



# Extension Forestry

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY

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## Forester's Notes

### There is only room for so many

At the beginning of the year, my daughter and I went through what has become an annual exercise: the culling of the stuffed animals. If we combined all the stuffed animals she has had at one point or another, I think it would fill the entire volume of her room. There is only space for so many, though. When she gets a pile of new ones for Christmas, some of her existing ones need to be given away so that other little girls, who don't have 5,000 stuffed animals, can enjoy them. We choose ones across all size classes in order to maintain a consistent volume for her stuffed animal bins. In other words, it's a proportional thinning. Actually, since the purpose is to make room for new ones, it's probably more like uneven-aged management using the selection system as the regeneration harvest.

For a kid with a perennially messy room and mild hoarding tendencies, I've found that "there is only room for so many" is an important concept to grasp. The same is true, of course, in the forest. Trees are good, but more is not necessarily better.

"Growing space" is a term that includes not just the physical space but also the level of resources available for tree growth, namely light, water, and nutrients. Growing space, like the space on my daughter's bed, is finite. There is only room for so many.

A forest system can support a relatively high number of small trees or a relatively low number of big trees. Problems start when a high number of small trees try to grow bigger. As they approach the carrying capacity of the site, there are no more resources available for growth. The only way any trees can grow bigger is if other trees die. In other words, you can't stockpile nature. So much nature has been lost in the world that we sometimes want to cram as much of it as possible into our little corner of the world. You can have a reasonable number of healthy, vigorous trees that are growing well, or you can have a whole lot of trees that are all starving to death together.

## **Competition and stress**

As trees start to compete heavily for diminishing resources, the ones that are outcompeted begin to die and density starts to decrease. This is called self-thinning, and it is a survival of the fittest situation. In nature, variability in disturbance patterns, species, spatial arrangement, germination times, and genetics create variability in the fitness of individual trees. This is what determines which trees will survive and which won't.

With modern forest practices, the natural variability in tree fitness is greatly diminished. Post-logging conditions usually do not leave the level of variability that there would be after a natural disturbance. Seedlings are all planted together in a grid pattern, and they are often all the same species. The seedlings are a product of a common breeding program, so they have a narrow range of genetic variability. Under these uniform conditions, it is harder for the stand to naturally self-thin.

When stands are too dense, the trees no longer have all the resources they need for healthy growth, which puts them under stress. Even the “winning” trees experience stress in the process. The natural competition stress that stands experience, exacerbated by forest practices that create uniformity, and coupled with invasive pests and climate change has put many of our forests under particularly high stress. When trees are stressed, they stop growing in diameter and they lose their ability to defend against pests and diseases. This is the context in which we are seeing a lot of forest health problems, especially damage and mortality from drought. With the “cup of water” getting smaller, the more straws that are sipping from that cup, the less water each receives.

## **Maintaining vigor**

Maintaining tree vigor is ultimately the best solution for forest health problems, whether from drought, diseases, or pests. A key to maintaining vigor is to minimize stress. By keeping stands at a reasonable density that limits competition, we can reduce that stress and maintain vigor. This is why thinning overstocked stands is such an important part of maintaining a healthy forest. By monitoring density and manually thinning when competition builds, we can get a stand through the stressful period of its lifecycle more quickly, hopefully maintaining a high level of tree vigor in the process.

It is important to maintain our own vigor as well. Stress is no better for us than it is for our trees. When we are stressed, our

immune systems are compromised, and we become more vulnerable to health problems. We can also lose our sense of kindness, compassion, and gentleness. As I think back through times when I have been at my worst, times when I lashed out or I was unkind or even cruel toward someone, all of those times I was under extreme stress. Stress causes both physical and relational damage.

In these times of stress, I was trying to be and do too many things. When we are eager to please and have trouble saying no, we end up with overstocked lives. For our health and our relationships, we may need to look at thinning out some of the things we've taken on. There is only room for so many, and when we try to do everything, we end up doing none of it well.

Kevin W. Zobrist  
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Serving the Puget Sound Area

## **Upcoming forest stewardship webinars**

Our forest stewardship webinar series continues, with the next webinar coming up this Thursday, March 21st. The title is *Wildlife Habitat on Small Woodlands*, and our speaker will be Ken Bevis, stewardship biologist with the Washington Department of Natural Resources. You will find him both informative and entertaining.

