



Forestry

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION

WSU North Puget Sound Extension Forestry E-Newsletter

November/December 2014
Volume 7, No. 7

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Forester's Notes

As I attempt to begin this newsletter, I have been staring at a blank screen here for quite some time thinking about what I might talk about in this busy moment among some of the most revered holidays in our culture. Thanksgiving was just a few weeks ago, Hanukkah began yesterday, Christmas is next week, followed by the changing of years a week later. These celebrations have great religious and cultural significance in our society, and I imagine most of you have deeply-rooted family traditions associated with this time of year. For many of us (myself included), this is sacred time. We are more deliberate about devoting attention to family, and we engage with family and friends that we may only interact with at this time of year. There are other celebrations that some of you enjoy this time of year as part of your faith and culture, and some of you may not celebrate at all such that you have a much different relationship with this season than those around you.

These complex elements evoke deep emotions and strong memories. Many of those are joyful, while some can be extremely painful. I am fortunate to have very good Christmas memories, especially from childhood and early adulthood. However, in more recent years, I have begun to associate the holidays with grief and loss. This year I am facing an imminent loss so deep that it will be challenging (but not impossible) to find joy in this season again. There are some of you out there who can relate well to this (though for your sake I wish you didn't).

One way or another, good memories or bad, joy or grief, this becomes a very contemplative time of year where thoughts of past, present, and future seem to connect in a unique way (Dickens captured this brilliantly). So it is no coincidence that at this time of year I am sitting here deep in thought about what to write. My ultimate point, though, is this—emotions and memories, especially around family and traditions, are powerful forces that shape us for many seasons to come.

As I mentioned above, I am fortunate to have really happy childhood memories to draw from, which are a blessing especially during difficult times. Some of my best and strongest childhood Christmas memories of course involve trees. I looked forward to the day we would get our Christmas tree almost as much as Christmas itself. My family would set out early on the first or second Saturday in December and head to a local Christmas tree farm. When I was very young we went to Arlington. When I was older we usually went to North Bend, with an important stop beforehand at Ken's restaurant for an enormous breakfast. Memories of those days bring many things to mind—the crisp air, the smell of fresh-cut trees, hay rides, candy canes, cookies, and hot apple cider.

Just this past Saturday my wife and I went up to North Bend to get our tree from that same Christmas tree farm that both our families went to when we were children. It has been years since we've done that. Thought it would have been much easier to get our tree from the lot that is just around the corner from us here in Everett, those powerful memories drew us back to the tree farm we loved as children. We of course stopped at the restaurant (formerly known as Ken's) to fill up on good food beforehand as we lived out our old family traditions. Things were just like I remembered them, if not better, which is such a rarity in a world that has changed so much in the past 25 years. We spent at least an hour hunting for the perfect tree, drinking hot apple cider, eating cookies, joking with Santa, and soaking up the atmosphere.

Christmas tree farms are selling much more than trees—they are selling experiences and good memories that draw families back year after year. Think about that in the context of your own forest. What traditions does your family have, or what traditions could you create? What are ways that you have instilled powerful, place-based memories in a younger generation? If you are a multi-generation forest owner, what traditions and memories were instilled in you? These could be so many things both in December and throughout the year—growing and cutting your own Christmas tree, winter walks, summer campfires, picnics, family work parties, forts and treehouses, etc. For those of you who are new to owning forestland, what experiences have you had so far that are particularly memorable?

Are there seasonal things you hope to do over and over again? Are there things you haven't done but would like to?

I hope that in this season of contemplation that you will find happy memories to draw from, and that you will also create new ones. Rekindle activities that you loved in years past, and do something new as well. Take time to walk in the woods with your spouse, children, parents, dog, or anyone else special in your life. Feel and taste the damp, and soak in the sights, sounds, and smells of the forest. Share the experience together as a memory not only of place but of each other. These are the memories that keep generations connected to both each other and the land.

In closing, I want to reflect on one of the fruits of this year's contemplations, which is thankfulness. I have much to be thankful for both personally and professionally. I want to take a moment to express my gratitude to a few specific people for making the WSU North Puget Sound Extension Forestry program possible. This is by no means a comprehensive list—there are many more of you beyond this list who have made important contributions to this program, and while you may not all fit on the page, you fit in my heart and please trust my appreciation for you.

