

WSU North Puget Sound Extension Forestry E-Newsletter

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Forester's Notes

It's a cool and foggy day here in Everett today, and while the weather is supposed to perk back up a bit next week, we are starting to say goodbye to summer. And what a glorious summer it was—beautiful days that were warm but not too warm and dry but not too dry. I predict that our trees will have a good annual ring for this year.

As I say goodbye to summer, I am also saying goodbye to two colleagues who departed at the end of August to embark on exciting new endeavors. Mary Ann Rozance, my program coordinator, has left us to pursue her PhD at Portland State University. She made tremendous contributions to this program, many of which were behind the scenes. Meanwhile, Mike Nystrom, DNR Stewardship Forester, has embarked on a well-earned retirement after many years of service (he's been helping woodland owners longer than I've been alive!). I am thrilled for both Mary Ann and Mike, but they leave big gaps in our stewardship team and will be sorely missed. My hat is off to both of them, along with my sincere thanks for all that they've done.

Goodbyes lead to hellos, though, and on that note I am pleased to introduce our new Extension Forestry Program Assistant, Lauren Grand, who is picking up where Mary Ann left off. Lauren has actually been working with Mary Ann for the past two months to get up to

speed on everything. She just finished her master's degree at the University of Washington and has a strong forestry background. She brings a lot of great skills to our team. Lauren can be reached at lauren.grand@wsu.edu or 425-357-6023. Please help me welcome her!

Also, we say hello to fall (have you noticed the maples are already turning?), and that means fall classes and a hello to many new faces. We are doing two concurrent Forest Stewardship Coached Planning classes this fall, one in Preston and one in Oak Harbor (see below). The Preston class is already sold out—the earliest that has ever happened. We'll have some other fall programs coming up that will be announced a little later this fall, so stay tuned to this newsletter.

In the meantime, I am leaving tomorrow for an international forestry conference in Japan to present a paper on forest landowner values and demographics. So instead of "hello," I will be saying "konnichiwa." I'll be back in late September, and Lauren will be at the helm in the my absence.

Sayonara and best regards,

Kevin W. Zobrist
Regional Extension Forestry and Biofuels Specialist
Serving the North Puget Sound Area

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Forest Stewardship Coached Planning

This comprehensive university-based forestry class, which is our flagship program, 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?
- Are characteristics of your property attracting or repelling the wildlife you enjoy? What can you do if wildlife cause damage?
- Are there certain trees you should always keep or remove? How do you remove trees without damaging your land?
- When selling logs, are you getting a fair deal or getting ripped off?
- How do you find or grow edible berries or mushrooms? How do you cut holiday greens without hurting the tree?
- 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?

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.

What's included:

- Eight classroom sessions taught by forestry experts
- A Saturday field trip
- A large notebook full of reference materials and how-to guide
- A one-on-one consultation at your property with a professional forester.

We have two classes coming up this fall, and one in the spring. The fall class in Preston (King County) is already full. For you folks in the Skagit County, San Juan Islands, and Whidbey Island areas, we've got one in Oak Harbor on Thursday nights starting October 3rd, and that class still has space. The early registration discount for that class has been extended to September 16th.

For spring 2014, we will have a class in Whatcom County on Thursday nights starting March 13th, and an online class on Tuesday nights starting April 29th.

Participants frequently tell me that this is one of the best classes they have ever taken. Not convinced? I'll make you this deal: if you register for and attend this class and by the third week you decide that it isn't for you, you can turn your materials in and drop out of the class for a full refund, no questions asked. **How often does a state agency give you a satisfaction guarantee?**

Here is a nice article about the program from a participant's perspective:

<http://sflonews.wordpress.com/2013/07/30/tune-up-your-forest-management-skills-2/>

Details and registration info for the fall Oak Harbor class and the two spring classes are available at <http://snohomish.wsu.edu/forestry/forestryevents.htm> or by calling 425-357-6023.

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Non-WSU Events

Note: These forestry-related events are listed for informational purposes only and do not imply any vetting or endorsement by WSU.

Green Everett Partnership is hosting a native plant ID workshop on September 14th at Forest Park in Everett, led by Coached Planning graduate Kim Frappier. It is free and open to the public. For information or to sign up, contact Kim at greeverett@forterra.org.

