Native Plant Sale & Expo
SATURDAY, MARCH 21 • 9AM-4PM • BELLINGHAM

New Plant Sale Venue!
This year’s sale will be held on the campus of Whatcom Community College (WCC). WCC and the Community Food Coop have stepped up to be generous community partners to help us better serve our plant sale customers. WCC and the Food Coop also share in our mission of serving Whatcom County residents with education, stewardship and sustainability choices.

Open Sale
It’s your chance to purchase low cost native plants and get your questions answered about native plants, planting techniques, composting, local agriculture, restoration opportunities and more. Pre-Order deadline Friday, March 6, 2008. Pre-order pick-ups Friday, March 20th 9:00 am-3:30 pm on the campus of Whatcom Community College. See insert.

District Welcomes New Employee – Nichole Emberton
Nichole recently joined the District to help with nutrient management plan implementation and to create a new Sustainable Livestock Production Program focusing on providing practical knowledge and solutions to environmental issues faced by livestock producers. The District’s new program will address environmental issues on farms in a whole systems approach; looking at air, water, soil, economical, and social impacts together. It is the goal of the program to provide Washington livestock operators comprehensive education, effective management practices, and guidance through new and emerging environmental issues.

Open Sale

New plant sale partner
Whatcom Community College Focuses on Sustainability
It started as the “Issue of the Year” at Whatcom Community College in 2006 – a campus-wide focus on sustainability and climate change. In mid-2007, the issue was officially incorporated into the College’s Strategic Plan. “It was obvious that sustainability was very important to our whole campus community,” explains Linda Maier, Dean for Workforce Education.

Since then, many steps have been taken to reduce the carbon footprint of the institution, including expand-

WCD Welcomes Two New Board Members
Whatcom Conservation District Board of Supervisors
Dick Yoder – Chair
Dr. Ed Stone, DVM – Vice Chair
Sabina Gouran – Secretary/Treasurer

Joe Heller – Supervisor
Terry Lenssen – Supervisor

The Whatcom Conservation District is governed by a board of five supervisors, all local residents. Formed in 1946, the WCD serves all of Whatcom County and is committed to fostering sustainable stewardship practices. Our board of supervisors work to guide and direct the programs and staff at the Agricultural Service Center in Lynden. Our current board is a diverse group,

Joe Heller, Supervisor
Joe joined the Board in May of 2008. He is a Whatcom County native, raised on a dairy/beef farm in the Kendall area. Joe holds a Forestry Degree from University of Washington (1971) and recently retired after a 35-year career with the U.S. Forest Service. His experience with timber management, watershed, recreation and wildland fire operations in Oregon and Washington will benefit the WCD programs, goals and mission.

Terry Lenssen, Supervisor
Terry also joined the board in May of 2008. He is a lifelong Lynden resident who grew up on a dairy farm near the border. Terry and his wife have two girls and live in Lynden. Recently, he and his brother purchased the family farm from their parents. Terry says that, “This has made me more aware and concerned about the issues relating to farming. Over the last eight years, our operation has grown and continues to do so. By joining this board, I feel I am able to get involved with the limited agricultural land base that we have but also to balance that with protecting the wildlife habitat around us. I look forward to serving the community with the great staff we have at the office.”
Whatcom Conservation District will continue to provide opportunities to local farmers. Our program strives to assist landowners with Best Management Practices and Critical Areas (streams, lakes, wetlands) protection. Whatcom County’s Critical Area Ordinance requires you to either abide by standard buffer widths documented in the ordinance or, if you qualify as ongoing agricultural use, to operate under a farm conservation plan may allow you to decrease the size of the buffers around your critical areas.

If you are farming property on which a critical area is located you can take part in the Conservation Program on Ag Lands (CPAL). The CPAL program is designed to offer flexibility to Whatcom County’s Critical Area Ordinance. Whatcom Conservation District will continue to provide opportunities to local residents to learn more about the CPAL this spring.

WORKSHOP TOPICS INCLUDE:
• Streams and Wetlands: Living with Livestock Near Water
• Mud and Manure Management: Improved Confinement Areas and Animal Health
• Local Regulatory Requirements Affecting Your Farm
• Pasture Management and MORE!

Small Farm Expo a Great Success!

