

Views From The Foothills

A Publication of the Culpeper Soil & Water Conservation District
Serving Culpeper, Greene, Madison, Orange & Rappahannock Counties
www.culpeperswcd.org

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M. Johnson

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Welcome!

You are receiving this newsletter because you receive land use tax benefits in our counties.

Please call 540-825-8591 or email stephanied@culpeperswcd.org to remove yourself from our mailing list.

DID YOU KNOW?

Did you know that many fencing/water development projects that are funded by the District receive anywhere from 85 to 100 percent reimbursement? And if wider buffers, longer contracts, or both, possibly equates to more than 100 percent reimbursement? *This might be a good thing to know!*

Did you know that the District has funding to help with pasture stand improvement to help get your pasture back into “tiptop” shape and put some serious meat on those animals? *This also might be a good thing to know!*

Did you know that there are significant tax credit changes beginning this year and likely ending in just a few years? And that includes conservation equipment purchases? (see page 2) *This could be helpful for anyone contemplating equipment upgrades!*

Did you know that the District also has cost share payments available for pasture cross fencing and water line extensions? *A very good way to better utilize existing pasture and establish rotational grazing system.*

Did you know there are various options for both developing and implementing nutrient management plans for both grazing lands and cropland which can save you money? *A good way to save on high fertilizer costs.*

And lastly.....did you know that the District has cost share available for tree plantings on those steeper bare areas that don't really grow much grass anyway. *It's true! And other tree planting options.*

So now that you are aware of all those topics, please visit page 3 of this newsletter and read and learn more and then call one of us. We look forward to your questions. An evaluation of your situation and options available from us come at no charge to you. *There are many, many opportunities in conservation assistance programs to improve your land. The table on page 3 is just the beginning. Let's begin the conversation.*

Major Overhaul to the Virginia Agricultural Tax Credit Program

There have been several major changes to the Agricultural Best Management Practices Tax Credit Program that will be of interest to producers. You may qualify to claim this credit if you are a producer of agricultural production for market and you have a soil conservation plan in place that your local soil and water conservation district has approved. The practice and associated tax credit must be approved by the Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Directors prior to project construction.

An income tax credit equal to 25% of the first \$100,000 out of pocket expenses for approved agricultural best management practices. The amount of the tax credit may not exceed \$25,000. If the practice being implemented is part of a resource management plan, the producer can claim an income tax credit equal to 50% of the first \$100,000 out of pocket expenses.

The credit can be claimed against individual income tax or corporation income tax. If the amount of the credit exceeds the taxpayer's liability for such taxable year, the excess will be refunded by the Tax Commissioner for 100 percent of face value within 90 days after the filing date of the income tax return. If you are claiming this credit, you cannot claim another credit for costs related to the same eligible practices.

To claim the credit, producers will need to submit Virginia Form ABM by April 1st of the taxable year. (Available from the District.) Additional follow up will be required with the Department of Taxation. Attach the appropriate document and your tax certificate received from your local soil and water conservation district when filing your taxes.

Many of the practices in the Virginia Agricultural Cost Share Program that provide significant improvement to water quality in Virginia's streams, rivers and bays are eligible. Please contact the Culpeper Soil and Water District for a complete list of practices.

For more information, see *Va. Code* § 58.1-339.3 and *Va. Code* § 58.1-439.5

Conservation Tillage and Precision Agricultural Equipment Tax Credit Updates

You may qualify to claim this credit if you are a producer who invests in certain equipment designed to reduce soil compaction and disturbance or provide for more precise pesticide and fertilizer application to reduce the potential for adverse environmental impacts. To claim this tax credit, you are required to have a soil conservation plan in place that your local soil and water conservation district has approved and be implementing a nutrient management plan developed by a certified nutrient management planner.

The value of the tax credit is equal to 25% of expenditures on qualifying equipment up to \$17,500 credit. You can claim this credit on your tax return, not to exceed your tax liability. If the amount of the credit exceeds the taxpayer's liability for such taxable year, the excess will be refunded by the Tax Commissioner for 100 percent of face value within 90 days after the filing date of the income tax return. To claim this tax credit, producers will need to submit a formal application, Virginia Form AEC. (Available from the District.) All supporting documentation must be submitted 90 days before the return upon which the tax credit will be claimed is due.

Many different types of equipment qualify for this tax credit. Please contact the Culpeper Soil and Water District for a complete list of qualifying equipment.

For more information, see *Va. Code* § 58.1-337.