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Market Update

Here is the latest news on log prices in Western Washington based on data provided by our friends at DNR in their monthly Timber Sale Query reports.

Log prices remain strong. There was a slight dip in July, but things were back up in August, with a #3 sawlog fetching an average of \$583/Mbf for Douglas-fir and \$624/Mbf for alder (delivered). For #2 sawlogs, the average delivered price in August was \$605/Mbf for Douglas-fir and \$675/Mbf for alder.

For an updated price graph, please visit

<http://snohomish.wsu.edu/forestry/documents/LogPrices.pdf>

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Research Update

Invasive weed contributions to forest seedbanks – A central WA study found that, while invasive weeds tend to grow primarily along roads and forest edges, their seeds are spreading much farther into the interior of forest stands. These seeds may not germinate immediately because of the heavy shade, but they build up in the seedbank, which is the population of plant seeds that persist in the soil for years waiting for the opportunity to germinate when conditions are right. If there is subsequent thinning or other disturbance in that forested interior, those seeds are there ready to sprout and quickly colonize the site. Thus, what may look like just a few patches of invasives along a forest edge may have much broader and longer-term impacts in your woods. (Buonopane et al. 2013)

Logging debris and vegetation control impacts on reforestation – A study was done in Western Washington and Oregon looking at the impact of logging debris and vegetation control on subsequent seedling growth. Competing vegetation diminishes seedling growth because it robs the available soil water. Herbaceous vegetation (grasses, forbs) is worse than woody vegetation when it comes to taking water away from tree seedlings.

High logging debris cover keeps soil temperature lower, which can inhibit seedling growth. However, logging debris can also increase seedling growth. The exact mechanism(s) for this increase is not fully known, but it is suspected that it increases available nitrogen and possibly makes more soil water available through a surface mulching effect.

This study found that the optimal scenario is to have 80% cover of logging debris combined with vegetation control. If vegetation control is not planned, 40% cover of logging debris is best. This provides some suppression of herbaceous vegetation (which is the more problematic kind) but still allows woody vegetation to grow, which then further suppresses that problematic herbaceous vegetation.

The worst case scenario is to leave 80% cover of logging debris but then not do vegetation control. While the high debris cover does provide vegetation suppression, there is still enough competing vegetation such that the combination of the debris and the vegetation produces a negative impact on soil temperature that outweighs any nitrogen or mulching benefits from the debris. Bottom line: you should have a reforestation plan before you log, as your planned site preparation/vegetation control activities will dictate how much slash you should leave (Harrington et al. 2013).

Consulting forester fees – A 2005 study in Massachusetts found that there are four ways that consulting foresters charge for their services: 1) per hour, 2) per Mbf, 3) per acre, or 4) percent of the timber receipts. Some may see charging a percent of the timber receipts as a conflict of interest, since the forester could have an incentive to harvest more timber than the landowner may want. Ultimately, there is no best or worst method, but rather landowners should discuss this with their foresters up front to come up with a mutually agreeable approach given the services provided. The study found that fees vary widely between consultants for the same services, so it can be good to “shop around” (Hersey and Kittredge 2005).

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Focus On: Edible Berries

In this month’s Focus On article, I’m going to talk about something near and dear to my heart: food. One of the best things about the woods in our area in the summer is all of the wonderful things to eat.

- The salmonberries are ready first, usually around the end of June. Some people find them bland, but I think they have a wonderful flavor and I love how sweet and juicy they are. Because they are so juicy, they don’t keep. You need to use them or preserve them right away (even leaving a pail of salmonberries overnight will yield a squishy mess by morning). While this can be a challenge, it is also one of the things that make salmonberries special. You won’t find them at the store and probably not even the farmer’s market. Rather, it’s a taste you only enjoy when you pick them yourself. They are wonderful eaten fresh, and they also make great freezer jam, which is how I preserve them to enjoy throughout the year. A Belgian waffle topped with salmonberry jam and whipped cream is an absolutely wonderful breakfast on a cold winter morning. To make salmonberry jam, get a box of pectin from the supermarket and follow the instructions for raspberry jam (salmonberries are very similar to raspberries). Because salmonberries are so juicy, the jam doesn’t always set, but then you just have a nice salmonberry syrup. Note that ripe salmonberries vary in color from yellow to dark red, even on the same bush. The reason for this variation is unknown. Don’t assume that a berry is ripe (or not) based on its color, but rather go by its firmness and do a taste-test if needed (or even if not needed!). Also note that ripe salmonberries can have a little worm in them, so take a quick peak inside before

tossing it in your pail (but if you miss one, don't worry—it's just a bit of extra protein for your snack or jam).