Our first ever Small Farm EXPO held this past fall in Ferndale was a great success. Over 80 local livestock owners enjoyed this event and received information from 15 different businesses and organizations that support the agricultural industry. Thanks to all our partners and participants:

- Washington State University
- Farm Friends
- Sustainable Connections
- Northwest Ag Business Center
- Gallagher Fencing Company
- Local Seed Rep — Laurel Farm Supply
- Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association (NSEA)
- Whatcom Co. Noxious Weed Control
- Whatcom County Planning and Development Services
- Whatcom County Health Dept., Compost and Septic Regulations
- Kulshan Veterinarian Hospital
- Local 4H Clubs — leaders Darlene Westoff, Dave Weisenhorn
- Whatcom Educational Credit Union, Ferndale Branch

Need help with livestock Best Management Practices? Interested in upcoming Small Farm Events? Contact Beth or Chuck at the WCD for more information or visit www.whatcomcd.org.

Eight Farming Practices That Help Protect Puget Sound

Focusing on practices that benefit natural resources.

Additional information on these actions and other Best Management Practices can be found at www.whatcomcd.org.

FARM ACTION | BENEFITS TO PUGET SOUND
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**Improve forage production in pastures and hay fields.** Plants are the gatekeepers to the relationship between farms and the environment. Healthy plants generally indicate a positive environmental relationship while unhealthy plants usually indicate something is wrong.

Farming as a land use has a very positive role to play in protecting Puget Sound from pressure brought about by development. Plants help keep nutrients, soil, and pathogens such as E. coli bacteria from entering water, and they reduce the rate of surface runoff.

**Give pastures a rest.** Do not graze livestock after the growing season ends (usually sometime in October). Go into the rainy season (October) with at least 3 inches of forage covering fields. Don’t start grazing until vigorous growth begins in March or April.

Soils retain more precipitation and/or have lower rates of surface runoff if they haven’t been compacted. Lower rates of surface runoff improve stream conditions for salmon by reducing the severity of flooding and regulating stream flows.

**Maintain winter livestock confinement areas.** Find the minimum size needed to ensure livestock comfort and safety. Strive for quality over quantity. Reducing confinement area reduces the volume of precipitation mixing with manure and increases the likelihood it can be collected and stored properly. Reducing confinement area size also creates new areas for pasture.

Once manure comes in contact with water it is much harder to handle and prevent from becoming a pollutant. Confinement areas protect streams by collecting and storing manure away from water.

**Farm with caution in areas within 50 feet or more of ditches, streams and wetlands.** Learn to treat these sensitive areas as the last line of defense that prevents contaminants from leaving your farm. It is important to maintain a vigorous stand of perennial forages, to establish generous “set-backs” for applying manure, and to keep livestock out when the growing season has ended.

Livestock manure is one of the main sources of fecal coliform bacteria in Puget Sound so preventing manure from entering water will help protect commercial and recreational shellfish beds.

**Raise your own feed.** If possible, increase the amount of feed raised on the farm as a percentage of the total amount required to meet your livestock feed requirements. Make it a goal to reduce purchased feed through the grazing season (April through October).

Agricultural producers elevate their overall level of management when they focus on increasing the amount of on-farm feed they raise. Improving forage production will generally reduce practices that contribute to the pollution of water by nutrients, sediment and pathogens and also help to reduce the rate of surface runoff.

**Subdivide pastures so they provide livestock with no more than a week’s worth of grazing (less is even better).** Then move them to another pasture. Unless pastures are subdivided, livestock will overgraze the plants they like and pass the ones they don’t.

Dividing fields into smaller grazing units is another practice that increases forage production and helps prevent pollution.

**Plant trees.**

Puget Sound salmon will love you for it if you plant trees near water. Trees provide salmon with food and shelter and help shade streams to keep water cool and clear.

**Implement a Conservation Plan.** Use Whatcom County’s Standard Farm Conservation Plan Workbook to develop an Action Plan. Workbooks are available at Whatcom County Planning & Development Services

The 34 question checklist in the Workbook will help livestock producers determine if any of their current farming practices are adversely affecting Puget Sound and what they can do to correct it.
**Announcements & Links**

- Whatcom Farm Friends is now coordinating the Farmers Growing Trees for Salmon project and are looking for volunteers in March to help plant 25,000 Western Red Cedar, Sitka Spruce and Douglas Fir trees on designated farm fields. The tentative dates for field planting are March 7 and 14. Cooperating farmers will grow the trees for one year and in spring of 2010, there will be a FREE Tree Give-Away. These young trees will need a home along waterways (streams, river, wetland, pond or lake) throughout Whatcom County. Call the Whatcom Farm Friends office to volunteer or for more information 354-337.

