



Forestry

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EXTENSION

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Forester's Notes

I've been home sick for over a month now, and it's going to be a few weeks yet until I am back to regular duty. I caught whatever the crud du jour was that was floating around and keeping so many people coughing for weeks. Unfortunately mine turned into pneumonia and I coughed so bad I actually broke one of my ribs, so I've been sidelined. The reason I bring this up is that it is affecting the program and if you have tried in vain to reach me, that's why. I have hundreds of emails awaiting response and it's going to take a long time to get things whole again, especially with Lauren Grand's impending departure (see [staffing changes](#) below).

Being homebound has given me excessive time to observe and think about my house. We bought this house new ten years ago. I remember the builder's salesman saying to us that, unlike other builders, they don't "cut corners" in their construction techniques, giving us a quality home that we can count on. The example he gave was some special way they tacked the carpet down. I didn't believe for a moment that they didn't cut corners, and just hoped they didn't cut corners where it really counts.

If you're not familiar with term as I present it here, cutting corners means taking shortcuts to save a buck, usually with disproportionately negative impacts on quality and outcomes. It turns out that my lack of trust was well-founded. In the ten years we've lived here, we have had to replace the roof, re-seal and paint the house (when rainwater started to leak into the walls), replace carpeting and flooring, etc. All the different contractors who came out to give bids on these various projects said the same thing: premature failure due to the cheapest possible materials and poor workmanship. The bottom line is that a lot of corners were cut in the building of this house, and it has proven very, very costly.

What does this have to do with forestry? Well, there are some common temptations out there to cut corners when it comes to tending your forestland. In some cases it's no big deal (the forest is pretty forgiving), but there a couple places where trying to save a few bucks could set you up for costly consequences: harvesting and planting. I want to talk a little about these two events and why I think it is important to not try to cut corners here. When you cut corners during harvesting, you can lose out on thousands of dollars of timber value, open yourself up to liability and civil penalties, and damage your property in ways that it will take decades to restore. When you cut corners during planting, you set yourself up for decades of unnecessary mortality and poor growth. These are long-lasting impacts.

Let's start with planting, which sets the whole trajectory of your new forest. As Aristotle said, "well begun is half done." I encourage you to start with high quality seedlings. The 1-0 seedlings may be the cheapest, for instance, but 2-0 or 2-1 may have much better performance and survivability, getting above the brush and browse quickly and saving you money and headaches in the long run. There are times when the nature of the soil may require something small like a plug, but in general don't be afraid to spend a little extra on a high-quality seedling. And don't settle for just any seedlings from any source—make sure you get ones from your seed zone, or your trees may struggle throughout their lifetime. Sometimes people like to transplant volunteer seedlings that are coming up naturally in other areas of their property. I don't see a big problem with this per se; just remember that transplanting takes a lot more care digging and handling the root ball than bare root stock or plugs so weigh the cost of a seedling against the extra effort. As always, make sure you have the right tree for the right site.

Planting the seedlings takes skill and care. I myself am terrible at it because I lack the consistent practice (no, I am not volunteering to plant your trees for my own edification!). Good planting starts with handling—handle them improperly and you're planting dead seedlings. Mistakes in planting technique, such as J-root or L-root, improper depth, and improper soil tamping can cause your trees to fail within the year or even several years down the line (just when you thought things were going along well).

Because of this, I recommend hiring an experienced, professional planting crew. If you and your family have the skill, patience, and back strength to plant your forest, I'm all for do-it-yourself and you will probably do it enough to build up the necessary skill and experience. What can be more problematic is enlisting inexperienced (typically youth) volunteers to plant your forest as a service project in order to save money. Let me be clear here that I am not at

all opposed to having volunteer groups, especially youth, do tree planting projects for experience, education, and connecting with the outdoors—these engagements are very important. Nor am I suggesting that all of such plantings will fail.

Rather, I want to make the point that we observe a higher rate of failure in stands planted by inexperienced groups. This is a normal thing to expect with inexperienced tree planters. Is this higher failure rate the ruin of the stand or even a problem at all per se? Not necessarily. It just means that the stand may have a slower beginning and it may cost more in the long run to replace seedlings that die or struggle due to planting problems. Bottom line—do it to get kids in the woods, not to save money. For the best start for your seedlings, a professional crew can be a very good investment.

Let's take a look now at the other end of the rotation—the harvest. I've seen recommendations about selling timber from Extension Forestry programs all over the country, and the number one recommendation is always the same: hire a professional forester to manage the sale. Yet, people are very reluctant to do this because it is perceived as an additional and unnecessary cost.

Let me tell you a true story from several years ago. A landowner was ready to sell some timber and wanted to do it right, so he hired a professional forester to set up and manage the sale. Once a forest practices application is made, it becomes public record. Some logging companies watch for these and then try to swoop in and undercut whomever the landowner is working with (a common but I think very unethical practice). Sure enough, a local logger approached the landowner and chastised him for spending extra money on this "middle man." The logger encouraged the landowner to dump the forester and instead deal directly with him, promising he'd do right by the landowner and give a fair deal.

