Tree of the Quarter: Siberian Crabapple (*Malus baccata*) is an extremely hardy, smallish flowering tree. In the spring, pink blossoms erupt into beautiful, fragrant, 5 pedaled white flowers. The fruits are 1/3” diameter apples, ripening by fall. The apples make excellent jellies and wines, as they are too tart to enjoy fresh. They will remain on the tree most of the winter, providing food for many species through the bleak harshness of winter. The shape and size of the Siberian Crabapple ranges from round to spreading, and may grow to 25 feet tall. Siberian Crabapples provide fair habitat and excellent food for a wide variety of wildlife species. New plantings should be protected from wildlife, as they can destroy trees in short order. They should not be planted near juniper, cedar, or cotoneaster. Siberian Crabapples are beautiful trees that will make a wonderful addition to any tree planting. If you are interested in planting Siberian Crabapple, conservation grade bare root trees can be ordered through the SCD Tree Store.

Ladies Ag Night 2016

The District held its annual Ladies Ag Night on March 10th in Casselton. Val Farmer, nationally recognized psychologist and syndicated columnist, was the keynote speaker. Over 140 people attended the event, which was catered by One-on-One Catering of Fargo. Pies from Kerry’s Sweet Shop delighted the crowd. The addition of raffle items was a hit, and the lucky winners went home with beautiful themed baskets. All in all, it was a wonderful evening spent celebrating women in agriculture. The District would also like to thank Ginny Uhlich, Michelle Martin and Katie Miller for help with the event.

Food, Land, & People Workshops: Summer 2016

The District has scholarship funds available for Cass County teachers. For a brief description of sessions, please visit: [http://www.foodlandpeople.org/resources/resources-for-learning/brief-descriptions/](http://www.foodlandpeople.org/resources/resources-for-learning/brief-descriptions/)

Fargo workshops: (Held at ND Farm Bureau Training Center)
- FLP I Intro Course: June 27th – June 28th
- FLP III Nutrition & Consumer Behavior Course: June 29th-June 30th
- FLP Institute: “Growing STEM from the Ground Up!”: August 16th-17th

Please contact the District office for more scholarship information.
Conservation Quote of the Quarter:

“Every year one day comes, when, although there is no obvious change in the appearance of trees and hedges, the Earth seems to breath and it is spring.”

Elizabeth Clarke, The Darkening Green

Tree Planting Season is here!

Spring is here! That means the District will be receiving our tree order from the nurseries. Our equipment is ready to roll, so we request planting customers get your site prepped and ready to be planted. Working the site is imperative to a successful planting, as a good seedbed allows for good soil-to-root contact. Some work on the front end of the planting goes a long way in ensuring a long lasting, beautiful planting.

The District would like to thank Dan Iwen and Barry Rupprecht for returning for their 12th planting season. Their hard work contributes to our success every year.

Upcoming Events

April 19th—Board Meeting: Fargo Field Office
April 26th—Make a Rain Barrel Workshop: 6-8pm
May 3rd—Make a Compost Tumbler Workshop: 6-8 pm
May 5th & 10th—Bale/Pallet Garden Classes: 6-7:30pm
May 17th—Board Meeting: Fargo Field Office, Reforest the Red: Jefferson West Park 2-7pm
May 30th—Memorial Day: Office Closed
June 21st—Board Meeting: Fargo Field Office

Living Ag Classroom

The District participated in the annual Living Ag Classroom program held at the Red River Valley Fairgrounds on March 1-4. The Living Ag Classroom educates elementary school-aged children on the diversity of agriculture in the state of North Dakota, and its role in the state and the world. 2,306 Fourth Grade students attended, with 115 groups rotating through 12 stations. The Cass County Soil Conservation District’s presentation was on Soil and Water Conservation and Erosion. Staff members worked the booth daily, interacting with the students and presenting the program. The event was productive and enjoyable.

Happenings

Ryan Haspel completed his Acting DC duties at the Fargo Field Office, and Lucas Schmiesing, Soil Conservationist from the Devil’s Lake Field Office, will be acting March 13-April 9.
Fruit Trees for Wildlife

When planting trees for wildlife, we often plan for bedding and escape cover. However, fruit trees can provide cover and high energy, preferred food, drawing wildlife to a property. Fruit trees don’t require annual planting, like a food plot, adding a value enhancement for wildlife. There are a variety of species that can be planted in Cass County. These include crabapples such as Siberian, Dolgo, or Midwest Manchurian. Some varieties of crabs will drop apples, while other will retain. Deer will be attracted to apples on the ground, while birds and squirrels prefer those that stay on the tree. My personal field experience is that crabapples are magnets to whitetail deer, and they are included in plantings on property I manage.

Grafted apple trees can also be planted, but at a much greater expense than a conservation grade tree. Lincoln Oakes Nursery has a conservation grade apple, Prairie Yellow, that merits a close look. We have not planted this tree yet, but a few test sites will be doing so in 2016. American Plums are another good choice, as they grow into thickets for cover and produce fruit for food.

The key to establishing fruit trees is protection from depredation as they grow. Deer, rabbits, and other rodents will reduce a young tree to nothing in short order, so a cage or tube to protect it as it grows is needed. Fabric squares, mulch or regular mowing is also needed, to reduce competition from weeds. While the returns from fruit trees may be a few years after planting, they will provide for wildlife for many years. Planted in conjunction with other habitat improvements such as native grass plantings and/or food plots, fruit trees can add another dimension to a property for wildlife attraction and retention.

Continuous CRP Signup

While the big news in the last few months has been the general CRP signup, there is also a Continuous CRP (CCRP) signup. This program, initiated in 1996, is a voluntary program to restore and protect specifically targeted sensitive land. It differs from the general CRP by focusing on a more specific suite of practices, particularly wetlands, wildlife habitat, and water quality buffers. Some applicable practices to Cass County include:

- **Wetland Restoration:** There are a variety of practices associated with this application, including floodplain wetlands, non-floodplain wetlands, farmable wetlands, duck nesting habitat, and wetland buffers.

- **Buffers:** Once again, there are a variety of practices associated with this application, including filter strips, riparian buffers, grass waterways, field windbreaks, living snow fences, shelterbelts, and marginal pastureland wildlife buffers.

- **Special Purpose Practices:** The most applicable practice associated with this is Salinity Reducing or Salt Tolerant Vegetation. This practice establishes salt tolerant vegetation on saline areas.

The intention of CCRP is not to enroll entire sections or farms in CRP, but to address specific resource concerns.

With the lower commodity prices we are now faced with, it may be a good time to evaluate marginal areas of your property and see if now is the time to consider establishing wetland buffers, taking some low, marginal lands out of production and restoring back to wetland, or planting shelterbelts, living snow fences or field windbreaks. For more information on any of these programs, contact us at 701-282-2157.

County Weed Programs for 2016: Contact the Weed Control office at 701-298-2388 if you are interested in cost shared herbicide and application, weed scouting, or keeping ditches unsprayed for hay.
STEWARDSHIP FOR TODAY & TOMORROW

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