

CONSERVATION NEWS

MORTON COUNTY SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Landscaping is Not Just Scenery ❄️

Volume 20, no 1

By: Ted Becker, Morton County SCD Board Chairman



Usually when we think of planting, we think of how the planting will appear as the plants grow including colors in different seasons. These are important but there can be much more. We can design plantings for multiple purposes.

Plantings can be home to a large variety of birds. The bushes and trees can provide both food and shelter. Good nesting trees are attractive and usually get residents. Some Crabapples hold their fruit up all winter and provide food when they need it. Evergreens, especially spruce and junipers, are good shelter in both summer and winter. Plantings also are places for insects and other creatures such as worms to live. Many birds enjoy eating them. Some of these insects pollinate the flowers and vegetables in our gardens. Many plants in our gardens need to be pollinated to set fruit. Some pollinators, such as butterflies, are simply pretty.

Frequently we choose edible landscapes. Plum, chokecherry, apple and others give us harvest of fruit if we can best the birds. Both bushes and trees can be used depending on design. Some of the other benefits of landscaping can be wind reduction, temperature moderation, dust, and snow control. Depending on the location and design, there can be some noise reduction.

It would be nice to have all plantings do everything. Some plants are better than others for particular use. The best way to have a good planting is to decide your priorities before the plan. Then a plan, including specific plants, need to be developed. The soil type may control which plants will grow in a particular location. The emphasis changes for bird watching, fall color or lilacs for cut flowers and so on. We do our best to design a plan to fulfill your goals.



Conservation Stewardship Program, CSP, Sign-up NOW for 2015

The deadline—February 27, 2015—is rapidly approaching to apply for enrollment in the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). CSP is a competitive NRCS program that encourages maintaining, improving, and adding additional conservation to ag operations. “The program is great for farmers and ranchers already using conservation practices on their operations,” says Michele Doyle, NRCS District Conservationist. “You’re financially rewarded for things that you already do, and additionally rewarded for taking your good conservation practices up a notch.”

The sign-up process asks applicants to answer some questions about current conservation practices on their land and to select enhancements to “kick it up a notch”. The competitive ranking process considers existing conservation and proposed enhancements to determine who will receive funding. Program details and the full list of enhancements can be found on the NRCS website at: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/>. Click on Programs tab and scroll down the page to Stewardship Programs. Click on the link: 2015 Conservation Stewardship Program – Payment for Performance.

The Morton County NRCS has worked with more than 15 farmers who have successfully applied for CSP dollars. “The participants are happy with the program. For some it was the incentive they needed to get going on the good intentions [management, record keeping] they’d been thinking about but never took the time to do,” says Doyle. The process may require a few visits to the NRCS office, so interested applicants should start the process as soon as possible. Doyle says it’s helpful for applicants to start working on the forms at home. “The more homework they get done, the faster the process goes in the office.”

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SCD Supervisors:

Ted Becker
Travis Wolf
Jim Hopfauf
Rocky Bateman
Aaron Steckler

Advisory Supervisors:

Duane Olsen
Don Tanaka

District Personnel:

Beth McCleary
Joseph Stegmiller
John Bauer

County Agent:

Jackie Buckley

NRCS Personnel:

Michele Doyle
Paula Kvernum
Sharon Potts-Saylor

Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Biologist:

Justin Edwards

2014 Annual Report

January— The Morton County SCD presented its 2014 Winter workshop featuring Temple Grandin! There were over 300 people who attended the workshop.



The Morton County SCD Board of Directors

reorganized and Jim Hopfauf was re-elected as Chairman.

February— MCSCD presented at the 2014



KFYR Living Ag Classroom. Justin Edwards from Pheasants Forever and Brandon Alvethere from the District gave the children a presentation on trees. Fourth graders from across North Dakota came to the Bismarck Event Center to listen to all the different businesses give presentations.

March— The Morton County SCD attended the Area IV Results meeting.

The SCD kicked off the Soil Health Mentor Project bringing Dr. Don Tanaka in as a mentor to the project participants.

Friends and neighbors gathered for a Shop Talk at Duric Hoff's shop. Discussion topics fo-



ocused on improving soil health through the use of cover crops and diversifying crop rotations.