- First and foremost to Lauren Grand and Tarrahan Swanson. Nothing would get done around here without your passion, dedication, commitment, and attention to detail.
- Special thanks to the field foresters, including Boyd Norton and Julie Sackett (DNR), Kristi McClelland and Bill Loeber (King County), all the eastern WA DNR foresters who provide the on-the-ground support for our programs, and thanks to Steve Gibbs, Larry Fry, and other DNR personnel who provide behind-the-scenes support for forester coordination, maps and data analysis, and other tasks without which our programs would not be possible.
- Thanks to the specialists who give generously of their time and expertise to support our programs: Dave Peterson, Ken Bevis, Karen Ripley, Dan Omdal, Amy Ramsey, Glenn Kohler, Jim Freed, Sasha Shaw, all the county noxious weed folks, and many more.
- Thanks to those who provide the funding for this program, including the King County Council, Snohomish Conservation District, Snohomish County Surface Water Management, Island County Commissioners, Whidbey Island Conservation District, Skagit County Commissioners, Whatcom County Council, and the Society of American Foresters.
- Thanks to the WSU Extension leadership and support staff that make this program possible, including county directors (Curt, Don, Tim, Drew, Tom), administrators (Jim, Randy, Rich), WSU support staff (Kathy, Becky, Caitlin, Jean, Maureen, Mike, Linda, Jackie, Joan, Tom, Katy, Chris, and others), the folks at WSU Press and University Publishing (Lagene, Karla, Gerald, Melissa, Beth, Caryn, Bob, and others), the CAHNRS Communications team, and the folks here providing local support (Karie, Janet, and others).

- Thanks to a few forest owners who have gone way above and beyond in supporting this program – Tom Westergreen, Keith Graves, and the Crystal Lake community.
- Finally, my sincere thanks to all of you. Someone recently asked me what type of people I serve, and I told him the absolute best—there’s no better group to serve than forest landowners and the forestry community in Washington. Thank you for all you do to care for the land. Thank you for coming to classes, filling out surveys, studying on your own, and sharing your knowledge and passion with others. Thank you for all the kind emails, phone calls, Christmas cards, etc. that you send me, and for the drop-in visits when you are in the area. I love hearing from you. You make this a great job and I’ll see you in the new year.

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

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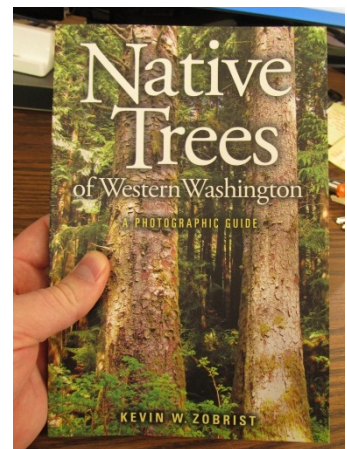
Native Trees of Western Washington Update

You may recall from last month that, due to printing delays, the books would not arrive at the publisher’s warehouse until November 23rd. Unfortunately, even that didn’t happen because of additional delays. The books have been stuck in port down in California because of a labor dispute affecting all the west coast ports. We had to cancel all of our December book signings.

The good news is that the books finally got through port and supposedly got as far as Seattle just today. I am hoping they will arrive at WSU Press in Pullman in the next day or two such that they can start taking and filling orders, and maybe even get orders out in time for them to be given as Christmas gifts. I will send out a separate announcement to this newsletter list as soon as we are “open for business.”

We re-scheduled all of our December book signings for January and added several others in early 2015:

1. January 6th in Everett
2. January 9th in Forks
3. January 17th in Enumclaw
4. January 31st in Stanwood (Country Living Expo)
5. February 17th in Seattle (U-District)
6. March 4th in Mill Creek



Some of these signings include presentations. All of the details are available at <http://forestry.wsu.edu/nps/events/nativetrees/>

If you know of a local bookstore, organization, or other venue that might like to host a native tree presentation and/or book-signing, please let me know—I'm happy to come to your neighborhood.