- WA State Dept. of Agriculture’s (WSDA) Small Farm and Direct Marketing Program works with farmers, farmers markets, chefs and non-profit organizations to connect consumers directly to farmers who sell fresh, local products. They partner with public and private organizations to increase the economic viability of family farms and strengthen Washington’s local food systems. Contact Fred Berman – Program Coordinator (360) 676-2059 (Bellingham) smallfarms@agr.wa.gov.

- Farm Service Agency (FSA) Beginning Farmer and Rancher Financing available. FSA’s loan programs are designed to help family farmers. The law also requires FSA to reserve or target loan funds for exclusive use by beginning farmers. A beginning farmer or rancher is an individual or entity who:
  - Has not operated a farm or ranch for more than 10 years
  - Substantially participates in the operation
  - For Farm Ownership loan purposes, does not own a farm greater than 30per cent of the average size farm in Whatcom County and must have participated in the business operation of the farm for at least 3 years.

For more information about FSA loan programs, contact Mark Tumer, 360-354-5658, ext. 106.

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**NATIVE PLANT PROFILE:**

**Snowberry – Symphoricarpos albus**

Snowberry is found in woodlands, roadsides and along field borders throughout Whatcom County. It is commonly found along small streams like Tenmile Creek, along the Nooksack River, and in most other riparian areas. Snowberry is one of the most adaptable native plants; it grows well in the sun or shade and thrives in most soil types including soils with high clay content. This finely branched deciduous shrub can reach up to six feet tall in sunny areas. Snowberry flowers are small, light pink, and bloom May through July. While waxy berries follow in late summer and fall and often last throughout the winter. These bright “popcorn” berries are a welcome site in the winter and are easily recognized throughout Whatcom County Park trails, or along forested edges of local roads.

Are the white berries edible or poisonous? Snowberries contain a bitter compound that our bodies do not digest well. Birds do eat snowberries but wait until most other native berries are gone. Snowberry is best utilized by wildlife for its dense thicket forming growth habit, which makes excellent cover for the following animals: squirrels, rabbits, voles, mice, coyote, raccoon, bobcat and mink. Birds that use snowberry for cover and nesting include ruffed grouse, chickadee, junco, varied thrush, goldfinch and western flycatcher. The Snowberry Clearwing moth and the Vashti sphinx moth rely on the snowberry flower. Look at the above fall 2008 photo of a snowberry planted in the spring in one of our CREP projects!!

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**New Book by Dairy Farmer Celebrates Local Agriculture “Food for the Body, Mind and Soul...Whatcom County Agriculture” By Cheryl DeHaan**

“A picture is said to be worth a thousand words. As a person who has been using many words for many years to try to describe what is special about Whatcom County farms I am thrilled to enjoy Cheryl’s photo collection. This book paints a beautiful picture of the productive soils and natural resources that sustain us and celebrates the hardworking farmers that steward those resources. Take the opportunity to reconnect with the land that sustains us, the farm economy that enriches us, and the people and place that we call home.” Henry Berlink, Policy Director Whatcom Farm Friends.

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**Two District Employees Receive State Recognition**

- Bill Bonsen
- Chris Clark

Two Whatcom Conservation District (WCD) employees were honored this December at the Washington Association of Conservation Districts’ annual meeting in Wenatchee. Bill Bonsen and Chris Clark received the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Individual Partnership Award for their joint efforts.

Bill Bonsen and Chris Clark acted in true partnership to help the NRCS. Bill and Chris work efficiently and effectively, while respecting NRCS engineering standards. Together they provided critical support to the mission of the NRCS by completing the design of over 40 structural conservation practices for Whatcom County Dairy farms in 2008.

In 2006, Bill retired from NRCS after 47 of service. He has since returned to our office to help the WCD with design projects. Bill has not let his retirement or health issues or retirement get in the way of his continued service to local ag producers.

Bill and Chris have worked closely with the NRCS staff to provide effective technical assistance for the implementation of Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) contracts throughout Whatcom County in 2008. Without the contribution of these partners, the NRCS would not be able to provide the outstanding level of service that agricultural community in Whatcom County has come to expect over the years. Along with NRCS employees, Joy Hawley, Marty Rankin, and Alex Hall, Bill and Chris provide an example of team work for the rest of the state to strive towards.

Congratulations Bill and Chris!
Recycled Tree Protectors Available at this Year’s Plant Sale

Raingarden Posters Available for sale along with other Good Natured Publishing Posters.

This year Norplex tree protectors (blue tubes) are not on the plant sale order form. Instead WCD will offer FREE used tubes. The tubes will be available at our open sale and you can purchase the bamboo stake that goes with it. If you are placing a large pre-order or just need a large quantity of tubes give us a call and we can arrange a pick up time. If you prefer new blue tubes please contact us for more information.

