



# Conservation CONNECTION

WHIDBEY ISLAND CONSERVATION DISTRICT NEWSLETTER

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Edward Adams

## New Supervisor Appointed to WICD

The WICD Board of Supervisors is made up of three locally elected members and two members who are appointed by the WA State Conservation Commission (WSCC). Local Farmer and businessman, Fran Einterz, recently retired after serving 9 years (3 terms) on the District Board. District Manager, Karen Bishop, said, "Fran contributed a great deal of time and energy to WICD. We appreciate all of the talents he shared to bring the District to the strong position we are in today to better serve our landowners."

WSCC appointed Edward Adams, PhD, of Oak Harbor to fill the position vacated by Fran Einterz. Ed is an emeritus faculty member of Washington State University Extension and will bring a great perspective, energy, and knowledge to the WICD board. For a full bio, please visit the [Supervisor page](#) of our website.



Conservation districts offer resources and services that can help you address water supply issues and wildfire risk. Click [here](#) to find out more about . . .

**Drought Resources for Landowners**

## Prepare Now for Summer Drought

The warm winter and spring may have disappointed skiers and snowboarders, but it could be disastrous for farmers using irrigation in the surrounding off-island areas. Record low snowpack in the mountains signals water shortages this summer, and stream flows are projected to be less than 50% of normal. On May 21, Governor Inslee declared a drought emergency for all of Washington state.

Typically on Whidbey, it's low rainfall that impacts our farmers, most of whom don't irrigate but rely on adequate soil moisture for their crops. This year, warmer weather has brought drier soils. People will likely use more water to irrigate gardens and lawns, increasing demands on local aquifers. Please turn to page 2 for a list of water reduction practices for your landscape or your farm to protect our island aquifers.

**2015 WICD Award Winners** WICD cooperators and partners were recognized at our Annual Open House held on May 5 at the Coupeville Library. Congratulations to Connor McDanniel, John Burks, Ruth Richards, Vic & Sharon Milford, Richard Doyle, Fran Einterz, and Bruce Gordon. Meet the winners and read more about their achievements [here](#).

## Buying Locally Produced Food - It's ALL Good! by Karen Bishop

An abundance of sunshine, bringing an early spring to Whidbey Island, is providing our local farmers with perfect conditions to offer a plentiful supply of nutritious, fresh, healthy food grown right in our backyard. There are a myriad of reasons not to look past our island to purchase much of the produce and fruit that we consume during the growing season. Even though the island feels quite rural with farms speckling the landscape, a very small percentage of the food consumed on the island is actually grown here.

We as consumers have the power to change this pattern, particularly at a time when our farmers are figuring out how to extend the growing season and, as a result, are producing a wider variety of locally grown products. [Continue reading](#).

Related links for "buying local":

- 2015 Whidbey Island Farm Stand [brochure](#)
- Whidbey's Country Farms [map](#)
- WICD Local Agriculture [web page](#)
- Whidbey Island Farm Tour [website](#)

## Upcoming Events - Please visit our website [Calendar page](#) for more details about these and other events:

- **Forest Health Field Workshop**, Tues., June 23, 6:30-8:30pm - Crystal Lake Tree Farm, Woodinville. \$10/couple \$7/single
- **Septic 101 & Septic 201 Training for Home Owners**, Mon., June 29, 5:00 - 8:00pm, Pacific Rim Institute near Coupeville
- **Drip Irrigation Workshop**, Sat., July 11, 10am - noon, S. Whidbey Tilth Sustainability Campus, 2812 Thompson Rd, Langley
- **Summer '15 Forest Owner Field Day**, Sat., Aug. 29, 9:00am - 4:00pm, off SR 534 at milepost 3 near Conway, Skagit Co.
- **Forest Stewardship Coached Planning**, Oct. 8 - Dec. 3, Thursdays 5:45-8:45pm, Deer Lagoon Grange, Langley

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Visit our website at  
[www.whidbeycd.org](http://www.whidbeycd.org)

## Home Septic Training

The Island County Public Health Home Owner Septic Training, or HOST program, is helping people to better understand and maintain their septic systems. Properly functioning septic systems are essential to protecting our streams and lakes, Puget Sound, and our home investment. The next classes for Septic 101 and Septic 201 will be held on Monday, June 29th at Pacific Rim Institute near Coupeville. [More info here.](#)

## Commercial Kitchen Survey

Goosefoot, a non-profit economic and community development organization on South Whidbey Island, is very interested in developing a commercial kitchen that really works...but only if one is really needed. [Take the survey here.](#)