Our Annual Tree Sale has Begun Accepting Orders! Print out & mail the order form on page 9 with payment. Contact Stephanie DeNicola at stephanied@culpeperswcd.org for current availability.

Agriculture Cost Share Funds Available

Conservation funds for implementing conservation management practices are currently available. Now is a very good time to contact District staff to explore your options. Listed below are many of the commonly used conservation practices and payment rates. There are others.

Culpeper & Rappahannock (540-825-8591):

- David Massie; davidm@culpeperswcd.org
- Amanda McCullen; amandac@culpeperswcd.org
- Brandy Harris; brandyh@culpeperswcd.org

Greene, Madison & Orange:

- Kendall Dellinger; kendalld@culpeperswcd.org 540-825-8591 ext. 1008
- Spencer Yager; spencery@culpeperswcd.org 540-308-6301

Practice	Details
Grazing Land Management with Stream Exclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stream exclusion fencing & water development • Includes fence, well, water troughs, pipe, stream crossings, rotational fences, etc. • Covers 85% of <i>estimated</i> cost with 35' buffer & 100% with 50' buffer • Buffer payment rate of \$80/acre/year paid upon installation of all practices • 10 and 15 year contracts available
Stream Exclusion with Narrow width buffer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stream exclusion fencing & water development with reduced setback • Includes fence, well, water troughs, pipe, stream crossings, rotational fence, etc. • Covers 60% of <i>estimated</i> cost with 10' buffer & 75% with 25' buffer • 10 and 15 year contracts available
Afforestation of Crop, Hay & Pastureland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 75% of eligible cost for planting trees (hardwood or conifers) • \$100/acre for 10 year incentive & \$150/acre for 15 years
Woodland Buffer Filter Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planting trees in riparian areas • 95% of eligible cost for planting hardwoods or conifers • Conifers: \$100/acre for 10 years OR \$150/acre for 15 years • Hardwoods: \$100/acre for 10 years OR \$250/acre for 15 years
Cover Crops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • October 25th cut off for harvestable cover crop & early planting date for cover crops to be killed in the spring • November 15th, cut off planting date for kill down crops • Rates: \$20/acre to harvest, up to \$60/acre to kill & \$30/acre for legumes
Nutrient Management Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to \$4/acre to have a nutrient management plan written for your farm • A great way to save money on input costs!
Precision Nutrient Management on Cropland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to \$8/acre for the precision application of nitrogen & phosphorus to cropland • Must have current nutrient management plan: provide records, maps & a bill for nutrient management
No-Till & Cropland Conversion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to \$70/acre to convert from conventional tillage to a no-till system for 5 years • Up to \$410/acre to convert cropland to permanent hay or pasture; 10 or 15 year contracts available
Grassed Waterway, Grass Filter Strips & Critical Area Seeding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to 75% to grade & seed gully erosion • Up to 75% to establish grass filter strips along waterways adjacent to crop, hayland or animal holding areas • Up to 75% to grade, fill & seed critically eroding areas
Continuing Conservation Initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$0.50-\$1.25/linear foot of stream bank protected with fencing • \$250-\$1,000 per water system, water trough or stream crossing • A great way to receive funds to maintain existing infrastructure!

Invasive Species and NRCS

By Ashleigh Cason, NRCS Soil Conservationist

The term, invasive, is a landowner and producer's least favorite of words. It means that something unwanted and undesired has shown up on a property and called it home. Both animals and plants have lists of species that are termed invasive. Let's focus on the plants...

Invasive species spread easily and rapidly, taking over habitat from desirable species, and thereby reducing natives. Most invasives can be hard to extinguish, outcompete native or desired species and establish well in many different site conditions and climates. Invasive presence can mean a decrease in an agricultural commodity, such as forage or crop, leading to a decrease in profit. It can mean a decrease of a native stand, leading to a degradation of wildlife habitat. It always means that some form of control is needed, which can be overwhelming and daunting, and can chip away at the wallet.

Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS), an agency of the United States Department of Agriculture, recognizes the increasing importance of invasive species control. NRCS offers different programs which can be applied for by landowners and producers alike. Whether a producer's property is forest land, pasture, crop, open land or a combination, NRCS's invasive species eradication measures stretch across the board.

NRCS offers Herbaceous Weed Control for weedy and grassy species, as well as Brush Management for woody and brushy species, in the form of chemical, mechanical, biological, or a combination of practices, to rid the landscape of unwanted, invasive weeds and brush located on pasture, crop, or forest land. Virginia NRCS utilizes a comprehensive list that is created by NRCS specialists' recommendations at a State level, as a guide for justification of the two practices. NRCS also has a list of invasive species for weeds and brush that authorizes multi-year control of certain hard-to-control species, where a single application or method is not going to achieve a desirable outcome.