The CREP program annually uses 60,000 blue tubes to protect the tree seedlings that are planted on streams throughout Whatcom County. These tubes are removed from the tree after the trees have reached a free-to-grow stage (usually 2-3 years). In an effort to reduce, reuse and recycle we will be giving away blue tubes at this year’s annual plant sale. Many of you have purchased tubes at past sales but these plastic protectors are so durable they can be used again and again.

The blue tubes, otherwise known as Norplex tree protectors, are made of high density poly-ethylene (HDPE) and help give young seedlings a good start in the field by shielding them from toothy voles, mice, deer and beaver. The tubes also help insulate seedlings from wind and harsh conditions, protect them from weed whackers, and from herbicides, and control competitive grass and weeds during the establishment period.

Low Impact Development Practices Add Beauty to Your Landscape

Raingardens are one of the most versatile and effective tools in a new approach to managing stormwater. They are a great way to add beautiful landscaping to your yard and protect nearby streams, lakes and rivers.

What is a raingarden? A raingarden is a shallow depression that absorbs runoff from roofs, driveways and other impervious surfaces allowing rainwater to soak into the ground slowly instead of running off directly into waterways. Specific plant species are selected to effectively trap pollutants and sediments.

Help us plan for our Saturday Open Sale – if you are interested in a pre-bundled raingarden kit please visit our website or call for more information. The bundles will include: Ferns, Sedges, Oregon Grape, Mock Orange, Red Flowering currant, Snowberry and more!

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including a beef producer, a dairy producer, a local small animal veterinarian, a retired forester and a Whatcom County environmental health dept employee.

Dick Yoder, Chair

Dick Yoder is a Custer area cattle man. During the 40 years Dick has farmed in Whatcom County he has been a dairy producer and a crop grower. Dick also grows beans, corn and helped人造 fragments and control weeds in his farm operation. He and his sons maintain as many as 500 Herffords (200 cow-calf pairs plus replacements and bulls). Dick also grows beef sheep and silage corn as rotation crops on some of their hay and pasture land. Dr. Ed Stone, DVM, Vice-Chair

Ed grew up on a farm in the Appalachian mountains of southwestern Virginia. Being around animals from an early age influenced his desire to become a veterinarian. He attended undergraduate school at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University and graduated from The Ohio State University College of Veterinary Medicine in 1982 (where he met and married Dr. Schraeder). He practiced in New Jersey before moving to Bellingham in 1986. Ed and his wife Michelle, own and operate Mountain Veterinary Clinic on Mt Baker Hwy. His love of the outdoors drew him to this area and when he is not at the clinic, he is doing outdoor projects at home or hiking the mountains with the dogs.

Sabina Gouran, Secretary/Treasurer

Sabina has a B.S in Environmental Science with an emphasis on wetlands. As a post baccalaureate student, she took a year of graduate courses in hydrology. After graduating, Sabina worked for Gifford Pinchot National Forest as a tree climber, installing bird and bat boxes. She also worked for a consulting firm in Seattle delineating wetlands and developing wetland mitigation plans. Sabina brought her forestry and wetlands experience to the Whatcom Conservation District where she worked as a CREP technician from 2000-2004 helping landowners find a balance between farming and environmental protection. Now Sabina continues to share her knowledge as a Supervisor on the Board. Sabina is a mother of three young girls and lives with her husband Brian in Bellingham. She currently works for the Whatcom County Health Department. She enjoys gardening, travel and chasing her girls around.

WCD Notice of Election

The WCD is Looking for New Supervisors

Do you have the time and desire to help conserve natural resources in Whatcom County? If so, Whatcom Conservation District is seeking enthusiastic volunteers to fill two positions on its Board of Supervisors. Supervisors serve without compensation, guide policy, and set the work plan for the District. One Board position is locally elected and one is appointed by the WA Conservation Commission. Eligible candidates must be registered voters in Whatcom County. Commitments include committee meetings, monthly board meetings and special events. The election will be held 9am-6pm on March 10, 2009 at the WCD Office, 6875 Hansen Road, Lynden WA. Candidate forms and further information can be obtained at the Whatcom Conservation District office (Monday – Friday 8am to 4pm), by email [at] wcd@whatcomcd.org or call (360) 354-2035 x 3. Or visit the WA Conservation Commission’s website at http://www.scc.wa.gov/ or (360) 407-6200.