April— The Morton County SCD hired two new employees in April. Joseph Stegmiller was hired as the new 319 Watershed Coordinator. Joseph is from Flasher, ND and grew up on the family farm/ranch. Joseph received his Bachelor's Degree in zoology and a Master's Degree in entomology.



The Morton County SCD also hired Beth McCleary as the new District Secretary. Beth is originally from Lincoln, ND but moved to Bismarck in 2011. Beth was the Miscellaneous Clerk at the NRCS State office in Bismarck while attending Bismarck High School.



Water Fest—Morton County SCD hosted Water Festival again for Schools of Morton County. The kids loved the interactive teaching techniques.



May— The beginning of May started off with the SCD Hand Plant and Replacement Tree pick-up sale where the district sold 8,548 trees.

With weather permitting the SCD staff and Tree crew started planting trees for the 2014 planting season.



The SCD staff created a Facebook page to keep Morton County residence up to date with upcoming events and information!

Please like us on Facebook and stay connected!



June– The SCD staff and tree crew finished the tree planting season and planted a total of 103,039 lineal feet of trees. The SCD staff and tree crew then started applying fabric. The SCD sold their excess trees in New Salem and sold 2,786 surplus trees. The SCD Board and staff members attended the Area IV Meeting which was held in McClusky, ND.



July– The District hosted a Soil Health Mentor Tour on cover crops.



The SCD staff and tree crew finished applying fabric and finished the season with a total of 87,686 lineal feet of fabric.

August– The District hired John Bauer as the new District Technician. John is originally from Michigan where he attended Michigan Technological University where he received his Bachelors of Science in Forestry in 2008; and also attended Gogebic Community College where he received his Utility Technician Certificate in 2010.



September– The District hosted a Solar Range Tour Southwest of Ft. Rice. Fred Nass from NRCS presented information on Solar Watering Facilities. Mike Gerbig from NRCS and David Toledo from Northern Great Plains Research Laboratory presented information on grazing rotations and plant ID.



October– The District sold their 1991 Ford F250 Diesel truck and a John Deere 2640 Tractor on sealed bids. The District plans on purchasing a newer tractor for the 2015 planting season.



The SCD held 3 Soil Health Tours in October. The tours focused on Soil Health and included a demonstration from Jay Fuhrer on the rain-fall simulator.

November– The Morton County SCD Supervisors and staff attended the North Dakota Association of Soil Conservation Districts Annual Meeting held in Bismarck at the Ramkota Inn. The Morton County SCD 2014 Conservation Achievement winner Lance Gartner and Family were honored.



December- The Morton County SCD Supervisors and staff held a Holiday themed board meeting at Ted Becker's house to celebrate a great year. The District sponsored the TREES Program presented by Tom Gibson. Tom presented to Morton County Elementary Schools and the kids really enjoyed him.



Range improvement practices installed in 2014:

- 4 livestock water wells and 8 pumps including solar powered
- Over 49,500 feet of livestock water pipelines and more than 20 tanks
- Over 26,800 feet cross fencing
- 2 portable windbreak fences on cropland
- Over 580 acres of hayland and pasture planting



Wildlife Habitat Programs Available!



There are still acres available through the CP-38E Pheasant SAFE Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) provided by the United States Department of Agriculture. CP-38E targets the Southwest part of North Dakota. The goal of this program is to help increase both quantity and quality of habitat in our major pheasant population areas in the state.

Portions of fields that may be difficult to farm for various reasons such as too wet, areas too small to get equipment into, or produce poor yields are examples of excellent locations to convert into wildlife habitat. If these areas are adjacent to existing habitat that is even better!

There are several incentives and payments to help landowners establish habitat on their land in addition to average county soil rental rate. First, there is a 50% cost share for establishment costs (soil prep, grass seed, and planting costs). Second, there is an additional practice incentive payment (PIP) of 40% for establishment costs to supplement the 50% cost share mentioned earlier. Finally, there is a one-time up front sign up incentive payment (SIP) on newly enrolled grass at \$10 per acre per year up to ten years.