## The Holly & the Ivy

What's wrong with a little holly and ivy? Plenty. Learn why and how to remove these invasives [here.](#)



## WICD Historical Mapping Project

WICD recently archived several sets of historic aerial photographs inherited from Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) when NRCS closed its Whidbey Island office in the 1990s. The images are of Island County from the 1940s, 1963, and 1990. [Read more.](#) To access a map with links to the aerial photos, [click here.](#)

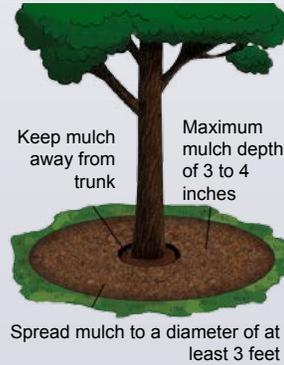
## TIPS to PREPARE YOUR YARD and GARDEN for DROUGHT

**1. Forego irrigating the lawn.** Turf grass naturally goes dormant in summer, so consider giving in to a golden lawn. To help maintain the health of your turf through the dry summer, mow high, 2 ½ inches or more and use a mulching blade. Taller grass shades the soil, helping to preserve moisture. A mulching blade will leave the finely chopped clippings to insulate the soil and add water-holding organic matter.

**2. Mulch around perennials, trees and shrubs.** Applying mulch while soil moisture levels are high retains moisture much later into the growing season.

Plus, mulch inhibits weeds that compete with desirable plants for moisture and nutrients. Mulch is the best insurance you can buy for a healthy landscape.

**3. Prioritize irrigation needs when things get really dry.** Consider what is essential for survival rather than striving for optimum growth. Most well established plants should be able to survive without



any irrigation and many others will get by with a good soaking just once per month in June, July, and August. Turf grass will bounce back fine in the fall if you apply just one inch of water for each month without rain.

**4. Convert some lawn into a less water-demanding landscape.** Transform your thirsty lawn into a carefree bed of drought-tolerant groundcovers, shrubs, and perennials. Check out this [list of drought tolerant plants](#). Start by simply covering the lawn with a foot of mulch this summer. Consider adding deck areas, patios and pathways as alternatives.

**5. Collect rainwater using barrels or tanks.** Rain barrels are an inexpensive way to collect roof water for use around the yard. Learn how to build your own with the guidance of our brochure "[Use it or Lose it.](#)" You might also consider installing larger tanks, to get you through our dry summer months, while reducing your demand on our island's aquifers.

**6. Provide Water for Wildlife.** Our dry summers present a challenge for our resident birds, mammals, reptiles, and insects. Adding a bird bath to your yard will give critters a reliable supply of fresh water through the dry months. Keep pools and baths filled, and clean them weekly to prevent the spread of diseases.

**July 17 cut-off date for EQIP statewide initiatives** - USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service announced the application deadline for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) in Washington State will come earlier than previous years to account for a stronger focus on conservation planning. EQIP is a voluntary, technical and financial assistance program designed to help farmers improve irrigation efficiency; manage nutrient run-off and/or animal waste; improve the health of native plant communities; and reduce soil loss. In most instances, producers who participate in the program pay for roughly half of the costs of the conservation measures or practices. [More details here.](#)

## TIPS to PREPARE YOUR FARM for DROUGHT

**Install a cistern to capture roof runoff.**

A half inch of rainwater collected from 1,000 square feet of roof area provides 312 gallons of water. Small farms with livestock have a use for non-potable water year-round, and collecting rainwater for reuse as stock water reduces our demand on the island's freshwater aquifers.

The photo above is a system installed at

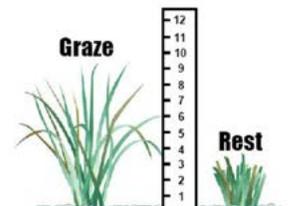


a local farm. An elevated 1,100 gallon cistern collects roof runoff water and gravity feeds it to a stock tank with a float valve. The water tank

straddled by a fence serves two pastures, facilitating rotational grazing.

**Rotate animals through pastures,** adhering to the take half, leave half rule of thumb. Allow pasture grasses to reach a height of 6" to 8"

before grazing and remove animals when the stubble height is no shorter than 3" to 4". This will encourage deeper roots, lessen plant stress and help shorten plant recovery time. More forage will result and healthy plants can deal better with dry periods.



Thank you to Clallam Conservation District for providing much of the drought preparation content.