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Chilean Forestry Talk

Last month I took a forestry study tour to Chile. Join me for a free slide show and talk about forestry in a region quite similar to ours. Learn about how Chile built a robust forest industry, the positive and negative aspects of plantations of exotic trees, Chile's evolving approach to environmental sustainability, agroforestry on small forest ownerships, and forest certification in Chile. Also learn about some of their interesting tree species like monkey puzzle trees. I will also share a bit from my forestry tours in Japan and Austria.

The talk will be Tuesday January 13th at 7:00 p.m. in the Evergreen Room at WSU Snohomish County Extension (600 128th St SE Everett, WA 98208). This event is free and registration is not required, but **RSVP is really appreciated** (so we can make sure we have enough space). If you are able, we encourage you to please bring a potluck dessert to share to brighten up the event. To RSVP, please visit <http://forestry.wsu.edu/nps/events/winterseminar/> or call Lauren at 425-357-6023.



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Forest Assessment for Real Estate Professionals

We are offering a new program called Forest Assessment for Real Estate Professionals. This course is designed to provide real estate brokers and appraisers with forestry knowledge to assist their clients in the buying and selling of wooded properties. You will learn to assess properties for tree health, wildlife issues, invasive species issues, restoration needs, wildfire risks, and potential recreational and income opportunities.

This class will help you:

- Learn to recognize forest conditions that could set your buyers up for future costs and headaches.
- Learn to spot opportunities for your buyers to enjoy high-quality woodland settings and even produce income.
- Explore how to turn forest features into compelling selling points.
- Learn how to help your clients avoid costly mistakes and benefit from tax savings with Current Use programs

This class is approved by the Department of Licensing to provide **15 clock hours** towards continuing education requirements for either **real estate licensees** (Course #C9428) or **appraisers** (Course #AP3343). The class will be held at the WSU Snohomish County Extension building: 600 128th St SE, Everett, WA 98208. The class includes four, Tuesday sessions from 3:30 PM – 7:00 PM, on January 20th and 27th, and February 3rd and 24, 2015. There will be a field trip on Friday February 6th from 9 AM -12 PM.

The class fee is \$135 if registered before 1/5/15 and \$160 thereafter. There is a 15% discount if two people from the same office sign up together, and a 30% discount if three or more from the same office sign up together.

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Forestry Classes at the Country Living Expo

The WSU Extension Country Living Expo is a huge annual event at Stanwood High School where you can choose up to five classes on just about anything you want to learn about (there are well over 100 different classes to choose from). This year's expo will be on **Saturday January 31st**.

There are three forestry classes to choose from:

1. **Chainsaws 101 for Women** - Learn the chainsaw basics! Starting the saw; basic handling and safety gear; choosing the right saw for your needs; fuel and oil; chain sharpening. We will be starting and handling saws in this class, but will not be cutting anything. Instructor: Dr. Caitlin Price Youngquist. Offered as a double session during either Sessions 1 and 2 (9:00 – 11:15) or 3 and 4 (11:30 – 1:30).
2. **Mushroom Cultivation** – Learn how to inoculate logs to grow your own edible mushrooms. Instructor: Kevin Zobrist. Offered during Session 2 (10:15 – 11:15)
3. **Native Trees of Western Washington** – Learn about the native trees that you are likely to encounter in the Puget Sound area, including identification, key features, ecological characteristics, where they grow, which are susceptible to disease, and

where or where not to plant them on your property. Instructor: Kevin Zobrist. Offered during Session 5 (2:15 – 3:15).

For complete details and registration, please visit <http://ext100.wsu.edu/skagit/countrylivingexpo/> or call the WSU Skagit County Extension Office at 360-428-4270, ext 0.

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Forest Stewardship Coached Planning

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?
- 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:

- 7 – 8 classroom sessions taught by forestry experts
- A Saturday field trip
- A large notebook full of reference materials and how-to guides
- A one-on-one consultation at your property with a professional forester.