The landowner stood his ground and continued with the consulting forester, who had set up a cash bid. (As a side note, I think a cash bid is the best way to sell timber—doing a "split" with a logger is madness in my mind, but that is a topic for a whole other conversation at another time). The logger was invited to come and submit a bid, which the logger did. The logger bid \$33,333.33 for the landowner's timber. It turned out that this arbitrary number was the lowest bid. The high bid was \$178,000. Of this the consultant charged 5%, or \$8,900. What do you think—was it worth paying the "middleman" \$8,900 to get an additional \$144,666.67 for his timber? How many landowners do you think have fallen for that argument about saving money?

The increased net value of the timber aside, there are other practical reasons why it is worth hiring a professional forester. The services a forester provides typically include making sure that all the appropriate permits are completed, the taxes get paid, and everything is done right all the way through the cleanup process. You may also retain the services of the forester to coordinate the replanting of the stand. The forester will also make sure that you have a solid timber sale contract that protects YOU. If you just accept the other party's "standard contract," whom do you think that contract best protects? (Hint: it's not you.) What happens if there is a legal violation, the taxes weren't paid, the neighbor's trees are cut by mistake, one of the workers gets injured, or a fire is started? What if the operator doesn't have the

right insurance? Are you liable? What's your recourse if a mess is left or the logger runs off without paying you (happens more often than you might think). If you're not sure, the piece of mind alone may be worth the forester's fee.

Don't take this to mean that loggers are bad or untrustworthy. The majority are skilled and honest operators. There are a few bad apples out there, but that's the same in any business. The IA good logger is *critical* part of your team. But it should be a team—you, the forester, the logger, the trucker, the log buyer, the DNR representative, etc. It is not the logger's job to represent you and your interests—it would be an inherent conflict of interest, which is why representing you is the job of the independent forester. A good operator will have no problem working with your consultant and in many cases they prefer it because of the ease of working with another experienced professional.

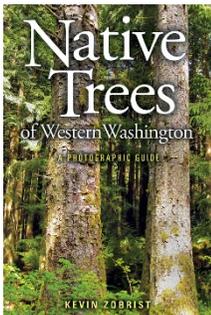
It is discouraging to see people invest in and nurture their trees over *decades*, only to cut corners and throw it all away at the very end. If there is ever a time in the life of your forest not to cut corners, harvesting is surely it. Let me put it another way; a way that you Seahawks fans will surely understand. When you have worked and prevailed game after game and quarter after quarter, and you've run that ball 99 yards down field and are one yard away from the championship, don't throw it away—give the ball to Lynch and get it done right.

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

P.S. If you want to learn more about how to get fair value and protect yourself and your land when selling timber, then here's a shameless advertising plug to attend our 2nd and final Selling Logs from your Property education symposium March 11 – 12 at Green River College in Auburn (see [below](#)).

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Native Trees of Western Washington – Quick Survey



Do you have a copy of the book Native Trees of Western Washington? Please help us evaluate its utility and plan for future editions by completing this very short online survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/29YJ6TF>

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Selling Logs from Your Property - A comprehensive educational symposium for landowners

2nd and Final Symposium: March 11-12 – Auburn, WA

Selling logs is one of the most important decisions you face as a landowner. Landowners log their property for a number of reasons. For some it's the culmination of decades of planning and hard work to produce a valuable crop. For others it might be a liquidation of an asset to meet a sudden financial need. Still others might be undertaking a thinning operation to improve forest health and habitat.

Whatever your reason or goal, selling logs is a high-stakes endeavor, and mistakes can be costly—this is not a time to cut corners! Timber is a valuable financial asset, YOUR asset, that took decades to produce—don't lose out on thousands of dollars by not getting a fair deal for your logs. Don't expose yourself to unnecessary liability or be left "on the hook" for someone else's mistake. Make sure your property looks how you want it to when the job is done and don't risk unnecessary damage to your property that could take decades to restore.

Topics we'll address include:

- Timber sale fundamentals
 - Selling methods (sealed bid vs. negotiation)
 - Types of sales (stumpage, lump sum, etc.)
- Types of buyers (mill, broker, logger)
- Getting fair value for your logs
- Understanding your rights and responsibilities as a landowner
- What a forestry consultant can offer you
- Protecting yourself from liability
- Minimum harvest amount to be economically viable
- Inventory and marketing for different forest products
- How to select a logger
- Permitting requirements and harvest regulations
- Excise taxes, current use taxation, and cost share programs
- Logging roads and operational logistics
- Silvicultural alternatives
- What log buyers look for

Speakers will include:

Consulting foresters, experienced landowners, log buyers, loggers, and representatives from the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Department of Revenue (DOR)

A field trip to Lincoln Tree Farm will look at:

- Commercial thinning options and techniques
- Marketing for poles
- Domestic and export sorts
- Dealing with root disease pockets
- Aesthetic considerations when harvesting
- Numerous examples of different log types, with log buyers on hand to talk about what they look for

When:

Note updated times to make things a little easier for people so it's not so extreme with the back-to-back late night and early morning.