In addition to ridding the land of the undesirable species, NRCS follows each type of control method, whether it was weed control or brush control, or both, with a comprehensive plan to improve the stand or habitat in which we eradicate the invasive species. For a forestry application, we could include forest stand improvement practices, tree/shrub plantings and other Virginia Department of Forestry recommendations to improve the health of your forests. For a pasture, we could include some re-seeding of pastures with cool season mixes, or a complete overhaul to a warm season grass, overseeding some legumes or possibly tree plantings. For wildlife applications, open land can be planned for more wildlife practices such as tree/shrub plantings, native warm season grass conversions, prescribed burns, firebreaks and other wildlife management techniques.

NRCS personnel are knowledgeable of these species and work closely with Private Lands Biologists, Extension, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and Virginia Department of Forestry to insure the best technical expertise is given to the applicant.

Please call to see if NRCS can help in the discovery, management and removal of your invasive species. If interested, contact the NRCS Culpeper Field Office:

- Ashleigh Cason: ashleigh.cason@usda.gov 540-317-7731
- Courtney Kidwell: courtney.kidwell@usda.gov 540-317-7728
- Rex Rexrode: rex.rexrode@usda.gov 540-317-7724

Free Lawn Soil Tests Still Available!

Contact Stephanie DeNicola at stephanied@culpeperswcd.org for information.



It Pays to Exclude Livestock from Streams

Your farm can benefit.

Your local Soil and Water Conservation District can help you qualify to receive up to 100 percent reimbursement for the cost of fencing the streams on your farm and providing an alternative water source for your livestock (SL-6 practice only).

Streamside livestock exclusion also can benefit your bottom line by:

- Improving herd health.
- Promoting greater weight gain in beef cattle.
- Increasing the quality and quantity of milk produced by cows.
- Supporting better management of available forage by using an alternative source of water (i.e., well or spring) and distributing watering troughs on pastures.

Money comes from the Virginia Agricultural Best Management Practices Cost-Share Program, which is carried out by conservation districts and administered by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation.

Who may apply?

Any individual or private business that operates a grazing farm bordering a live stream, wetland or Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act Resource Protection Area is eligible to apply for up to 100 percent reimbursement on the installation of a live-stream exclusion system. To receive reimbursement, landowners must have a Virginia Agricultural Best Management Practices Cost Share program (VACS) contract for Stream Exclusion with Grazing Land Management (SL-6N or SL-6W) approved by the local Soil and Water Conservation District.

How and where they work.

Excluding livestock from streams reduces streambank erosion and decreases the amount of sediment that local waterways carry. It also eliminates the bacteria associated with livestock waste that cause illness in both animals and humans.

Fencing works anywhere a creek, stream or river crosses your property. Cost-share technical specifications require fences to be set back from the water by a certain distance. Installing a riparian buffer can enhance economic and environmental benefits.



Here's the payoff.

In State Program Year 2022, the Virginia Agricultural BMP Cost-Share Program reimbursement rate will be up to 100 percent of the cost of all eligible components based on the width of the buffer and the practice lifespan. Additionally, a per-acre buffer payment will be added for all buffers 35 feet or greater. Fencing must be permanent and is subject to technical standards.

Farmers also can experience lower operating costs, because fenced livestock have:

- Fewer incidents of mastitis, which decreases milk productivity.
- Lower rates of foot rot, which is readily transmitted.
- Decreased opportunities for injury and accidental death.

Take the next step.

Conservation begins with your local Soil and Water Conservation District, which can help you apply for many different cost-share funding programs to help you implement stream exclusion best management practices. District staff also can identify other conservation programs for which you might qualify.

Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District
540-825-8591
www.culpeperswcd.org



New to 2022 Tree Sale: Virginia Meadow Seed Mixes!!

By Richard Jacobs, CSWCD Conservation Specialist III

This limited item will provide customers with seed and instructions for 1,000 square feet (limited to 1 bag per customer)

Meadows provide ground cover that protects the soil and habitat for birds and pollinators. These benefits make meadows an important practice to conserve soil and protect clean water and provide wildlife habitat. For the 2022 tree sale, the Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District is offering a meadow mix sample for small areas of your yard or adjacent areas.

What makes a meadow?

Meadows have a mix of warm-season grasses and forbs (i.e. wildflowers). A diverse mix is desired since each site is unique and some species may not grow as abundant as others. Diversity also ensures that something will be growing and blooming throughout the year and over the many stages of the meadow.

