

Soil & Water Conservation District

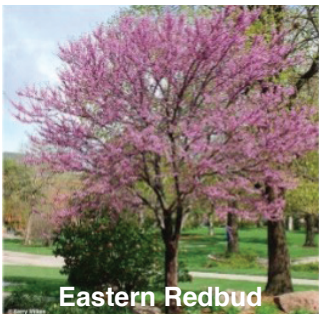
Volume 71, Issue 1

NEWSLETTER

February 2023

Our Tree and Shrub Sale is Expanding!

By Lyndsy Hilder, District Technician



Eastern Redbud



Native Ferns



Quick Bloom Wildflowers



Perennial Low Grow Wildflowers

As the times continue to change, we must change with them. In the recent years, more and more people have been switching to solely using credit cards instead of cash as payment as it is more convenient for them. So far, we had not been able to accept credit cards, until this year. We have been working to set up a Square website to provide our customers with the ability to pay with their credit card online instead of having to send in cash or a check with their order form. **WE WILL STILL BE ACCEPTING CASH OR CHECKS MAILED WITH ORDER FORMS.** We do not want to change things rapidly as there are still those who prefer to use cash or check for purchases such as this. We will also be able to take credit card payments at our office or even day of at our tree and shrub sale if anyone chooses to add to their order and use a credit card as payment. Our website will feature plenty of information regarding pickup, how to choose a tree species and how to plant it, frequently asked questions and offers a simple ordering process.

We have also changed our ordering options that we have offered in the past years to make things easier for everyone and to ensure that everyone gets what they ordered. Instead of offering multiple different bundle sizes, we are offering our conifers in bundles of 25 and our hardwoods and shrubs in bundles of 10.

New species:

- **Eastern Redbud:** A wonderful, early-blooming native shrub that brings beauty to an area and provides excellent habitat and early food sources for a variety of native pollinators and wildlife.

- **Native Fern Grab Bag:** A mix of 3-4 native fern species that produce lush green fronds that will reappear every year. Easy to maintain and prevent soil erosion. Fern species may include: Lady Fern, Hay Scented Fern,

Christmas Fern, New York Fern, Ostrich Fern, Cinnamon Fern, Maidenhair Fern, Marginal Wood Fern, or Toothed Wood Fern.

- **Quick Bloom Wildflower Seed Mix:** The perfect mix of 26 quick blooming, colorful annuals that will bloom in just a short time after planting and hardy perennials for the next season. Great for whole fields, cut flower gardens, areas that need to be filled in or some quick color in the garden.

- **Perennial Low Grow Wildflower Seed Mix:** A great perennial mix that stays shorter than traditional mixes, at approximately 2-3 feet in height. This is a mix for the serious wildflower gardener who doesn't mind waiting a year for bloom but really wants to invest in a permanent planting that should increase in color year after year.

- **Partial Shade Wildflower Seed Mix:** A seed mix that can grow in areas that receive less than a full day's sun. Contains 24 shade-tolerant species that are great for use up against a fence, buildings or near trees. Requires 1-4 hours of either direct or strong filtered sun per day, will not prosper in dense shade. ■



Partial Shade Wildflowers

The Many Benefits of Trees

By Lyndsy Hilder, District Technician

Trees are planted for many reasons whether it be aesthetics, extra shade during the summer months, or to create wildlife habitat. There are many benefits to planting trees other than their intended purpose, as they play a critical role for both people and the environment. Numerous studies have proven trees can improve mental and physical health, increase property values in a neighborhood, and even improve children's attention and test scores. Trees are an essential part of a healthy community and provide many long- and short-term benefits as well.

Social Benefits:

- Spending time among trees and nature reduces stress.
- A view of trees can help hospital patients recover from surgery quicker.
- Children are able to retain more of the information taught in schools if they spend some of their time in nature.
- Streets with trees have a traffic calming effect to allow slower and safer driving.