We have two upcoming classes scheduled, and **registration is now open** for both:



1. There will be an **online** class on Thursday nights starting February 19, 2015. Visit <http://forestry.wsu.edu/nps/events/cponline/> or call 425-357-6023 for details and registration information.
2. There will be a class in **Monroe** (Snohomish County) on Tuesday nights starting March 31, 2015. For details and registration for this class visit <http://forestry.wsu.edu/nps/events/cpsnoco/> or call 425-357-6023

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Summer 2015 Forest Owner Field Days

When you put up your new 2015 calendar, be sure to save the date for one of our annual summer field days. These out-in-the-woods, family-friendly events allow you to attend five or six different outdoor classes and workshops on topics like tree planting, weed control, thinning, tree diseases, mushroom-growing, and more.

- North Puget Sound – August 22nd near Conway (Skagit County):
<http://forestry.wsu.edu/nps/events/>
- Western Washington – August 15th near Frances (Pacific County)
- Eastern Washington – June 20th near Cle Elum (Kittitas County)



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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.

(http://www.dnr.wa.gov/BusinessPermits/Topics/TimberSaleAuction/Pages/psl_ts_query.aspx)

As of November, Douglas-fir, western redcedar, and red alder prices are strong. Douglas-fir is particularly strong—the highest I've seen it in years. Even a #3 sawlog will fetch on average \$661/Mbf delivered. Prices for other species are more or less stable. For an updated price graph, please visit <http://forestry.wsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/LogPrices.pdf>

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Focus On: Christmas Trees

As I mentioned in my notes above, I think the best part of getting a fresh-cut Christmas tree, whether U-cut or pre-cut, is the family memories it creates. Western Washington is a great place to get a fresh-cut Christmas tree, either at a local lot or directly from one of the many Christmas tree farms throughout the area. Douglas-fir, grand fir, and noble fir are three common-used species that are native to western Washington and have a nationwide reputation as quality Christmas trees. Grand fir and Douglas-fir grow naturally throughout western Washington, while the noble fir's natural range is at high elevation in the Cascades from approximately Snoqualmie Pass southward. Non-native species that are also readily available from local farms include Fraser fir, Shasta fir, and Nordmann fir. Each species has different advantages, and ultimately it's a matter of personal preference for how it looks and smells.

I have always chosen one of our native species, and I favor the true firs over Douglas-fir for how they look, their longevity after cutting, and, perhaps most importantly, how they smell. When I teach classes on native trees, I invite people to pinch off needles from different samples, break them in half, and smell. When it comes to grand fir, the response is always "it smells like Christmas." Other true firs smell similar, with a rich balsam scent that many people associate with Christmastime. Those with traditions around Douglas-fir, though, will associate that tree's citrusy smell with the holidays.



Douglas-fir



Grand fir



Noble fir

I have most often gotten a grand fir, though in recent years I have "upgraded" to noble fir. Nobles are more expensive and don't have as strong of a fragrance as grand fir, but they are wonderful in appearance and still smell delightful. The needles have a slight blue tint to them due to the having two stripes on each side of the needles (grand fir only has them on the bottom). These stripes are called stomatal bands, and they are where the breathing pores of the tree are. Nobles are a little more open than grand fir, which is nice for displaying ornaments.

In the past couple decades, there has been a big shift toward artificial trees. These do not have the natural look, feel, and fragrance of a real tree. Families can still create memories and traditions around artificial trees, they're just different than with a real tree. Artificial trees

don't make a mess, need watering, dry out, or require disposal every year, and they offer a good alternative for those with allergies. They also don't bring in bugs, although I think even this is part of the experience of a real tree. Every year there is always a small spider, usually beautifully colored, brought in on our tree that is attracted to the light of the star at the top and builds a small web around it. I have developed a fondness for these "Christmas spiders."

These are all legitimate reasons for choosing an artificial tree. I think it is a big misconception, though, that an artificial tree is somehow more environmentally friendly because it doesn't involve cutting a tree. This represents a fundamental misunderstanding of how Christmas trees are grown. The vast majority come not from forests but from farms, where they are a relatively environmentally-friendly form of agriculture since they do not require the same sort of annual tillage and soil disturbance as other crops. The number of young, immature trees left to continue growing each year far exceeds the number cut (each of which is replanted), providing a sustainable supply year after year along with continuous vegetative cover that provides wildlife benefits. Forgoing harvest of these row crops would not provide opportunities for them to develop into natural forests, though sometimes with intensive management landowners can utilize "escaped" Christmas tree plantations for lumber production. It is more likely that the land will be developed or at least be put into more intensive agriculture if there is no longer a market for the trees.