Meadows do have a life cycle in Virginia. Without periodic mowing or prescribed burns, a meadow will transition into a forest. Forests are the dominate land cover of Virginia, but grassland meadows can occur where there is disturbance such as fire, grazing, wind damage and mowing (once a year).

Choosing your site:

Sunny and dry areas are best. Shady and wet areas require a more diverse seed mix and require additional maintenance to control trees and shrubs. Meadows do well in poor soil as long as there is not excessive erosion or foot traffic.

Connecting the meadow with another habitat structure such as a pond, stream, forest, or rock pile will attract more wildlife.

Meadows can be any size. Starting from seeds you'll want to start with 1,000 square feet. You could start as small as 100 square feet with seeds or container plants.

Preparing the site:

If the site already has a good mix of native plants or you're not sure what lives there, just let it grow for a season or two. You may not need to seed the area.

When you have undesirable plants that smother the native plants, you'll want to remove them and prepare a seedbed. Removal methods vary depending on size and type of vegetation.

- Smothering with plastic tarp or cardboard covered with mulch or compost can be effective. Best for small areas covered with annual grasses.
- Using a double treatment of a non-selective herbicide such as Roundup® or Rodeo® is most common for thicker stands of vegetation. Herbicide should be applied following the label's instructions and never applied on a windy or rainy day.
- Tilling every two to four weeks for one to two month is a suitable alternative. Repeated tillage weakens the root systems of perennial plants.

After undesirable plants are controlled, the soil needs to be exposed for good soil/seed contact. Rake the dead thatch and grass clippings and rake to loosen up the soil.



Continued on page 7

Cost Share for Septic System Maintenance and Repairs

By Henny Calloway, CSWCD Conservation Specialist II

Some residents of the District continue to be eligible for reimbursement of fifty to eighty percent of the expense of pumping, maintaining, repairing or replacing septic systems, depending on income levels. The Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District continues to have funds for such projects in the Upper York watershed of Orange County (most of which is both south of Route 20 and east of Route 15) and also in much of the Robinson River watershed (any land that drains downstream of Mulatto Run all the way to the Rapidan River, including Deep Run and Muddy Run). The grant funds are focused on reducing any existing or potential impacts on local ground and surface water quality. E. Coli bacteria in some local streams has long been identified as being higher than expected by state water quality standards. Properly functioning and maintained septic systems can help reduce this. An additional benefit to the property owner is the assurance that their system is up to standards and functioning properly. It is a win-win for both water quality and property value.

Program participants are eligible for several different payments depending on the actual needs of their system. Reimbursement payments are typically fifty percent although can go as high as eighty percent for individuals that qualify for low income status. Maximum payments to property owners under average income levels are \$175 maximum towards a pump out and inspection; \$2,500 maximum towards a repair; \$4,000 maximum towards a conventional system or \$6,000 if a pump is required to move the liquids to the drain field; and \$12,000 maximum towards an alternative engineered system. Maximum payments under low income situations at the 80% cost share level are \$280 towards a pumpout; \$3,200 maximum towards a tank pump out and system inspection; \$4000 maximum towards a repair; \$6,400 maximum towards a conventional system or \$9,600 if a pump is required to move the liquids to the drainfield; and \$19,200 maximum towards an alternative engineered system.

Pump outs and inspections are encouraged for everyone; such preventative maintenance extends the life of a system and prevents higher costs later on if the systems fail. If further repairs are indicated by the inspection, the owner is still eligible for the additional repair payments. Applications are required and need to be approved prior to the work being done or funding can be declined. Free assistance with initial assessments of individual system needs is available from the District. Reimbursement payments are made promptly once the work has been completed. The program is entirely voluntary and assistance from the District is free of charge.

Further information on the program is available from the District at 825-8591 or 948-7531. Funding for these projects has been secured by the Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District from the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, Commonwealth of Virginia.

Meadows, continued from page 6

Seeding:

The best time to seed the meadow mix is October thru December along with a winter cover crop such as annual rye or a winter grain. This seeding scheme allows for the seeds to stratify over the winter to increase germination rates.

Seeding can also be done from April to July using a summer cover crop such as brown top millet, barley or buckwheat.

Spread seed mixture by hand or with a broadcast spreader at a rate of 1/2 pound per 1,000 square feet evenly over the site. Mix/scratch seed into the soil with the back of a rake, do not turn soil or bury seeds. Press seed into the soil by stomping with feet or rollers.

