

NORTH YAKIMA CONSERVATION DISTRICT



northyakimacd.wordpress.com

Greetings from the North Yakima Conservation District



I hope this newsletter finds you well as we are in the midst of the holiday season. As the end of the year approaches our work never seems to end here at NYCD. Although the idea of “conservation” and the “wise use of natural resources” is never far from my mind, I have to find time to stop, look back, reflect, learn and find value in NYCD’s accomplishments. If I don’t do this simple activity my job is just that, a job.

My reflections this year find that the NYCD has accomplished many goals. We have several programs that meet our natural resource priorities. Programs such as our fish recovery program where we assist landowners in screening their irrigation diversions. This program isn’t about saving fish as much as it’s about helping landowners and keeping them viable and compliant with rules and laws and the outcome is simply saving fish. Firewise is another program where we have and will continue to assist landowners with home and property actions to reduce the risk of wildfire. NYCD sponsors several education activities throughout the District where “conservation” lessons are taught that not only make students aware of natural resources in their community but also meet key State education requirements. I could go on but the point is that NYCD is accomplishing many of our goals.

While reflecting, I think about others and their approach to “conservation” and what it means to them. I believe each of us practices conservation whether it’s driving the newest hybrid or simply turning the down/off the faucet while brushing your teeth. All these actions are important and part of our human nature. Simply put, there is no one way to “conserve”. Conservation must be thoughtful, logical and make sense to the individual. That’s the principal NYCD lives by when working with landowners.

Please find time to stop, look back, learn and find value.... One of the values I realized is that a day of “catching” was a day well spent. Happy holidays to you and yours.



MISSION STATEMENT

To enhance and promote the wise use of natural resources; promote sustainable, profitable agriculture and improve the quality of life and culture in Yakima County by:

- Encouraging good land stewardship through education, incentives, and quality technical assistance.
- Support individual private property rights.
- Building strong coalitions with other groups.
- Including, but not limited to, government assistance as a valid conservation partner to agriculture, by providing quality, intelligent, technical assistance to cooperators and partners.



Riparian Enhancement Program

For the last several decades the North Yakima Conservation District has been working with voluntary landowners to protect and enhance waterfront property along the streams and rivers located within the District boundary. These areas, referred to as riparian areas, are not only important as habitat for fish and wildlife, as well as keeping the stream cooler by increasing shade, but also important to people. Healthy riparian areas provide filtration of chemicals and excess dirt that may enter and pollute the stream, they also counteract erosion along streambanks by anchoring the soil with root systems, working to decrease farmland loss during high water events.



Fence installation by Washington Conservation Corps members

When the District works on these projects, we use direct input from each individual landowner on desired specifications for elements such as the size of the riparian area to be protected, the type of fence to be built, if there is a need for off-channel watering systems, and the types of trees and shrubs to be planted. The majority of the time there is no cost to the landowner as these projects are 100% funded through grants, with installation being done by the District.

An example of this type of project, is one that was done along the Naches River and its side channels. The project rebuilt around 1,100 feet of dilapidated fence and installed around 470 feet of new fence. It also installed around 300 trees and shrubs, with species including sagebrush, aspen, ponderosa pine, and golden currant.



Installed plants on fabric mulch

Natural Resources Conservation Service

The United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is committed to helping private landowners care for the land, use it productively, and excel as stewards for the future. Through voluntary incentive-based programs, NRCS works directly with farmers and landowners to provide technical and financial assistance to make conservation work on private lands. Taking care of the landscape in concert with agricultural productivity is our goal. Whether it's reducing erosion, improving soil health, protecting streams and rivers, restoring and establishing fish and wildlife habitat, bringing in pollinators, improving air quality or conserving energy, we're here to help you develop a conservation plan and achieve your conservation goals.

In the Yakima Valley this has meant working with landowners to improve their irrigation water use efficiency, improve pasture health, install seasonal extension high tunnels, reducing wildfire risk, decrease soil erosion while improving soil health, improve riparian habitat along the many streams and rivers in the valley.



Conservation Technical Assistance is the term we use to describe assistance for farmers and ranchers. It helps you address opportunities, concerns, and problems concerning natural resources and make sound land management decisions. We group natural resource concerns into six main categories: soil, water, air, plants, animals, and energy. Usually, our assistance leads to the development of a conservation plan -- an assessment of the land that allows you to determine how to achieve your goals while using the resources under your care. **Soils** – I want to maintain and improve my soil health. **Water** – I want to water my crops and/or livestock and improve the water quality on my farm. **Air** – I want to minimize drift of pesticides and other particulate matter on my farm. **Plants** – I want to improve productivity and health of my crops and minimize pests. **Animals** – I want to provide feed and forage for livestock and enhance wildlife habitat or biodiversity. **Energy** - I want to improve the energy efficiency of my equipment, facilities, farming/ranching practices and field operations.

