer-learning network is an opportunity for women to learn from other women and share resources and experiences. Our local chapter is based on an email list where members can ask questions, share stories, and arrange get-togethers. To join, please visit <http://forestry.wsu.edu/nps/wownet/> and sign up for the email list. We also have a Facebook page

(<https://www.facebook.com/wownetworkwa/>) and a Facebook group (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/WownetworkWA/>).

We are looking for hosts for 2018 education and social gatherings, especially in (but not limited to) the King County area. If you are interested, please let me or Kelsey know.

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## Resources to Remember

This is a quick reminder of some key resources we have available for you:

1. **Forestry Job Announcement List** – Looking for a forestry-related job? I have a special email list that I post numerous job announcements to. Announcements include everything from seasonal work and graduate assistantships to faculty and executive director positions (and everything in between). To get on this list, sending a blank email to [join-forestjobs@lyris.cahnrs.wsu.edu](mailto:join-forestjobs@lyris.cahnrs.wsu.edu)
2. **Washington State Consulting Forester and Silvicultural Contractor Directory** – Looking for professional help? Aren't we all! This comprehensive directory will help you find the consultant or contractor you need to get your timber sale, thinning, or other forest project done. <http://forestry.wsu.edu/consultingdirectory/>
3. **Native Trees of Western Washington** – Of all the native tree books out there...this is one of them. You can get it on Amazon or

at many local bookstores, as well as directly from WSU Press at <https://wsupress.wsu.edu/shop/showbook.asp?id=393>. Proceeds from the book go to support the Extension Forestry program.

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Extension programs and employment are available to all without discrimination. Evidence of noncompliance may be reported through your local Extension office. Reasonable accommodations for the events described above will be made for persons with disabilities and special needs who contact us at the address above at least two weeks prior to the event.