Watering of the seeds is not necessary. Meadow seeds will sprout and grow at their own pace.

Maintenance:

Remove invasive and undesirable species by hand or spot herbicide.

Mow once a year between November and March. March is preferred to provide winter cover for wildlife. Mow high to leave about 4-6 inches of the plant stem uncut.

More specific instructions will accompany your seed order. Our packets will include the cover crop(s). If you would like to be alerted when we begin taking orders for the meadow mix, email Stephanie DeNicola at stephanied@culpeperswcd.org.



2021 Culpeper SWCD Tree Sale

Five of one species for \$5

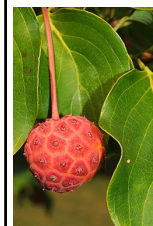
NEW THIS YEAR: Wildflower meadow mix

See article on page 5: culp-swcd-nletter-09.21.pdf (culpeperswcd.org)



Kousa Dogwood (*Cornaceae Cornus*)

Kousa dogwood grows 15 to 20 feet tall and has beautiful exfoliating bark, long lasting flowers, good fall color and attractive fruit. The white, pointed bracts are produced a month later than flowering dogwood and are effective for about a month, sometimes longer. The red fruits are edible and they look like a big round raspberry. Birds devour the fruit quickly. Fall color varies from dull red to maroon. It is resistant to the dogwood [anthracnose](#) disease, caused by the fungus *Discula destructive*. (Flowering dogwood is very susceptible and commonly killed by it)



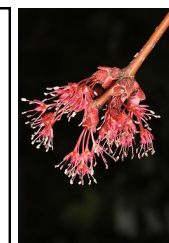
Norway Spruce (*Picea abies*)

Norway Spruce is best used in a lawn area or as a wind break or screen, planted apart. Norway Spruce tolerates most soils if moist & transplants easily. The Norway spruce is a beautiful ornamental tree species. The pyramid-shape makes it as a viable choice for Christmas trees. Full sun required. It tolerates slightly alkaline, wet at times, well-drained, loam and clay soils. Norway Spruce can grow 80-100 feet tall and spread 25-40 feet. Small-diameter branches sweep horizontally from the straight trunk which can grow to four feet thick. Branchlets droop from the branches toward the ground in a graceful, weeping fashion forming a delicate pyramid. The root system is shallow and often dense, particularly close to the trunk which makes growing grass difficult.



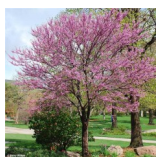
Red maple (*Acer rubrum*)

Red maple reaches a mature size of up to 90 feet in height & 2½ feet in diameter. It grows on a variety of sites. Red maple is a popular shade & ornamental tree, with brilliant fall color. Red maple is one of the most abundant and widespread of eastern North American deciduous trees. Red maple's ability to thrive in a wide range of wet to dry conditions surpasses the tolerance capabilities of perhaps all other species. It attracts deer, elk, moose, snowshoe hare, wood ducks, pileated woodpeckers, screech owls and flickers. Red maple is widely used as an ornamental or shade tree. The foliage turns brilliant red or yellow in the fall. Sap may be used to make syrup, although yield is lower than from sugar maple.



Paw paw (*Asimina triloba*)

Pawpaw is a small tree that is best known for producing banana-like edible fruits. It found in cool moist areas, often along streams or moist road sides. It is often found in the understory. It is a small tree up to 40 feet tall, 12 inches in diameter, often found in growing in small clusters. The large fruits are eaten by a variety of animals including raccoons, foxes, opossums, squirrels, bears and humans. The fleshy "banana-like" fruit is edible, although some people react badly. Wildlife relish the fruit and large flat seeds inside.



Eastern redbud (*Cercis canadensis*)

Redbud is a very popular ornamental for its springtime production of pink flowers. Redbud is found on a variety of soils, including moist valley and slope soils and lime outcrops. It is a large shrub or small tree up to 30 feet with a short, often twisted trunk and spreading branches. Deer browse young trees and a variety of birds eat the seeds. Flowers are edible and make an excellent addition to salads. Red dye can be derived from the roots.





American Elderberry (*Sambucus Canadensis*)

Elderberry can be effectively pruned into a nice, small, single or multi-stemmed, small, flowering tree but needs regular pruning to remove suckers growing from the base of the plant. In early summer or sporadically all year long, elderberry is literally smothered with 6- to 10-inch-wide clusters of yellowish-white blooms. These are followed by a multitude of small, dark purple berries which are quite popular with birds, & can be used in pies, jellies or fermented to make a wine. Ideal for use in naturalized landscapes where it will tolerate acid or alkaline soil & even some drought, elderberry performs best in full sun on moist to wet, fertile soils.