Environmental Benefits:

- Trees absorb CO₂ by removing and storing the carbon while releasing oxygen back into the air.
- Shade from trees can slow water evaporation.
- Trees reduce runoff and erosion and can prevent stormwater from carrying pollutants to waterbodies.
- Tree roots promote healthy soils and infiltration.
- Tree root systems can detect drought conditions and send signals to drought-tolerant native species to grow deeper roots to access groundwater.

Economic Benefits:

- Trees placed strategically around a single-family home can cut air conditioning by up to 50%.
- Heating costs can be reduced by tree windbreaks.
- Trees increase in value from the time they are planted, until they mature.
- Landscaped homes are more valuable than non-landscaped homes.
- More trees, more jobs: trees and forests generate thousands of job opportunities. ■



Attention!!! Washington County Schools Saratoga Regional Envirothon

By Amber Luke, District Technician

The Saratoga Regional Envirothon is a one-day competition for high school students in grades 9 -12 in Fulton, Saratoga and Washington Counties. This competition tests student's knowledge in five categories of environmental sciences. These categories include aquatic ecology, forestry, soils, wildlife and a current environmental issue. Teams comprised of five students work together to answer multiple choice questions at each station. The students must also present an oral presentation on the current Environmental issue topic. The 2023 Envirothon Current Issue will be Adapting to Changing Climate. The Envirothon competition is a great way to boost students' interest in the environmental sciences as well as teach them valuable skills to take with them into the future. Through this competition students will learn valuable skills such as public speaking and effective teamwork while learning how they can be involved in protecting our natural resources.

The Regional event is usually held on the first Wednesday in May with a registration deadline the end of March. This is a good time to start thinking about getting your teams together and getting signed up, so you are ready for the competition. The winner from each county will earn a chance to participate in the New York State Envirothon Competition on May 24 & 25, 2023 at Hobart Williams Smith Colleges in Geneva, NY.

If you are interested in becoming involved in this event as a competing school or as a sponsor, please contact the Washington County SWCD office to sign up or for more information. You can find study guides for the competition at www.nysenvirothon.net. For more information, please contact amber.luke@ny.nacdnet.net, 518-692-9940 Ext.117 ■

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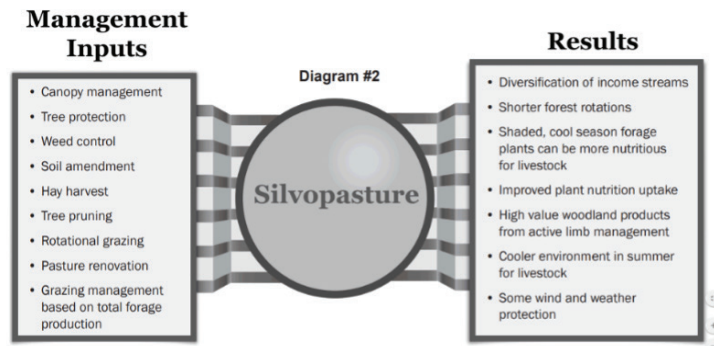


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Silvopasture - Another new buzz word!

By Corrina Aldrich, District Manager

Silvopasture is defined as the intentional integration and management of trees, forages, and livestock on the same land. Silvopasture can be achieved by either (1) planting trees into existing pasture or (2) thinning woods and establishing forages as understory. These systems are intensively managed for both forest products and forage, providing both short- and long-term income sources.



Many people are interested in Silvopasture for a variety of reasons. It could be about adding acreage to the current grazing system, a way to diversify income long term, providing shelter areas during the winter, or even to add another species to the grazing system. Whatever the reasoning behind the interest in Silvopasture folks should realize that while it sounds like a simple concept, it's not. A properly executed Silvopasture plan involves not only grazing livestock amongst trees but recognizes the need for long term management of forages, animals, and trees. While most farmers are aware of the resources available for information and the needs of the first two items, they may not be as literate on the last item: trees. No problem, just hire a forester you say...a good thought, but many foresters can be resistant to the idea of adding livestock of any kind to a good woodlot for fear of damage to their cash crop. Foresters are not as knowledgeable about how to establish grass or grazing concepts; they do know that in many cases livestock can do a great deal of damage in a forest or woodlot in many ways. These are concerns that a good grazer should be aware of as well when talking with a forester and actively listening to know how to manage to overcome those concerns.

