



WSU North Puget Sound Extension Forestry E-Newsletter

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Forester's Notes

Why am I here? This is the question I ask myself way too often as I enter a room and discover that in the 15 seconds it took me to get here I have completely forgotten what it was I came in for. I also try to occasionally ask myself this in the more existential sense. For instance, why am I at in this job doing Extension Forestry programs? What is it that I'm ultimately trying to accomplish?

There are a lot of short-term answers to what I'm trying to accomplish, e.g. respond to emails, plan new workshops, answer research questions, get field work done, and get grant applications submitted. It's easy to get so focused on immediate demands that I lose track of the bigger picture. What are all these things for? What are my big overarching goals? I'm not doing this just to stay busy and pay bills—there's an ultimate purpose and a reason I'm doing this rather than some other job. If I'm not careful, I end up taking time and resources away from the things that really matter and putting them toward things that really don't fit the

mission. When I pop my head up to look around and realize that I'm off track, then comes the other question I ask way too often when I enter a room: Where am I and how did I get here?

One of the most important things we do in our programs, particularly in the Coached Planning courses, is help property owners articulate their objectives. Oftentimes folks haven't yet thought a lot about why they own forested property or what they want to accomplish as a property owner. Most people have a clear sense that they do have reasons for owning forested property, but sometimes these aren't articulated explicitly.

It is valuable to not only articulate your goals and objectives but to document them in writing. Studies have found that those who write down their goals are far more likely to achieve them. This is one of the many benefits of having a forest stewardship plan—it's a place to document your goals and objectives and attainable steps to get there.

If you have not done so already, I encourage you to take some time to think about your goals and objectives for your property and write them down. I think it's helpful to differentiate between goals and action items. Management actions like thinning, pruning, weed removal, planting, etc. are action item steps to meet more underlying objectives. For instance, I would argue that thinning isn't really an objective in and of itself. The underlying objectives usually include some combination of having a healthy forest, attracting wildlife, achieving a desired aesthetic, or increasing wood production. So as you think about what your objectives are, dig deep—keep asking “why?” until the only answer left is “because that's what I want.”

Going through our flagship Forest Stewardship Coached Planning program is a great way to establish and document goals, objectives, and action items to get there. We still have two courses left this year, both in the fall (see below). Also consider that your land will outlive you. Do you have goals and objectives for your property beyond your lifetime? Is it important to you to keep it in the family? Do you want to see it remain in forest for either wood production or to grow toward an old forest condition? These are other questions to consider. To that end we are offering a Ties to the Land succession planning workshop at the end of this month.

As we think about long-term goals and objectives for our forests or our jobs, it's also important to not lose sight of the broader picture of our lives. If we spend all our time managing forests or Extension programs at the expense of our health or time with family, we may miss the broader mark of what we want out of life.

Kevin W. Zobrist
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Serving the North Puget Sound Area

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Ties to the Land Succession Planning Workshop

9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Saturday March 31st at Carnation Farms

Your land will outlive you. Who will care for it when you're gone? Will it be a family legacy or a family squabble? Will it be kept intact and protected, or will it be divided up and sold off in pieces? Will it become a source of conflict between surviving family members? What is the long-term future that you want for your property?

Death and taxes are life's two guarantees. The Ties to the Land succession planning workshop is a chance to consider both of those in the context of your land, family, and long-term goals. Succession planning is more fundamental than estate planning. This is the "human side of estate planning" that focuses on communication within families and working together to maintain family ties to the land from generation to generation. This workshop will help you better understand the key challenges facing families who own forest and farmland and how to address those challenges in a way that works for your family.

Ties to the Land is an award-winning curriculum developed by leading estate planning experts at Oregon State University Extension and the Austin Family Business Program. Originally developed with forest owners in mind, this program is applicable to all family-owned, land-based businesses, whether forest, farm, or ranch.

The curriculum features DVD-based presentations coupled with classroom exercises facilitated by WSU Extension staff. The workshop will also feature an open Q & A session with Sarah Smyth McIntosh, an attorney specializing in estate and succession planning.

