

Cass County Soil Conservation District

Winter Conservation News

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Tree of the Quarter: Red Splendor

Crabapple (*Malus Red Splendor*) is a beautiful ornamental hybrid crabapple tree that also offers valuable food to winter wildlife. Growing up to 20' tall and 20' wide, the Red Splendor Crabapple is covered in pink flowers in the spring. Though the crabapples it produces are quite small, at just over a 1/2" in size, they persist on the tree all winter. A wide variety of wildlife, such as deer, squirrels and birds feast on the fruit during the cold, short days. The dark green summer foliage is beautiful and offers good shade to a home or farmstead. If you are looking for a tree that provides beauty, wildlife benefits and shade, look no further than the Red Splendor Crabapple. Red Splendor Crabapple are available through the Tree Store in conservation grade stock and can also be in machine plantings.

**Check us out at
casscd.org or on
Facebook!**

District Staff

Jeffrey Miller—Director

Amy Cole—Office Manager

Eric Dahl—Soil and Water Resources Mgr

Tony Peterson—Programs Manager

NRCS Staff

Josh Monson—District Conservationist

Matt Shappell—Soil Conservationist

Matt Waclawik—Wetlands Specialist

Blake Johnson—Agriculture Engineer

Paul Flahave—Designated Conservationist

Tim Cogger—Program Assistant

District Supervisors

Terry Hoffmann—Wheatland

Brad Kellerman—West Fargo

Kelli Bowen—Cassellton

Jodi Meisch—Mapleton

Warren Solberg—Horace

Ladies' Ag 2023

Plan on attending our annual Ladies' Ag event, being held on March 23rd, 2023 at the Fargo Air Museum. Doors open at 4:30 pm. Stay tuned to our Facebook page for information on the guest speaker. Attendees enjoy a social hour and supper, entertainment, and raffle items. The proceeds from the raffle go directly back into the Ladies' Ag Night fund. This event is **FREE** to ladies who are invested in rural and urban conservation. Participants may register for this event by calling the District at (701) 282-2157 x 3 or emailing Amy at amy.cole@nd.nacdnet.net.



- ✓ The District worked closely with our partners NRCS and FSA in setting up EQIP and CSP contracts that involved either tree plantings or grass plantings. In addition, the **Cass County Windbreak Planting Initiative (CWPI)** continues to be very popular. We would like to thank all the cooperators in the county for giving the District the opportunity to apply conservation to their land. The District assisted these cooperators in planting over **150,000 LF** of trees and installed over **120,000 LF** of weed barrier. Almost **63,000 trees and shrubs** were planted in Cass County in 2022.
- ✓ Both no-till drills saw use and we planted over **3,500 acres** of perennial grasses and forbs, cover crops and alfalfa in Cass County in 2022.
- ✓ Our **Eco-Ed** outdoor educational program was held at Brewer Lake and reached over **135 7th and 8th grade students** from Central Cass and Maple Valley.
- ✓ The **Maple River Watershed Project** is open for sign-up and we are continuously accepting cost-share applications for management practices in the Maple River Watershed. Practices include livestock management, cover crop, grass and tree establishment, septic system renovations, and more.
- ✓ The **Red River Basin Wildlife and Water Quality Enhancement Program** was kicked off for 2022. The program will continue for 2023.
- ✓ The **Urban Conservation** program continues to expand. We took on many great projects throughout our community and held several community educational workshops including the construction of rain barrels and compost tumblers. The Pocket Prairie Initiative, Community Garden Grant, and Pollinator plantings continue to be popular. We are continuously accepting applications, so contact us today!
- ✓ The District's annual **Ladies' Ag Night** was finally held again and was a rousing success. Sabrina Hornung was the speaker and presented on Art in Rural Areas.
- ✓ The **Living Ag Classroom** program was held for the first time in two years and over 2,000 area 3rd and 4th graders attended.
- ✓ The **Home and Garden Show** was held for the first time in two years. We visited with many people interested in our programs and services.
- ✓ The District had a booth at the **Big Iron Farm Show**. Big Iron gives us a great opportunity to discuss soil conservation with the producers that stop by the booth.
- ✓ Director Jeffrey Miller worked with the City of Fargo and the Cass-Clay Food Commission and appeared in a video about the importance of pollinators.
- ✓ The District presented at Fargo Vocational Training Center (VTC) on a variety of topics.
- ✓ The "Animal Adaptations" presentation continues to be popular with area students, from pre-school through high school.
- ✓ The District's Eric Dahl and Jeffrey Miller were interviewed for articles that appeared in the Cass County Reporter

Quote of the Quarter:

"Thank goodness for the first snow, it was a reminder--no matter how old you became and how much you'd seen, things could still be new if you were willing to believe they still mattered."
Candance Bushnell

Red River Basin Wildlife and Water Quality Enhancement Pilot Program



Continuing for 2023, seven Soil Conservation Districts (SCDs) in the Red River Basin are coordinating with the ND Game and Fish Department and ND Department of Environmental Quality on the Red River Basin Wildlife and Water Quality Enhancement Pilot Program (Program). Counties include Cass, Grand Forks, Griggs, Ransom, Richland, Sargent and Walsh. The program will be active from 2021-2025.