Silvopasture requires management beyond just putting fence around a few acres of trees and letting your choice of livestock roam freely all the while expecting some type of great return. Managing grass for pasture and livestock is complex to begin with and introducing trees can add another level of complexity. However, adding Silvopasture, if executed properly through planning and management can add diversity, resiliency, and long-term income potential to an already well managed grazing operation.

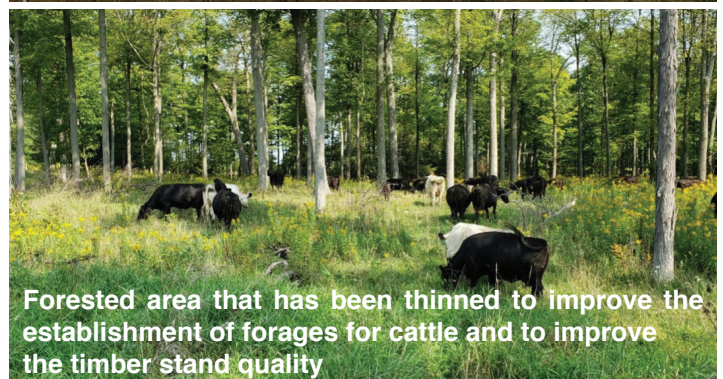
It is advisable to do some research about Silvopasture concepts before you jump in with both feet and start planting or cutting trees both of which could end up being costly mistakes. There is a great deal of interest in

Silvopasture across the state and we are fortunate that there are some producers who have been learning by making mistakes and trying new approaches, many are willing to share their experiences. We also have great resources through Cornell Cooperative Extension with Pete Smallidge and Brett Chedzoy.

There is also a wealth of information available online but just be careful to utilize information from resources that are in the Northeast who are dealing with similar circumstances regarding both animal and plant species as well as the climate and weather issues we are facing.

There is much interest in Silvopasture from the view of climate resiliency and carbon sequestration, and the concept is being looked on favorably by a lot of organizations and programs however if not implemented or managed correctly it could be detrimental as well. Again, it comes back to learning the concepts and proper management. You might find once you have done some research and gained a greater understanding of both Silvopasture and your own landscape, it may not be a good fit for you at this time or you may need to embark on more detailed long-term planning to prepare for adding Silvopasture to your enterprise in the future.

This type of planning would be a great fit with the Soil and Water Conservation Districts Agricultural Environmental Management or AEM planning model. We can help a landowner inventory the resources in their landscape and help to analyze what are the resource areas that need to be addressed. District staff can then help the landowner plan out the best management practices or BMP's to implement to help resolve the identified resource concerns. ■



CAFO Waste Storage and Transfer System - Round 1 Kenyon Hill Farm

By Amber Luke, District Technician



Kenyon Hill Farm recently completed the installation of a 4-million-gallon concrete manure storage. Washington County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) helped to facilitate the implementation of the concrete manure storage by working closely with the farm through the Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) program to help the farm identify resource concerns on the farm. This project was partially funded through a Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO) Waste Storage and Transfer System Program (WSTSP) Grant obtained by Washington County SWCD on behalf of Kenyon Hill Farm. The goal of this project was to provide Kenyon Hill Farm with the proper amount of manure storage capacity to allow for the farm to spread manure on fields when it is ideal for nutrient uptake. The manure storage will help to prevent excess nutrients from entering nearby surface waters.

Kenyon Hill Farm had no form of long-term manure storage prior to implementation of this project. Working with the farm's CAFO planner, the Soil and Water Conservation District was able to identify the need, write the grant, and help to facilitate implementation of the project. Contractors initially broke ground on the project in the summer of 2021. During the summer of 2021 we got excessive amounts of rain which made excavation difficult. The main part of the manure storage was poured in five pours that started in the fall of 2021 then got halted due to winter weather conditions. The project was wrapped up in the fall of 2022 with installation of a pumping pad and fence.