A special funding opportunity and in-kind support from Carnation Farms is allowing us to offer this at a lower cost than usual. The registration fee is \$35 for up to two family members before March 22nd, and \$45 thereafter. Bring additional family members for \$10 per person. The registration fee includes lunch and one set of materials for your family to share. Pre-registration is required. Registration closes at 5:00 p.m. Thursday March 29th.

For additional details or to register, please visit <http://forestry.wsu.edu/nps/events/ttl/>.

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Forestry Current Use Taxation Seminar for King County Property Owners

6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Thursday April 12th at the Covington Library

Learn how to reduce your King County property taxes at this free seminar. The seminar will introduce the current use taxation programs that are available to property owners with forested/wooded property in King County. There are two key programs to choose from depending on your objectives for your property: Designated Forestland and the Public Benefit Rating System (PBRs). These programs can provide qualified property owners with significant tax savings.

RSVP is appreciated. For additional details or to RSVP, please visit <http://forestry.wsu.edu/nps/events/currentuse/>.

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

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

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



Field-based, hands-on learning:

These practicums are completely field-based and centered on hands-on learning. After safety briefings, you will don protective gear (provided) to watch demonstrations and then do hands-on practicing of multiple control techniques, including hand-pulling, root digging, using a weed wrench, sheet mulching, foliar herbicides, cut stump treatments, and stem injection. You will learn about safe use of herbicides, including what products to use for specific weeds, where to get those products, how to read a label, proper safety equipment, avoiding environmental damage, pesticide laws, tank mixing, calibrating a sprayer for the proper application rate, and clean-up.



Take advantage of super-low registration costs!

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

Registration is now open for these 2018 practicums:

- **Bellingham – May 5, 2018**
http://forestry.wsu.edu/nps/events/weeds_whatcom/
- **Kent – June 2, 2018:**
http://forestry.wsu.edu/nps/events/weeds_king/
- **Mount Vernon – September 15, 2018:**
http://forestry.wsu.edu/nps/events/weeds_skagit/

This program is funded by the Washington State University Western Extension Risk Management Education Center, the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). This material is based upon work supported by USDA/NIFA under Award Number 2015-49200-24225.



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2018 Fall Coached Planning Arlington and Preston



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

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

Topics covered include:

- How do you know if your trees are healthy? What should you do if they aren't?
- What types of trees do you have? Does your forest look like a "mess"?
- Are characteristics of your property attracting or repelling the wildlife you enjoy? What can you do if wildlife cause damage?
- When should you worry about trees being hazards?
- How do you know if your trees need to be thinned, and how do you go about it?
- Are invasive and noxious weeds taking over your underbrush? What are the risks and what can you do about it?
- What kind of soil do you have and how does that affect what grows?
- What is the risk of wildfire on your property?

Save money, too:

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

Registration is now open for these upcoming 2018 Classes:

- **Preston – Fall 2018:** Wednesdays starting September 5th. For details and registration, visit <http://forestry.wsu.edu/nps/events/cppreston/>. **The Preston class sells out every year.**
- **Arlington – Fall 2018:** Tuesdays starting September 18th. For details and registration, visit <http://forestry.wsu.edu/nps/events/cpsnoco/>.

Also: There is a class for Eastern WA property owners in **Cle Elum** starting on **March 19th**: <http://forestry.wsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/Coached-Cle-Elum-low.pdf>

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Upcoming Women Owning Woodlands Events

Ladies – our local WOWnet chapter has been busy this winter, and we have two more events coming up:

Hügelkultur workshop with Liz Crain

Saturday, March 17, 2018 from 10 am – 2 pm at Leafhopper Farm in Duvall

“Who-ga-culture.” Who the what?! German for “mound or hill culture”, this ancient agricultural technique is used to construct garden beds from decaying wood debris and other compostable biomass plant materials. The process helps to improve soil fertility, water retention, and soil warming, thus benefiting plants grown on or near such mounds. Join with other women woodland owners to learn the basics of mound cultivation and view established hügelkultur mounds in use at Leafhopper Farm. Please bring your own lunch and dress for the weather! RSVP to Liz at info@leafhopperfarm.com.