- In mid-July, our native trailing blackberries ripen. These are smaller than the invasive Himalayan and cutleaf blackberries, and they have thin, round vines that creep along the ground and grab at your ankles. In contrast, Himalayan blackberries have thick, hexagonal canes. Once you try trailing blackberry, you'll never go back to the Himalayans! Seriously, these little guys are a treat. Use them in pies, jams, etc., or just eat them fresh. Note that trailing blackberry is different from the other berries in that it is dioecious, which means male and female flower parts are on separate plants. Both the males and females will flower similarly in the spring, but only the females will produce berries (assuming there is enough sunlight). Thus, while there may be an abundance of vines, there is not always an abundance of berries. If you find a good patch, it may be a good idea to keep it a secret!
- Right after the trailing blackberries are ready, it's time for blackcap raspberries. These turn black when they ripen, similar to a blackberry (but with a dull rather than a shiny appearance). The difference between blackberries and raspberries is that blackberries have a solid core while raspberries are hollow in the middle when you pick them. I don't find blackcap raspberries nearly as frequently as I do other berries. It is a treat when I do find them, though, as they are delectable. I find that they quickly go from sweet to tasteless as they ripen, so it's best not to leave them on the vine too long. I like to pick them when they're still slightly firm and have just a little tint of red left, as I think that tiny bit of lingering tartness combined with the quickly developing sweetness yields the best flavor.
- Near the end of July is when the thimbleberries are ready. I think thimbleberries have the best overall taste of any of our berries, though the texture can be a bit seedy/mealy. Thimbleberries are a type of raspberry, so they are hollow in the middle, and they are very thin and delicate. So what looks like a plump, juicy berry on the vine does not actually have much to it when you pick it. Because of this, it can be hard to get enough to do something with (e.g. make a syrup or jam) unless you have a lot of them (and if you do and aren't planning to use them, call me and I'll come pick them!). As with salmonberries, watch out for the little worms inside. Thimbleberries are at their prime when they are a bright, intense red. If they look dull and dried, it is too late.
- By mid-August (if not sooner), the salal berries should be ready. They are hard to pick because they tenaciously hold onto their tiny stems and it can be hard to avoid crushing them. Your fingers will be stained purple for days after picking salal berries! When they are a deep purple (almost black) color but still plump and firm is the ideal time to pick them (if in doubt, do a taste test). If they are shriveled and raisin-like, you have waited too long. The berries are sweet and tasty, but this is another one that is seedy/mealy, and the texture can be off-putting to some. I think salal berries make excellent freezer jam. Puree them in a blender (takes care of any texture issues), and then make the jam according to the blueberry recipe that comes with your pectin.

Salal berries are naturally high in pectin, so it's easy to get a good set (in contrast to salmonberries). I think salal berry jam makes the best peanut butter and jelly sandwiches (try it!). The flavor can be a little strong, though, so you may want to mix the salal berries with something else when making jam (e.g. mangos, peaches, apricots). A little lemon juice also helps to bring out the flavor. We actually have a short video on making salal berry jam:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BrgFOCPle4c>

- Of course, we can't forget the huckleberries. Red huckleberries are usually available mid-summer, whereas evergreen huckleberries are ready late summer and into the fall. If you leave the evergreen huckleberries on the bush until it starts getting cold, they will be a little sweeter, but don't wait too long or the birds will beat you to it. Red huckleberries are more tart than evergreen huckleberries, but both are quite palatable. These berries are very small, so it is difficult to pick enough to really do anything with other than enjoy a quick snack as you go by the bush. At higher elevations (e.g. high mountain meadows) there are all sorts of additional varieties of huckleberries and wild blueberries.
- I should give an "honorable mention" to our native woodland strawberry. They will produce berries throughout the summer, and they are a treat when you can find them. The berries are very small (about the size of a thimble), but what they lack in size they make up in intense flavor. It's like all the flavor of a full-sized strawberry crammed into a tiny package.