Stormwater infrastructure was put in place to help ensure the life of the manure storage and help maintain storage capacity. This consisted of a diversion that was installed to divert surface water around the manure storage to help keep the clean surface water from entering the manure storage. Subsurface drainage was also installed to take any groundwater that may be around the bottom of the manure storage and safely divert it to an underground outlet to reduce the risk of issue around the bottom of the manure storage. The underground outlet also acts as a leak monitoring point for the farm's operation and maintenance of the manure storage.

Completing projects like this do not happen overnight and entail working closely with the farm, planners, contractors, and engineers during the planning process all the way to implementation of the project. This relationship allows all parties involved to make sure the project works well with the farms management and is structurally sound. If you would like more information on Conservation Systems, AEM, or other programs the Washington County SWCD has to offer, please contact us at 518-692-9940 ext. 5 or email amber.luke@ny.nacdnet.net. ■

AEM Opens Door to Cover Crop Grants

By Bob Kalbfliesh, District Technician

This past fall three Washington County farms participated in an Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) implementation grant for cover crops. This grant assisted with the cost of establishing cover crops to help with soil erosion, nutrient retention and overall soil health. These farms received funding by participating in the AEM planning process. AEM is a tiered approach by the District to conservation planning on your farm.

- Tier I is an inventory of your farm.
- Tier II is a farm visit with more extensive questions. This is where good conservation practices are documented, as well as opportunities to start planning to implement Best Management Practices (BMP's) to address any possible environmental concerns.
- Tier III is a plan to address those concerns.
- Tier IV is implementation of these practices. This is when funding sometimes becomes available.

AEM offers a wide variety of opportunities for not only large farms but also for the smaller farms. The farms involved in this grant are all smaller farms. We want to thank Burchdale Farm, Rollin Hills and Mercure Farms for working through the AEM Tiers and implementing cover crops as the Best Management Practice. Previously these farms had worked with SWCD with funding from Champlain Watershed Improvement Coalition of New York (CWICNY) to upgrade their corn planters with new parts to have no-till seeding capabilities. This adaptation allows them to more easily plant into cover cropped fields. Adding cover crops has been a natural progression. We encourage all Washington County farms to participate in AEM and see what doors it could open for you. ■



Buckwheat Cover Crop



Oats and Turnips planted in corn stubble

Wildlife Habitat Turned People's Garden

By Lyndsy Hilder, District Technician



During the summer of 2022, technician Lyndsy Hilder spearheaded a wildlife habitat project in Salem, N.Y. utilizing funds allotted to the District. With the help of summer interns, a mulched walkway was constructed utilizing mulch provided by the Town of Salem Highway Department. On June 18th, the District and volunteers helped plant 210 individual plants that will not only provide food and shelter to native wildlife but will help improve the area and prevent the spread of invasive species. Along with the plantings, there were installations of educational signs along the trail that will allow the area to be used as an educational center. This habitat was then awarded as a Certified Wildlife Habitat through the National Wildlife Federation which is a safe haven for native wildlife in the area that provides food, water, shelter and places to raise young.

This January the habitat was deemed a People's Garden through the USDA. The People's Garden was named in honor of USDA's founder, President Abraham Lincoln, who described USDA as, "The People's Depart-

ment." People's Gardens are made to not only empower the communities to participate in the production of local food, but to teach about the benefits of sustainable, local agriculture. Our habitat has been recognized as a People's Garden due to its benefit to the community, the making of it being a collaborative effort, the use of sustainable practices and its educational benefits to the public.