It's easy to get started working with NRCS. Come visit our office and we can sit down and discuss your conservation objectives and how NRCS can help make them a reality. Neither farm size nor profitability are hurdles that NRCS encounters when we create relationships with our producers. We are interested in the resource concern issues that you have on your property and how we can go about solving them. Whether that be through simple technical assistance or maybe even with one of our financial assistance pathways we are here to help. It's important to remember that we here at NRCS are non-regulatory. We find that our voluntary participation fosters a much stronger relationship with the producers and therefore a much higher success rate in solving the resource concern issues that may be present on their land.



**NORTH YAKIMA
CONSERVATION
DISTRICT**



**DEPARTMENT OF
ECOLOGY**
State of Washington

Our WATERWISE DEMONSTRATION PROJECT located at 1606 Perry Street, Yakima, WA 98902

Introduction: The North Yakima Conservation District (NYCD) purchased the USDA Service Center building several years ago. At the time, the building was landscaped with lawn that required regular watering. Typical water needs for each lawn in the Yakima Valley totals 32 inches of water (WSU Ext) which equates to 20 gallons/square foot. NYCD envisioned future landscaping that would use less water and provide educational examples of low water use plants. In the spring of 2022, the NYCD was awarded a grant from the Terry Husseman Account by the Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology). These funds were combined with district monies to support the Water Wise Demonstration Project. We estimate that the new landscaping will reduce water usage by 50-75%. Many plants will benefit pollinators and complement the Heritage Garden Program that is growing in popularity.

Background: The demonstration garden provides an aesthetic and educational location for the public to learn more about the environmental and water quality benefits of native plants and low water landscaping. Low water-use plantings highlight the benefits of minimal or no supplemental water needs, reduced fertilizer use, ground water protection, habitat for wildlife and pollinating insects, local beauty, and low maintenance landscaping in the Yakima Valley's arid climate. The garden includes a small area of riparian species planted along colored river rock that represents a stream. These plantings provide a visual example that focuses on water quality benefits such as stream shade, water temperature reduction, soil stability, as well as the benefits to fish and wildlife.

To Date: All components of the Water Wise Demonstration Project have been completed. We prepared the soil by rototilling it early in the process. We landscaped areas to designate a stream and drainage points. Fabric mulch was applied as an underlayer to reduce weed growth and trap/conserves moisture. A network of drip irrigation, filters, pressure regulators, and emitters (0.5-1.0 gallons per hour) were installed to meet the needs of the low water-use plants. Several small boulders were placed, and crushed basalt has been spread throughout the project site. Over 1,000 wildflowers, grasses, shrubs, and trees have been installed. Now, we are waiting for the plants to grow and thrive next year.





HERITAGE GARDENS

of the

COLUMBIA BASIN

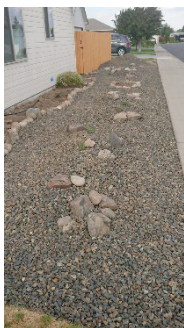
The North Yakima Conservation District offers **free technical assistance** to landowners who are interested in planning a Heritage Garden. Our services are made accessible to Yakima County communities thanks to grant funding from the Municipal Subgroup of the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan through the Washington State Department of Ecology.

The Program Representative in your conservation district will:

- ❖ Provide you with **custom plant lists** specific to the conditions of your site;
- ❖ Work with you to **develop a planting plan** to inspire your landscape;
- ❖ Provide continued **technical support, resources, and advising** for landscape installation and maintenance;
- ❖ And **certify gardens** that meet the HG Certification criteria. Certified gardens receive a yard sign and will be featured on the program's webpage.

Your Heritage Garden, no matter the size, helps our communities:

- ✓ Save Water for Fish, Wildlife, and other Agricultural and Natural Resources.
- ✓ Support Native Pollinators and Wildlife by Creating Diverse Habitats.
- ✓ Grow Regionally Unique, Beautiful, and Sustainable Landscapes.
- ✓ Reduce Chemical and Mechanical Inputs Required by Conventional Landscaping.
- ✓ Appreciate and share the biodiversity, natural history, and cultural diversity of the Columbia Basin.



As the saying goes with native plants-- *First they Sleep,*



then they Creep,



then they Leap!

A lot of these species will be tiny when you purchase them.



*Interested in starting the planning process with a Site Visit?
Have a Garden you think could Certify?
Contact Us!*

EMILY HAMANT

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Learn more at <https://www.hgcd.info>

or Find us on FaceBook at <https://www.facebook.com/HeritageGardenProgram>

to stay up-to-date on our latest events, outreach, and workshops.

NORTH YAKIMA CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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