NEW THIS YEAR: POLLINATOR MEADOW SEED MIX FOR SMALL AREAS OF YOUR YARD!

This meadow seed mix includes an already pre-mixed cover crop and will cover a 1,000 square foot area.

Limit one order per customer. The meadow mix does best in sunny areas that receive 6 hours or more of sunlight.

The mix is designed for both riparian and upland sites. Detailed instructions will accompany the seed mix at pick up.



RETURNING THIS YEAR: Live stakes to address streambank erosion and other uses

Silky dogwood (*Cornaceae cornus amomum*) and Streamco Willow (*Salix purpurea*)

These shrub cuttings come in bundles and root readily when planted in moist soils. See page 11.

Species	Price	Quantity	Species	Price	Quantity
Kousa dogwood (5 seedlings)	\$5		Red maple (5 seedlings)	\$5	
Norway spruce (5 seedlings)	\$5		Paw paw (5 seedlings)	\$5	
Eastern redbud (5 seedlings) MAX 2 packs per customer	\$5		Elderberry (5 seedlings)	\$5	
Silky dogwood (25 live stakes)	\$25		Streamco willow (25 live stakes)	\$25	
Meadow mix MAX 1 per customer	\$30				
TOTAL COST: (check or cash only)					

Name	
Address	
Phone number	
E-mail	

Checks payable to CSWCD. Pick up dates are Friday March 18 and Saturday March 19, 2022 at Culpeper office. Plants not picked up by 12pm on Saturday March 19, 2022 may be forfeited without a refund.

We do our best to insure quality control. However, no refunds on trees that do not grow.

Questions? Contact Stephanie DeNicola at stephanied@culpeperswcd.org or 540-825-8591

Mail order form & payment to ATTN Tree Sale, CSWCD, 351 Lakeside Drive, Culpeper, VA 22701

Species descriptions & pictures from Virginia Tech Dendrology <https://dendro.cnre.vt.edu/dendrology/factsheets.cfm>

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JR Landrum Fence

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jrlandrum1111@yahoo.com



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Fence Staining
Tree Work
Power Washing

Office: 540-948-6013



The District carries nonwoven geotextile (filter fabric) for sale that meets most state and federally funded project requirements, as well as many on-farm needs. Geotextile is sold by the foot, which comes in 12.5' widths. Please call the Culpeper Office at 540-825-8591 for pricing and more information!

Virginia Fence & Farm 540-522-7840
Extreme bushhogging, invasive species removal plus ALL of your fencing needs!
Virginalonghorns@yahoo.com

Live Stakes: Using Live Cuttings to Propagate Shrubby Plants to Stabilize Stream Banks and Wet Areas

NOTE: This fall we will again include live stakes as part of the Culpeper District's Annual Tree Seedling Sale. Orders will be taken during the fall and winter for early Spring 2022 delivery. We include this article as an introduction to live staking.

Whether you have an eroding stream bank or want to restore a riparian area, consider planting with live stakes. Live staking is the practice of using unrooted cuttings to propagate shrubs and some trees for establishing vegetation in difficult riparian areas such as stream banks and floodplains. Using cuttings from dormant multi-stem shrubs and trees which have the capacity to grow roots once they are tapped or hammered into the ground.

There are specific species that are particularly well suited for this; these include the silky, gray or red osier dogwoods, various willow cultivars, buttonbush, arrowwood viburnums, elderberries and sycamores. These plants root easily from cuttings. The cuttings should be between 1/2 inch and 1.5 inches in diameter and between 18 and 24 inches long.

Cuttings are taken from the "parent" tree in the dormant season, usually 2 to 3 weeks before planting in the spring (February and March). Use your thumb to gauge the diameter of the cuttings and start at the base of the branch and then cut into shorter lengths of about 24 inches. Keep cuttings cool, moist and covered until planting.

Planting live stakes involves making sure the cutting has a sharp point to help with pushing or tapping into the ground. There needs to be at least one active bud above ground and the stakes need to be planted with the bud facing up. A push rod can be used to aid planting by making a pilot hole for cutting. The live stake needs to be as deep as possible, leaving the active bud near the surface. The bottom of the planted stake should be in the soil that remains constantly wet or nearly so. Space the cuttings about 1 to 2 feet apart, depending on the desired density.

Not all of the live stakes will survive. After 2 to 5 years you can always take more cuttings from the living to replant the bare areas. Good luck planting!