The title of our April webinar, which will be on Thursday, April 4th, is The Future of Fire in Washington Forests — Risk and Responses. The webinar will be presented by retired U.S. Forest Service scientist and University of Washington Professor Emeritus Dr. Dave Peterson, who is a fire ecologist and also a small forest landowner.

There is no cost to participate in the webinars, but space is limited, and pre-registration is required. All of our past webinars have sold out, so register soon to ensure your spot. Both webinars will be offered twice, one from 12:05 to 12:55 p.m. and the other from 7:05 to 7:55 p.m.

- [Register for the wildlife webinar at 12:05 p.m. March 21st](#)
- [Register for the wildlife webinar at 7:05 p.m. March 21st](#)
- [Register for the fire webinar at 12:05 p.m. April 4th](#)
- [Register for the fire webinar at 7:05 p.m. April 4th](#)

## Your help needed

### Can you help us find local disease examples?

I am looking for local examples of *Rhizoctonia* in western hemlock and bigleaf maple decline. *Rhizoctonia* causes western hemlocks to die from the bottom up, losing all their needles layer by layer. This is caused by a new foliar disease that is currently being studied. Bigleaf maple decline symptoms include branch dieback, shrunken leaves, leaves with yellowing or browning edges, and mortality. We would like to examine some of these specimens up close. If you have seen these symptoms on

hemlocks or maples on your property, please [contact us about examining these disease specimens](#).

## **Can you help local forestry students?**

Students at local forestry schools like Green River College are regularly looking for case study forest properties and landowners to work with. This is a great way to contribute to education while at the same time getting some free work done.

### **Current Need**

Do you have invasive weeds on your property? Green River College in Auburn is teaching a bioinvasives course this spring. Students need case study properties to develop integrated pest management plans for. This is an opportunity to have a weed control plan made for your property. If your property is in south King or north Pierce County, please [contact us if you are interested in working with a student on a weed control plan](#).

### **Ongoing Need**

Do you need a forest stewardship plan for your property and don't want to pay for a professional plan or write one yourself? Have you gone through the Coached Planning program but still haven't been able to get an actual plan written? If so, allowing a student to work with your property could be a great way to get your plan done. I maintain a running list of interested property owners. If your property is in south King or north Pierce County, please [contact us if you are interested in working with a student on a stewardship plan](#).

## **Can you watch for these this spring?**

### **Conifer pollen cones**

Conifers have two types of cones. The female cones are the seed cones that we are most familiar with. There are also male pollen cones that appear in the spring. I would like to do an up-close examination of the pollen cones of Sitka spruce and grand fir. If you have a one of these trees that has pollen cones within reach (or an upper branch with pollen cones that has fallen), please [contact me about these pollen cones](#).

### **Oak and ash flowers**

I would also like to do a close-up evaluation of the spring flowers on Oregon ash and Oregon white oak. The flowers will likely appear as the leaves start to emerge over the next month. For the Oregon ash, male and female flowers will occur on different trees. For the Oregon white oak, male and female flowers will occur on the same tree. The male flowers are catkins, while the female flowers are small, nondescript, and close to the stem. If you have one of these trees with flowers that are in reach, please [contact me at about these flowers](#).

## **Can you help with these studies?**

### **Thinning study**

Northwest Natural Resource Group (NNRG) and Oregon State University (OSU) are seeking forest owners for a voluntary study about how timber harvesting methods affect the forest's condition and the owner's bottom line. Little information exists about the economics of commercial timber harvests that use thinning or uneven-aged management. This research will help landowners who are considering a timber harvest to learn from



others' experiences. The researchers are recruiting Oregon and Washington forest owners who harvested timber from their forest in the last 5 years (since 2014). Data from this survey will remain confidential, and information will be aggregated so it cannot be traced to any individual ownership. [Find more information or take the thinning survey.](#)

### **Carbon Study**

The Washington Farm Forestry Association invites you to share your opinions on forest carbon, climate change, and property rights. They have devised a short survey (15 questions that should take you about 10 minutes to complete), so that they can better understand how small forest landowners are likely to respond to proposed legislation that tackles these complex issues. Along the way, they have included some fun facts about forests, carbon, climate change, and small forest landowners. Your responses will be aggregated and anonymous unless you want to have further discussion on the topic, in which case they give you an option to provide your name and contact details at the end. Note: it says it is a petition, because their database won't let them call it a survey, but it really is just a survey. [Take the carbon survey.](#)