Fresh-cut Christmas trees are fully renewable, recyclable, and biodegradable. They sequester carbon as they grow, which is released slowly during decomposition but recaptured by the next rotation of trees. In contrast, artificial trees are produced from nonrenewable petroleum-based chemicals, generating significant carbon emissions and other pollutants in their manufacture, and they are not environmentally friendly to dispose of.

If you choose to buy a fresh-cut Christmas tree, here are some tips:

1. The tree always looks much smaller on the lot than in your living room, so be conservative on size (bring a tape measure!).
2. Make sure the tree is accurately labeled and priced for its species. I often see grand firs labeled as Douglas-firs, noble firs labeled as grand firs, etc., especially on lots. *Native Trees of Western Washington* (WSU Press) can help you accurately identify the species you want.
3. Look for a tree with healthy green needles. Look into the interior to make sure it is not full of brown, dead needles. Shake the tree to make sure there is not excessive needle drop, though some needle drop is quite normal. Many lots and farms have a mechanical shaker to shake out dead and loose needles so that there is less of a mess when you get home. Note that baling the tree will knock off a lot more needles, so expect to get some needle drop from that when you un-bale it at home.
4. When you get the tree home, put it in water right away. If you are not going to set it up in its tree stand right away, leave it in a bucket of water in an unheated area to avoid excessive drying.
5. To minimize accelerated drying and fire hazards, try to avoid putting the tree next to a heater, fireplace, or heater vent (close it if you have to).

6. Make a fresh cut on the bottom of the trunk before putting it in the tree stand, as the exposed initial cut will have sealed over, inhibiting water uptake.
7. Keep the bottom of the trunk in constant contact with water—don't let the reservoir dry up. For the first few days you may have to add water several times a day, so check it frequently.
8. Only use plain water—there is no need to add preservatives or other chemicals.
9. Recycle the tree when you're finished with it. See if there are local non-profit groups like the Boy Scouts who will collect the tree from your curb on a donation basis as a fundraiser. The trees are chipped and given new life as natural mulches. If you have commercial yard waste pickup, you can cut the tree up and put it in your yard waste bin to become compost. If you have forestland, you can toss it out in your woods to decompose naturally. However, do NOT discard your tree by dumping it in a greenbelt or natural area.

A great alternative to buying a Christmas tree is to grow your own. Areas on the edge of your forest or along your driveway can be excellent places to grow Christmas trees for your own use or for gifts to friends and family. Below are some good Extension resources on growing Christmas trees.

These publications and videos are available online only:

- Growing Christmas Trees in the Pacific Northwest – <http://ir.library.oregonstate.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1957/20732/pnw6.pdf>
- Christmas Tree Nutrient Management Guide for Western Oregon and Washington – <http://ir.library.oregonstate.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1957/12863/EM8856.pdf>
- Shearing and Cutting Christmas Trees video – https://media.oregonstate.edu/media/0_giqbsqxm

There is a new (2014) publication available called Identifying and Managing Christmas Tree Diseases, Pests, and Other Problems (PNW 659). This is available for purchase from OSU Extension at <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog/abstract.php?seriesno=PNW+659> or 1-800-561-6719.

Christmas tree growers associations are also excellent sources for information and resources:

- National Christmas Tree Association: <http://www.christmastree.org/dnn/default.aspx> or 1-636-449-5070.
- Pacific Northwest Christmas Tree Association: <http://www.nwchristmastrees.org/> or 1-503-364-2942
- Puget Sound Christmas Tree Association: <http://www.pscta.org/>

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The WSU North Puget Sound Extension Forestry program is made possible in part by funding from Snohomish County Surface Water Management, the Snohomish Conservation District, King County, Skagit County, Island County, and Whatcom County.

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.