Other Resources:

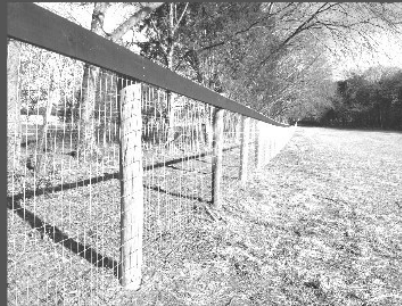
Fetter, Jennifer & Koch, Kristen. Live Stakes for Stream Restoration. Penn State Extension. March 17, 2015. Accessed September 2021. <https://extension.psu.edu/live-staking-for-stream-restoration>

Davis, Ryan. Live Staking: A Trusty Technique for Planting Trees and Shrubs on the Cheap. Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay. Accessed September 2021 [Live Staking: A Trusty Technique for Planting Trees and Shrubs on the Cheap - Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay \(allianceforthebay.org\)](https://allianceforthebay.org/live-staking-a-trusty-technique-for-planting-trees-and-shrubs-on-the-cheap)

Below left: Stream Bank sloped, bench and toe planted with live stakes

Below right: 5 years of growth, live stake willows





VIRGINIA FENCE COMPANY

- LIVESTOCK FENCING
- WATER SYSTEMS
- POLE BARNs

NICK HILL (540) 718-2108



VirginiaFence.com

RANDY HOVEY

CONSTRUCTION, LLC.



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RECREATIONAL
TRAIL CLEARING

POST LOGGING
CLEAN UP

POND RESTORATION

FENCE LINE
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News from the Tree World

By: Ed Furlow, VDOF Forester

What's new with your local Forestry Department folks? Well, for one, 2021 has been an exciting year so far. Four new team members have joined the Rappahannock Work Area, an area that encompasses the same counties as CSWCD, plus Fauquier. Our local field supervisor Joe Rossetti and Culpeper County resident was the last to leave, to get promoted into an Administrator's role (more on that shortly), and so, he was able to contain the disarray that change brings. The next time you drive through Warrenton, stop by our field office near the High School to say hello to our newest staff members. Peter Schoderbek, Zoe Bergman, and Kinner Ingram have joined the VDOF to serve landowners in the Culpeper SWCD area.

We are also celebrating 50 years of our very successful Reforestation of Timberlands cost-share program – a pine tree management program. When I think of pine trees, I think of farming trees. I think about all those pine plantations I've walked through these past 15 years; I think about the process of establishing them, of tending to them until they are ripe to harvest, and watching the rebirth of a plantation after a final harvest. I hit my first tree farming milestone this year: I had a landowner recently ask me about thinning one of the first plantations I helped establish.

A third bit of exciting of news is our Hardwood Habitat Incentive Program. State Forester Rob Farrell and friends have been diligently working on a new program for several years to improve the hardwood forest resource in Virginia. This hardwood program is in the last stage of polish- just another wax coating to ensure the program flows smoothly, but it is slowly taking off as you read these words. Now, while I also consider hardwood forest management, a type of tree farming, it requires a more delicate touch than what pine tree management requires- sort of like a gardener tending to flowering plants versus a farmer planting corn. The schedule of hardwood management is not easily predictable, and the results are decades in the making. Management is based on what the forest needs mixed with what the forest landowner wants, and that's when foresters do their best work. Whether our advice is to improve a bad timber harvest through a liberation cut, or to crop-tree-release a young teen-aged forest fighting for sunlight, to remove invasive weeds that damage our trees and their progeny, or to remove unwanted vegetation with a prescribed fire, these are a few ways this program will work. A liberation cut removes the remaining inferior trees from a timber harvest that overtops seedlings/saplings you want to grow.

Crop Tree Release is a practice that speeds the growth of desirable crop trees by selectively cutting or killing less desirable competing trees in younger, overstocked forests. Overstocked forests often become unhealthy due to a lack of air circulation and the stress that crowding produces as trees compete for resources. Availability of sunlight is often the most limiting factor for tree growth. When crowns of adjacent trees touch each other, growth rate is reduced. By cutting/killing unwanted trees whose crowns are touching the crown of crop trees, more space is created for crown expansion. Additional wildlife benefits include increased mast and forage production, and habitat diversification both at ground and canopy levels.

For me, my preferred program practice is to mark trees to remove. Should the owner desire and need a timber stand improvement harvest, or just want a few trees removed through a sustainable timber harvest, marking trees will leave the forest as an improved resource. Most hardwood forests would benefit from some tending. If you want to know if your forest would, reach out to me or one of the friendly local VDOF staff. In addition to the advice, we can discuss how the new Hardwood Habitat Incentive Program can help you get the work done.