## **Buckley Forest Stewardship Coached Planning Course**

### **Coached Planning finally comes to Pierce County!**

The first course we've ever done in Pierce County starts Thursday, April 18th. Extension programs are funded by local

counties, so we can only offer programs in counties providing such funding. This year, through a generous grant from the Puyallup Watershed Initiative, we are able to offer this program in Pierce County. As always, we welcome participants from anywhere.

## **A forestry class for property owners**

Would you like your property to be a recognized Stewardship Forest and be able to display the Stewardship Forest sign? Do you want to know why people say this is the best course they've ever taken? Would you like to walk your property with a professional forester, see things with new eyes, and learn about everything that is going on in your forest? Join this spring class in Buckley.

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

### **Topics covered**

- 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 course 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.

## **When and Where**

### **Dates and Times**

The course will run on Thursday evenings from April 18th through June 13th. Classes will be held from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m., except for the first class which will start at 5:30 p.m. There will be a Saturday field trip on May 18th.

### **Location**

Thursday evening sessions will be held at White River High School, 26928 120th St E, Buckley, WA 98321.

### **Register before April 4th and save \$30**

Registration is open, and an early-bird discount is available until April 4th. These classes almost always sell out, so register quickly

to ensure your spot. [Buckley Coached Planning Details and Registration](#)

## **Courses in other parts of the state**

There will also be a [Coached Planning course in Olympia](#) starting April 1st.

## **Forest Health Updates**

Below are some brief updates on current forest health issues.

### **Bigleaf maple decline**

Researchers are still trying to determine the cause of bigleaf maple decline. A study was just completed at the University of Washington. [Read about the bigleaf maple decline study results.](#)

### **Secondary bark beetles**

There are a variety of secondary bark beetles that are typically opportunistic, causing damage to trees that are already weakened by something else. Forest health experts at the Department of Natural Resources have been finding unusually elevated levels of Douglas-fir damage around the state from these beetles. [Learn more about secondary bark beetle damage.](#)

### **Sword fern die-off**

You can keep up with the latest finding on the sword fern die-off issue at the [Seward Park Sword Fern Die-Off Blog.](#)

## **Pacific madrone health issues**

You can learn about the various diseases and pests impacting Pacific madrone by visiting the [Washington State University Pacific Madrone Research website](#). You can also sign up for their excellent madrone newsletter at that site.

## **Upcoming Forest Health Seminars**

### **Learn why trees are dying and what to do**

Dead and dying trees have proliferated throughout western Washington. Trees were particularly hard-hit in 2018, especially western redcedars, causing concern for many property owners. Washington State University (WSU) Extension Forestry will be giving a free public seminar to explain why so many trees are dying right now and what property owners can do.

Learn what makes forests healthy or unhealthy and how to recognize when there's a problem on your property. Topics include insects, diseases, and drought, including their environmental roles and the important interactions between them. Learn about what property owners should do (and not do) to increase tree resilience and mitigate impacts. The seminar will be taught by Kevin Zobrist, associate professor of forestry at WSU and author of the book *Native Trees of Western Washington*.

The seminars are free, and there is no registration required. Space is limited, though, so arrive early to ensure your seat.

## **Upcoming offerings**

### **Vashon**

The Vashon seminar will be held Monday, April 22nd, from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the Vashon-Maury Island Land Trust building, 10014 Southwest Bank Road, Vashon, WA 98070.

### **Woodinville**

The Woodinville seminar will be Tuesday, May 7th, from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at the Brightwater Environmental Education and Community Center, 22505 State Route 9, Woodinville, WA, 98072.

### **Skykomish**

The Skykomish seminar will be Tuesday, May 28th, from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the Skykomish Community Center, 114 Railroad Avenue, Skykomish, WA 98288.

### **Maple Valley**

The Maple Valley seminar will be Tuesday, June 4th, from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at the Maple Valley Library, 21844 Southeast 248th Street, Maple Valley, WA 98038.