- Friday March 11, 2016 4:00 – 8:30 PM (Doors open at 3:00 PM) &
- Saturday March 12, 2016 9:30 AM – 5:30 PM (Doors open at 8:30 AM)

Friday night lodging option:

The Best Western Plus Peppertree Auburn Inn has reserved a block of rooms for a special rate of \$109.99. Rooms must be booked before **Friday February 26th** to receive this rate. After that room rates are \$139.99. To reserve a room call the hotel at 253-887-7600 and let them know you would like a room under the event name WSU Forestry Program.

Where:

Green River College, Salish Hall, 12401 SE 320th St, Auburn, WA 98092

Cost:

- Individuals: \$23/person before March 3rd; \$30/person March 3rd and later
- Couples (same household or ownership): \$33 before March 3rd; \$40 March 3rd or later
- Student and Master Gardener discounts available – call 206-263-1128 for more information

What's Included:

- Friday evening and Saturday morning classroom sessions and panel discussions
- Saturday afternoon field trip (bus transportation provided)
- Dinner on Friday
- Saturday morning refreshments
- Lunch on Saturday

Registration: <http://forestry.wsu.edu/nps/events/timbersymposium/>

Funding for this project was provided by the Washington State University Western Extension Risk Management Education Center, the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), King Conservation District, the Pierce and Upper Puget chapters of the Washington Farm Forestry Association, and the South Puget Sound chapter of the Society of American Foresters. This material is based upon work supported by USDA/NIFA under Award Number 2012-49200-20030.



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Spring Coached Planning

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 a service forester and learn about everything that is going on in your forest? Now is your chance—spring Coached Planning classes are coming up in March, with the first one starting next week!



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.

Vashon Coached Planning: Wednesday evenings starting March 2nd. For details and registration, visit <http://forestry.wsu.edu/nps/events/cpvashon/>.

Everett Coached Planning: Tuesday evenings starting March 29th. For details and registration, visit <http://forestry.wsu.edu/nps/events/cpsnoco/>.

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2016 Native Tree and Plant Sales

The 2016 plant sales are here. This is an excellent opportunity to stock up on native trees and plants. Most of the pre-order deadlines have passed, but there are still walk-up sales:

King Conservation District

- Pre-order pickup and walk-up sale: March 5th
- More information: http://kingcd.org/pro_native.htm

Pierce Conservation District

- Pre-order pickup: February 26th and 27th
- Walk-up sale: February 27th
- More information: <http://piercenativeplantsale.com/>

San Juan County Extension Master Gardener Foundation

- Pre-order deadline March 1st
- Pre-order pickup: March 12th
- More information: <http://www.mgfsjc.org/native-plant-sale.html>

Skagit Conservation District

- Pre-order deadline: March 11th
- Pre-order pickup: March 25th
- Walk-up sale: March 26th
- More information: http://skagitcd.org/native_plant_sales

Snohomish Conservation District

- Pre-order deadline: February 17th
- Pre-order pickup and walk-up sale: February 27th
- More information: <http://www.theplantsale.org/>

Whatcom Conservation District

- Pre-order deadline: March 14th
- Pre-order pickup and walk-up sale: March 26th
- More information: <http://www.whatcomcd.org/plant-sale>

Whatcom Farm Forestry Association Tree Sale

- March 19th at the Northwest Washington Fair Grounds in the Henry Jansen Agricultural Center
- A variety of native and non-native conifer seedlings available for \$0.90 each
- For information call 360-671-6988

Whidbey Island Conservation District

- Pre-order pickup and walk-up sale: February 27th
- Ordering information: http://www.whidbeycd.org/store/c1/Featured_Products.html

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Other Educational Opportunities

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

- March 19th – NNRG workshop “Emerging Biofuel Options for San Juan Forests” in Friday Harbor – Many forests in the San Juan Islands are severely overstocked with a considerable assortment of low value material that is a potential fire hazard and limits biodiversity. Learn what you can do with this non-commercial wood material. This workshop will present new ways to use and sell woody biomass. Visit <http://nnrg.org/workshop-san-juans-biofuels/> for details and registration.

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Staffing Changes and Job Opportunity

I have bittersweet news, which is that Lauren Grand has accepted a faculty Extension Forestry position with Oregon State University that will be based in Eugene. Lauren's last day with us will be March 15th. Please join me in congratulating her on this tremendous and well-deserved opportunity. To say that she will be missed is a huge understatement. Her contributions to this program over the past two and a half years have been nothing short of outstanding, resulting in significant growth in the scope and scale of what we offer. I can't say enough good things about her and the work she's done, and I can't wait to see the great things she will do with OSU.



Efforts to re-fill Lauren's position are already underway, and the position is posted at <https://www.wsujobs.com/postings/23858>. Only online applications will be considered, and the closing date is March 1st. Please share this with anyone you think might be good candidate.

In addition to our own job opportunity, I regularly pass on announcements (usually several per week) of forestry/natural resource-related jobs ranging from seasonal field work to faculty and executive director positions. If you would like to receive these announcements, please subscribe to our forest jobs email list by sending a blank email to: join-forestjobs@lyris.cahnrs.wsu.edu

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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.