And so, back to the beginning of my news. Joe Rossetti was chosen among a field of talented candidates to improve Virginia's hardwood forested landscape and to ensure a successful future of the Hardwood Habitat Incentive Program. Fortunately, DOF Foresters are found throughout the state to implement this new program and to help those forest landowners achieve their goals. See you in 2022.



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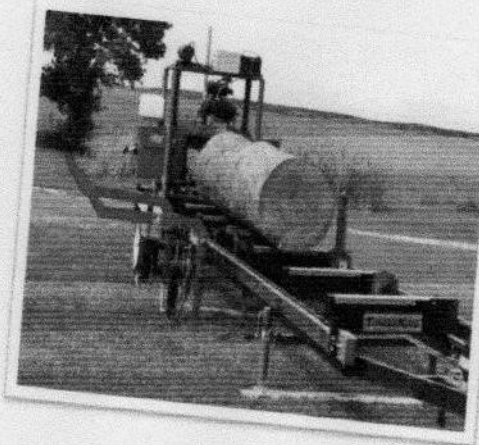
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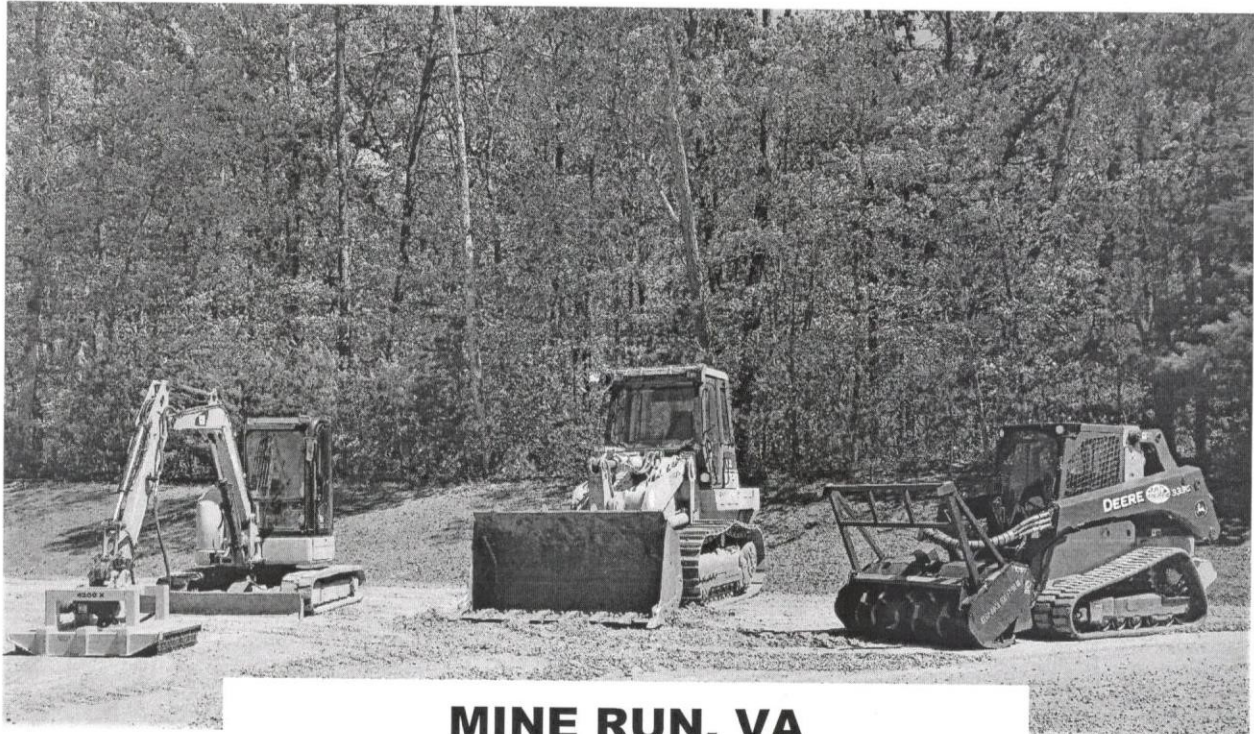


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Culpeper Office
351 Lakeside Drive
Culpeper, Virginia 22701
540-825-8591
540-645-6624 (F)

Orange Office
325-B Madison Road
Orange, Virginia 22960
540-308-6301

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