Another option that can be done to help supplement the costs of establishment and provide a little extra rental payment is to sign up for the North Dakota Game and Fish Private Lands Open to Sportsman (PLOTS) program. When coupled with CRP, the PLOTS program will provide an access payment of \$6 per acre per year (in one up-front lump sum) and will pay the remainder of the establishment costs (up to 100%).

If you are interested you can contact your local FSA office or Justin Edwards- Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Biologist: 701-667-1163 jedwards@pheasantsforever.org

Farming for the Bottom Line

Please plan on joining us for Farming for the Bottom Line, Monday, March 2, 2015. This FREE 1 day seminar is brought to you by Area 4 SCD Cooperative Research Farm, Bismarck State College Agricultural Department, NDSU Extension Service, ND Agricultural Experiment Station, USDA Northern Great Plains Research Laboratory and the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service.



The Seminar will be held at **Bismarck State College, National Energy Center of Excellence, Bavendick State Room** starting at 10:00 a.m. CT.

For more information or to register please go online at www.bityurl.com/00f6c2 or call the NDSU Extension Service of Morton County at 701-667-3340. Registration deadline for this Free seminar is February 23, 2015.

Winter Workshop Well Attended

Close to 100 were in attendance to learn how to “Teach Your Livestock to Eat Noxious Weeds” at the Morton SCD’s annual day long Winter Workshop. Kathy Voth, Livestock For Landscapes, LLC, presented her proven technique for teaching cattle to explore grazing unfamiliar plants, including noxious weeds. Using slides and video, Voth explained the “education” could be completed in as little as 7 days. Other popular topics that day included nutritional requirements of cattle by Dr. Blaine Hopfauf who tied in the nutrient value of weeds with the nutritional needs of cattle. Bio control of weeds and herbicide resistance were presented by Ron Moehring-SD Dept Ag, and Dr. Brian Jenks-NDSU Extension Center, Minot.



Soil Health “Shop Talks” in Morton County

Morton County producers interested in improving their soil health are hosting “Shop Talk” sessions this winter. The sessions are informal and relaxed get-togethers of neighbors, and the setting is someplace warm - usually in the host’s shop. The evening’s discussion is facilitated by Soil Health Mentor and SCD Associate Board member, Dr. Don Tanaka, retired ARS agronomist. Some of the NRCS and SCD staff are also on hand to contribute to the information. The soil health topics and conversation flows in whatever direction the group takes it. Jim Hopfauf, Flasher, hosted the most recent shop talk with about 12 neighbors dropping in. Cover crops for soil health were the focus of the evening. Cover crop species, mixes, planting dates, and especially grazing of cover crops kept the group animated for several hours. Please contact the SCD staff if you’re interested in hosting a “Shop Talk”. We’ll be happy to help you set it up.

2015 Women's Ag Day Bling Out Your Yard with flowers & trees

You're Invited

The Morton County SCD is hosting its 2015 Women's Ag Day and you're invited! Please feel free to wear your best costume jewelry and your best "bling". The evening will be filled with education on flowers, pollinators and trees so you can learn how to "bling" out your yard! The Morton County SCD will be providing a complimentary supper. Our featured speakers this year will be Craig Stange, Jackie Buckley, and Dave Dewald.

Thursday, March 12th, 2015

Seating begins at 6:00 pm CDT

Program starts at 6:30 pm

Baymont Inn & Suites Motel (formerly Seven Seas Hotel)
(2611 Old Red Trail, Mandan)



There will be limited seating for supper, so please register by March 5th 2015. You are welcome to bring a friend or neighbor. Please call 701-667-1163 ext. 3 or return the registration form below to Morton County SCD 2540 Overlook Lane Mandan, ND 58554 to reserve your spot!

Morton County SCD 2015 Women's Ag Day Registration

Please return this registration form to:

Morton County SCD 2540 Overlook Lane Mandan, ND 58554

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Number to attend: _____

Friend's Name: _____

Facts & Figures

By: John Bauer

Looking at the 2015 planting season. I have come up with a few unique numbers such as: the top five species requested, follow by species the district still has left in abundance.

Do you have your trees ordered? If not, please review and consider 2015 an opportunity.