Plant Partners with Liz Crain

Saturday, April 21, 2018 from 10 am – 2 pm at Leafhopper Farm in Duvall

Join with other women forest owners as you take a moment to deconstruct the green wall of vegetation which grows abundantly all around. What can you eat? What medicine grows right outside the front door? In the spring, there are so many fresh young shoots and leaves to learn about in this afternoon of shared discovery; come take a walk and find a sweet or bitter snack! Take home a new set of eyes on the landscape to better your relationship with the plants all around! Please bring your own lunch and dress for the weather! RSVP to Liz at info@leafhopperfarm.com.

Get involved with WOWnet

This informal peer-learning network is an opportunity for women to learn from other women and share resources and experiences. Our local chapter is based on an email list where members can ask questions, share stories, and arrange get-togethers. To join, please visit <http://forestry.wsu.edu/nps/wownet/> and sign up for the email list. We also have a Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/wownetworkwa/>) and a Facebook group (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/WownetworkWA/>).

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Remaining Native Tree/Plant Sales

It's not too late—there are still some chances left to take advantage of some excellent opportunities to stock up on native trees and plants. Here are the remaining 2018 sales:

Skagit Conservation District – Bow

- Pre-order deadline: Friday March 30th
- Pre-order pickup: Friday April 13th
- Walk-up sale: Saturday April 14th
- More information:
<http://www.skagitcd.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/Plant%20pages%20for%20newsletter.pdf>

Washington Native Plant Society Central Puget Sound Chapter – Mercer Island

- Saturday April 18th
- More information: <https://www.wnps.org/cps/plantsale>

Whatcom Conservation District – Bellingham

- Walk-up sale: Saturday March 24th
- More information: <http://www.whatcomcd.org/plant-sale>

Whatcom Farm Forestry Association – Lynden

- Saturday March 17th
- More information: 360-733-5931

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Other Educational Opportunities

Please note: any non-WSU events are listed for informational purposes with no implied endorsement by WSU.

NNRG Workshop: Measuring Timber and Woody Biomass in San Juan Forests

April 28th – Lopez Island

Learn how to use basic forestry tools to install inventory plots to measure timber volumes and distinguish between merchantable and non-merchantable trees. More information:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/measuring-timber-and-woody-biomass-in-san-juan-forests-tickets-41832873250>

WFFA Annual Meeting: Wildfire – Building a Community of Resilience

May 20th–22nd – Winthrop

Learn more about the science of building forest resilience, and learn from the people involved in the nuts and bolts of disaster recovery as they take you on their journey of re-building communities, and developing community resilience, neighborhood by neighborhood. While the event is framed around wildfire, our program offers insights on how to prepare for natural disasters in your neighborhood regardless of whether they come from fire, wind, water, or earth.

NNRG Workshop: How to Manufacture Biochar from Woody Biomass

June 30th – San Juan Island

Pick up all the tips and tricks San Juan forest owners have learned to safely and successfully manufacture biochar, a valuable charcoal used to amend soils. Focus will be on using woody biomass derived from forest thinning. More information: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/how-to-manufacture-biochar-from-woody-biomass-tickets-41833476053>

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Focus On: How to Tell If Your Forest Needs to Be Thinned

Density management is one of the most important factors for taking care of the trees on your property. Every site has a finite level of the resources that trees need to grow. If too many trees compete for those same finite resources, none of them get what they need and stand begins to decline. The competition for resources puts the trees under stress, resulting in poor growth and greatly increased vulnerability to damaging agents like drought, root disease, and bark beetles.

Many stands of trees do not need thinning, at least not yet. Stands that are already well-spaced and on a good growth and development trajectory may not need thinning for years, if ever, to keep growing vigorously. In other stands, thinning is so long overdue that the stand is weak, sick, and may need to be cut and replanted in order to have a better long-term future. Most stands fall somewhere in between. Where does your stand fall? Here are five ways to tell if it needs to be thinned or not.