As a District we are proud to have a project that has been recognized as not only a Certified Wildlife Habitat, but as a People's Garden as well. This project was a stepping-stone to create habitats that not only benefit the native wildlife, but to be an educational space for the community to have hands-on, real-world experiences. Learn more about People's Gardens and see our garden on the map at <https://www.usda.gov/peoples-garden> and please go and enjoy our garden which is just off Stanton Hill Road, park at the entrance to the Salem Art Works park and walk up the driveway to the water tower, cross the wooden bridge to enjoy our flowers and educational signs. ■



The 4 Letter Word No One Wants to Say... SNOW!

By Amber Luke, District Technician



The Snowy Owl had adapted to blend in with the winter landscape.

It seems like lately no one wants to hear the word snow, let alone see it when they look outside their window. Typically, the arrival of snow means bundling up, shoveling, cleaning your car off, plowing the driveway, and in some cases driving difficulty. While snow may certainly be an added chore that we all have to deal with, snow does have multiple benefits that effect humans, wildlife, and climate. The benefits of having snow cover may even outweigh the drawbacks for some.

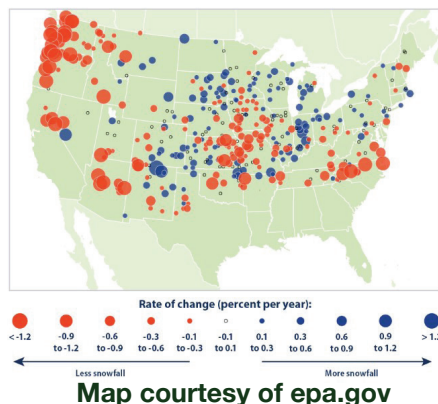
What is snow? Snowflakes are tiny frozen crystals that form when water vapor freezes. Snowflakes can be comprised of 200 crystals and all snowflakes have 6 sides (or points). Have you ever heard the term “poor man’s fertilizer?” As snow falls it acts as a scrub brush picking up trace amounts of nutrients from the air creating a natural source of fertilizer. Snow can contain Nitrogen, sulfur, and other trace nutrients. The average amount of Nitrogen deposited in snow (and rain) across the U.S. ranges from 2 to 12 lbs. per acre per year depending on your location. Even more beneficial than the nutrients snow can add to the soil is the hydrologic benefits!

Think about it...Where does all that snow go in the Spring? This is probably obvious to most, but it runs off into surface water or it gets absorbed by the ground. Snow is very important for replenishing the water table especially when following a very dry summer. Snow as it melts slowly releases water to be absorbed by the soil along with any nutrients that it may be carrying. This slow release of water allows for more water to be absorbed into the ground recharging groundwater unlike rain which sometimes can contribute to more runoff and less infiltration. Some areas throughout the U.S. depend on snowmelt to fill reservoirs used for drinking water and irrigation. On average 10 inches of snow equals 1 inch of water...but this varies depending on the type of snow. The impact of snow cover is also very important for regulating the earth’s temperature. Snowpack helps to regulate the heat exchange between

the Earth’s surface and the atmosphere. This is due to the ability for snow to reflect (80 to 90%) sunlight from the Earth’s surface. Without snow cover the Earth’s surface absorbs most of the sunlight which ultimately warms the Earth. Snow has a great insulating value as well. Snow cover also helps to protect low growing plants and roots of larger plants and trees from extreme temperatures swings (freeze/thaw) during the winter. Fun Fact - Under just 1 foot of snow the soil and organisms within the soil are protected against changes in air temperatures.

Winter snow cover also helps protect small mammals from predators. Small mammals, such as mice, voles, and shrews, live under the snow where they create tunnels to navigate through the winter wonderland to find food and create nests. Snow cover is important for animals that have adapted to camouflage themselves in the winter months. With no snow cover these animals stand out more making them vulnerable to predators. Without snow cover we are noticing false starts to Spring which leave plants, migratory birds, hibernating animals, insects and even crops vulnerable to late freezes. Overall snow may be a bit of a nuisance but just remember all the environmental benefits that snow can have and maybe coping with the snow will be made a little easier. ■

Figure 1. Change in Total Snowfall in the Contiguous 48 States, 1930-2007





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