The Five Species most requested this year **as seen in Figure 1** are: Rocky Mountain Juniper, American Plum, Wolfberry, Common Lilac, and Hansen Hedge Rose.

Trees Still Available

Native species available for handplant tree orders **as seen in Figure 2** are: Wolfberry, Green Ash, Bur Oak, Golden Currant, Sand Cherry, Common Chokecherry, and Sumac Skunkbush.

Non-native species available for tree orders **as seen in Figure 3** are: Hansen Hedge Rose, Common Lilac, Caragana, and Siberian Elm. Also we have many other varieties still able to get by request. Please feel free to call or ask availability.

Reminder **Ground Preparation** is key to tree survival- black soil is best.

Once soil is exposed to natural elements; Creeping Jenny, Smooth Brome Grass, and Canada Thistle are common and may take over tree plantings.

Monitoring and Maintenance is not just a single process but has multiple parts. Please review your site if you have not done so since fall.

Field stubble should be kept to a minimal for placing fabric.

Planting into sod is **NOT** recommended and we need to be reminded that it's **NOT** beneficial for growth of new tree seedlings.

As a producer you need to record your maintenance and track the changes seen in the field. By following an established plan together we can see beneficial results.

The Morton County Soil Conservation District is also looking for seasonal part-time tree crew members.

If you are interested in becoming apart of the team please contact John Bauer at

John.Bauer3@ND.nacdnet.net or call 701-667-1163 ext. 105

Figure 1: Top Five Species Requested for 2015

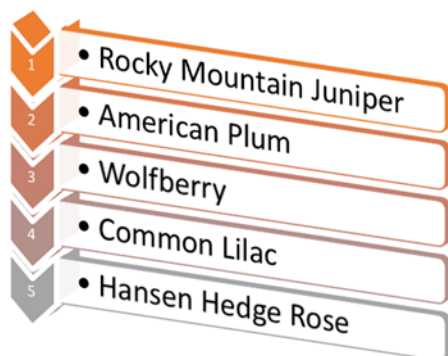


Figure 2: Native Species Still Available for Hand Plant Orders

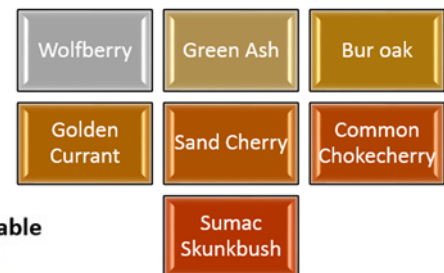


Figure 3: Non-Native Species Still Available



Morton County Northeastern Watershed Project

Providing **technical** and **financial** assistance in the:

Crown Butte, Otter Creek/Harmon Lake, Square Butte, and Sweet Briar Watersheds

60% Cost Shared Available for these Practices:

Cropland Management

Cover Crops

Nutrient Management

Saline Soil Management

Grassed Waterways

Forage Plantings



Rangeland Management

Prescribed Grazing

Pipelines

Range Planting

Cross Fencing



Also Available for 60% Cost Share:

Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment

Wildlife Plantings

Septic System Renovations



For more information or questions, Contact Joseph Stegmiller at (701)667-1163 ext. 3

MORTON COUNTY SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT

2540 OVERLOOK LANE
MANDAN, ND 58554-1593

Phone: 701-667-1163 ext. 3

Non-Profit Organization

U. S. POSTAGE

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BISMARCK, ND

Permit No. 433

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

All Programs and Services of the Soil Conservation District are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, marital status, age, or handicap.

Pheasant Fun Fact

Did You Know?

Through most of the growing season, pheasants can survive on the moisture they consume in insects and the morning dew on vegetation.



UPCOMING EVENTS

March

- 2nd—Farming for the Bottom Line @ BSC
- 12th— Women's Ag Day—Baymont, Mandan
- 17th—SCD Board Meeting @ USDA Service Center, Mandan
- 19th—Morton County Ag Day @ Open Road Honda

April

- 9th—SCD Board Meeting @ USDA Service Center, Mandan
- 14th—Morton County Water Festival—Mandan Nazarene Church