1. **Sky test** – This is the simplest test. Enter the stand and look up. Can you see open sky between the trees, or are the individual tree crowns starting to overlap such that you can only see fragments of sky? If the tree crowns have started to overlap, this is a good indicator that the trees are competing for resources and that thinning may be needed.
2. **Understory evaluation** – This is another simple test. What do you see on the ground? A robust understory indicates that the trees are spaced wide enough such that plenty of

sunlight is reaching the forest floor. A tall shrub layer is an especially good sign, and this may include species like red elderberry, vine maple, salmonberry, and huckleberry. If the understory is sparse or is limited to things like sword fern and Oregon grape, the stand may need to be thinned. If the ground is barren because of lack of light, then there is definitely a problem.

3. **Diameter spacing** – The average tree spacing in feet should be more than the average diameter in inches. In other words, if your average tree diameter is 8 inches, the average space between them should be more than 8 feet (sometimes significantly more depending on the type of tree). If your 8-inch trees are spaced only 7 feet apart, you have a problem. If you have shade-intolerant trees like Douglas-fir, your trees should be no closer in feet than diameter plus 4. For our 8-inch tree example, thin if they are 12 feet apart or closer.
4. **Live crown recession** – This test is particularly important. As trees become overcrowded, they shade each other's lower branches. Layer by layer from the bottom up, these lower branches die due to lack of light. Thus, the base of the live crown (the vertical portion of the tree that's still green) recedes upward. Some level of crown recession is normal, and forest managers have sometimes relied on this phenomenon to allow the trees to "self-prune" (with varying levels of success). Live crown recession can quickly get out of hand, though. A 50% live crown (i.e. the top 50% of the vertical height of the tree is green) is considered healthy. If trees are kept too dense for too long, the crown recedes into an unhealthy range. If it is down to 30%, there may be an imminent need for thinning. If it's below 30%, things may be getting desperate and even beyond the point of no return. In these situations we would say that the "thinning window" was missed. These stands are difficult to deal with as none of the options at that point are particularly desirable.
5. **Ring growth** – When trees don't have enough resources, they become stressed and have to prioritize how scarce resources are used. The number one priority, with a nod to the Bee Gees, is staying alive. The lowest priorities are insect and disease resistance and diameter growth. The tree will continue growing in height after it has stopped growing in diameter, as it knows it needs to get above its neighbors and win the battle for sunlight if it's going to survive. Overcrowded trees end up getting too tall for their girth and become unstable. Using an increment borer (the same tool we use to assess the age of a tree), you can extract a sliver of wood from the outer 1 – 2 inches of the tree and look at the tree ring spacing. If the rings have suddenly become really narrow and tight, this means that diameter growth is grinding to a halt. If diameter growth is slowing or stopping, you know that the trees are stressed and also that they have lost their resistance to insects and diseases. Thinning is needed in these situations.

It is good to use a combination of these ways to make a determination about whether thinning is needed and how badly. As a property owner you can employ any of these methods on your own, and the first four require no equipment. The last method requires an increment borer, which costs several hundred dollars. This tool is an excellent investment, though, as taking

periodic core samples can tell you a lot about the health of the trees. Taking core samples is not harmful to the tree.

If you think your stand might need to be thinned, a consulting forester can help you make a final determination, advise you on how wide to thin, help you choose which trees to keep vs. remove, and set up the thinning operation in the most economical way. If the trees to be thinned are merchantable, you may even make a little money in the end. WSU Extension maintains a directory of consulting foresters in the area at <http://forestry.wsu.edu/consultingdirectory/>. You can also take one of our [Coached Planning classes](#) to learn much more detail about how to assess your property's needs in the contexts of your objectives, walk through your woods with a state stewardship forester, and develop a solid game plan for the future.

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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 21 days prior to the event.