## **Service Area Changes and New Southwest Washington Services**

### **North Puget Sound service area changes**

Starting January 1st, our service area shifted south. We now do programs in Pierce County, but we no longer do programs in Whatcom County.

## **New services for southwest Washington**

Extension forestry services have arrived in southwest Washington! Last year, Washington State University hired Patrick Shults as a new Extension Forester to serve southwest Washington. If you are in Thurston County southward through Clark County, Patrick is your go-to person for classes, events, and assistance. For Patrick's contact information, upcoming southwest Washington programs, and to sign up for Patrick's southwest Washington newsletter, visit the [Southwest Washington Extension Forestry website](#).

## **Women Owning Woodlands Update**

### **About the chapter**

Woman Owning Woodlands Network (WOWnet) is a network of women who learn, educate, and work together to build female literacy and involvement in forestry, land conservation, and natural resources. WOWnet is a nationwide program that is dynamic, fun, informative, and strives to bring topical, accessible, and current forestry information to woman woodland owners and forest practitioners. We support women in forest leadership, women who manage their own woodlands, and all who facilitate the stewardship of forests. Through educational resources and personal stories, we strive to instill a sense of confidence and empowerment in women's abilities to meet the challenges of forest ownership.

For more information on the national network, visit the [National Women Owning Woodlands Network website](#).

For information on how to get involved with our local western Washington chapter, visit our [Western Washington Women Owing Woodlands website](#).

## **2018 Report**

Women Owing Woodlands (WOW) had a busy year thanks to several members who generously hosted events. Liz Crain led several workshops on her land-of-many-uses property, Leafhopper Farm. She shared her expertise on hedgerow creation, the practice of hügelkultur (using woody debris to build raised garden beds), edible native plants, and rainwater catchment systems. Mary Crane showed off her work managing a small forest for wildlife and doing maintenance with hand tools. Lauren Heitmann gave us a tour of her recently acquired property and facilitated a discussion of objectives and potential management strategies. Finally, Elizabeth Boutin hosted a gathering on Vashon Island. Her property tour included a discussion of noxious weed management and working with local agencies to access technical assistance and utilize cost-share programs. WOW is a peer-learning network, and its members are its foundation. I am grateful to Liz, Mary, Lauren, and Elizabeth for sharing their knowledge and experiences with other women woodland owners. As we look toward the coming year, I invite anyone interested in hosting an event to get in touch. Let's keep learning from each other!

## **Upcoming WOWnet events**

Please [contact Kelsey Ketcheson about these free WOWnet events](#) at least 48 hours in advance to RSVP and get directions.



## **Defending Young Plants**

This event will be held Saturday, March 23rd, 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at Leafhopper Farm in Carnation.

How many of us have planted new young species in our forest, only to discover them decimated within a few weeks by eager wildlife looking for food? There are ways to “fight back”, and the diverse solutions abound. Let’s look at some defensive strategies to keep wildlife out of young plantings. From wire mesh to mazes of deterrence, we’ll look at what’s working in the field and what has not, ideas to help you keep your young plantings alive and thriving as they establish on the landscape.

## **Second Annual Spring Edible Plant Walk**

This event will be held Saturday, April 27th, 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at Leafhopper Farm in Carnation.

Buds, flowers, and crisp young leaves are out! Let’s take some time to identify different species found in our native forest, and how to ethically and safely harvest these plants for our own larder. We’ll forage and prepare our findings for a wild lunch. This was a very successful workshop last Spring, and we’re at it again, come discover all the delicious offerings of Spring growth in the landscape.

## **Other educational events**

Disclaimer: these non-WSU events and are listed for informational purposes with no implied endorsement by WSU.

## Washington Farm Forestry Association Annual Meeting

The Washington Farm Forestry Association will be holding their 2019 annual meeting May 2nd through 4th at the Best Western Silverdale Beach Hotel in Silverdale. The theme of this year's meeting is "20th Anniversary of Forests and Fish – Past, Present and Future." For more information, read the [Washington Farm Forestry Association 2019 Annual meeting brochure](#).

## Subscription and Contact Info

### Manage your subscription

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King Conservation District, Puyallup Watershed Initiative, San Juan County, San Juan Islands Conservation District, Skagit County, Snohomish Conservation District, and Snohomish County Surface Water Management.

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.