If you have some favorite edible berries, you don't have to leave their occurrence to chance—you can actually cultivate these and create native berry patches both in your forest and around your home. This falls under the topic of "forest gardening," where you can apply gardening principles to your forest or bring a little bit of the forest into your garden.

I live in the city, so I have to bring the forest to my garden. I have a couple shady garden areas dedicated to native forest plants. I planted evergreen huckleberry bushes seven years ago that are now taller than I am and produce an abundance of fruit. I just planted some red huckleberry bushes in some shadier spots and those have started growing rapidly. I have planted some native woodland strawberries that are quickly spreading out and becoming a nice (and edible!) groundcover.

Along my north fence, I am trellising trailing blackberries on wires (see a picture on our Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10151509100866377>). It works well and takes advantage of vertical space since I have very little horizontal space. I transplanted the vines in the middle of last summer, which is the worst time to transplant, but that was when I could find individuals in the woods that I was sure were females because they had berries on them. I cut the vines a foot or two from the roots, and then dug up the root crowns and immediately put them in a bucket of water to keep them wet, transplanted them right away with some compost and organic fertilizer, and kept them watered through the rest of the summer. Even the shriveled up ones that I was sure had died during the process re-sprouted from the roots the following spring and grew vigorously. I planted

mostly females with a few males mixed in for pollination, and I got an excellent first crop of berries. Growing them up off the crown gives them a little more light, which helps with production. I did a similar thing with blackcap raspberries along my west fence, as the raspberries need a little more light.

Being natives, my berry "patches" don't need much in the way of maintenance to grow successfully. Rather, the maintenance need comes in trying to control and direct the growth, especially during the height of the growing season when the blackberries seemed to be growing a foot per day. As the vines grow, I weave them through the wires while they are still really flexible (don't wait until they stiffen up or they will crimp or break when you do this). I'm at the point now where I most of the available space is filled in such that I need to start actually cutting them back to keep them contained in their space. This might be a "be careful what you wish for" sort of thing! Seriously, these are aggressive (and so are the strawberries, for that matter), so use caution when introducing these to your home garden.

In my case, my only option was to plant berries around my home, and I was space-limited in what species I could use. In the woods, though, you have a lot more space and a lot more options. If you're lucky, you may have plenty of natural berry patches to keep you satisfied. If not, or if there is a specific species of interest, you can create berry patches in your woods just like I did in my yard. Consider the wetness and light level when identifying possible spots, and also consider the aggressiveness of the species. If you want something that will be contained to a small area, plant huckleberries, not salmonberry! When creating your patch, you can transplant individuals from other parts of your property, or you can purchase planting stock. The Conservation District's annual plant sale in late winter/early spring is a great place to get a number of edible berries, including most of what I've mentioned above. There are also nurseries that specialize in native plants (e.g. Fourth Corner Nurseries in Bellingham). There is a "where to buy" handout on the WSU Extension Forestry website with more details and options:

http://snohomish.wsu.edu/forestry/documents/Forestry_Supplies.pdf.

Although we have reached the close of this year's berry season, this is the perfect time start thinking ahead about some things you might want to cultivate in your woods and/or yard. This way you'll be ready to procure any needed planting stock in early 2014 and you'll have berries next summer. Or if you already have an abundance of berries in your woods, think about some recipes that you may want to try, so that next year you can enjoy that waffle with salmonberry jam.

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Tidbits:

- Our publication on promoting biodiversity in your woods won the silver award : (second place) in a national award program for natural resource-related extension publications. You can download this "award-winning" publication for free at <https://pubs.wsu.edu/ItemDetail.aspx?ProductID=15459>.

- Our forest measurements publication won the bronze award (third place) in that same program. Learn about this “award-winning” publication at <https://pubs.wsu.edu/ItemDetail.aspx?ProductID=15488>.
- King County has a new Current Use Taxation website that helps explain the options available to landowners: <http://www.kingcounty.gov/environment/stewardship/sustainable-building/resource-protection-incentives.aspx>.
- Batteries made of wood?? Check out this research at the University of Maryland: <http://umdrighnow.umd.edu/news/battery-made-wood>.

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Kevin W. Zobrist
Regional Extension Specialist, Forest Stewardship
Washington State University
600 128th St SE
Everett, WA 98208-6353
425-357-6017

kevin.zobrist@wsu.edu

<http://snohomish.wsu.edu/forestry/>

Also join us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/wsuforestry>

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