The primary objectives of the Program are to increase wildlife habitat and improve water quality in the Red River Valley. Marginally productive croplands (e.g., saline areas, flood prone sites, etc.) in the uplands and along riparian corridors are the primary focus of the Program. Eligible practices include: Conservation Cover, Critical Area Planting, Filter Strip, Grassed Waterway, Pollinator Habitat, Range Planting, Forage and Biomass Planting, Riparian Forest Buffer and Riparian Herbaceous Buffer.

Sixty percent (60%) of eligible practice costs will be supported with Outdoor Heritage funds and the balance of costs (i.e., 40%) will be the responsibility of the producer. In addition to the practice cost-share, producers are also eligible to receive payments for the management and maintenance of select practices, including Conservation Cover, Pollinator Habitat, Riparian Forest Buffer and Riparian Herbaceous Cover. These payments will be issued through management agreements established between the participating producer and SCD.

Management agreements can be up to 5 years in length and the payments will be based on local county rental rates. Payments to the producers can be provided as an annual or lump-sum payment and cannot exceed 50% of the county rental rate.



If you are interested or would like to get more information, contact us today!



Upcoming Events

December 26th— Christmas Observed: Office Closed	February 20th— Presidents' Day: Office Closed
January 2nd— New Year's Eve Observed: Office Closed	February 24-26-Home and Garden Show-FargoDome
January 10th— Board Meeting: Fargo Field Office	
January 16th— MLK Day: Office Closed	

What's in a Track?

Newly fallen snow transforms the world into a blank canvas. Critters that have moved in the shadowy dark are forced to leave evidence of their wanderings. From mice to moose, the snow reveals it all.



Some tracks are easy to identify. The heart-shaped hooves of a deer are familiar to just about anyone, as is the giant chicken-like track of a turkey. The spoor can be followed easily in shallow snow.

Other animals leave tracks that are headscratchers. Rabbit and squirrel tracks, to the uninformed, look like they were made by anything but a rabbit. Looking closely, however, it's easy to understand the fact that the critter's back feet are in front, with the smaller rear paws in the back. Viewed alone, it looks like a mushy horseshoe.

The animal's feet aren't the only thing revealed in the snow. Birds taking off and landing leave feather marks. A hunting owl, pouncing on a mouse, will leave wing marks on both side of the hapless prey. All sorts of woodland and prairie dramas, normally only privy to the participants in them, lay obvious to anyone willing to take a close look.

This winter, get outside after a fresh snowfall and find the drama just outside the window.



Spring 2023

It's not too late to plan your Spring tree planting! Depending on the practice, there may even be cost-share available! Just looking for hand-plants for your property? The Tree Store is now **OPEN!** Winter is the perfect time to plan a Pollinator Plot or Pocket Prairie as well. Call or email us today and let's get a plan together!



The Winter River



During the warm seasons, a river burbles and babbles as the water flows smoothly over the landscape. Ducks and geese fly by, sleek river otter slip into the dark water, and raccoon and mink hunt the shore. Beneath the surface, muscular catfish and slab-sided goldeye glide through the current, picking

food off the bottom and higher up in the channel.

As the days shorten and the air gets colder, the river undergoes a tremendous change. Rivers don't freeze at once, with ice forming first in the slowest current areas and then glazing over in the swiftest current. It takes very cold temperatures, over an extended period of time, to completely freeze larger rivers. Shallow creeks and rivers may freeze from the surface to the bottom, fish will vacate the water via a temperature trigger. In larger rivers, fish remain. Activity decreases as their body temperatures lower in step with the lower water temperatures. A fish's metabolism slows down to the lowest energy input and output that it can withstand. Because of this, fish use rocks and submerged debris much more, using them as resting and hiding areas. Daylight activity reduces as nighttime activity picks up, both as a means of avoiding daytime predators and as a way to avoid submerged ice clusters, called anchor ice.

Water-loving mammals, such as muskrat, otter and beaver, keep small holes open to allow them to enter the water. Ice is no match for their sharp teeth and claws. Thick, dense fur ensure the animals stay warm no matter the air or water temperature.

Waterfowl employ a different tactic, flying south to warmer climates once liquid water disappears.



Rivers are amazing places to be, no matter the season. River ice is never safe, so enjoy the season from the bank and marvel at what is occurring under the ice.

Cass County Soil Conservation District

1665 43rd St S, Suite 103

Fargo ND 58103-3319

STEWARDSHIP FOR TODAY & TOMORROW

All programs and services of the Cass County Soil Conservation District are offered on a non-discriminatory basis, without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age or handicap. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.


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BRIAN TEBERG
Owner

Phone: 701.277.3255
3201 39th St SW
Fargo, ND 58103
eliteautomotivecenter@gmail.com

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AGASSIZ
SEED & SUPPLY

Chris (Chrispy) Prochnow
Sales

445 7th Street NW • West Fargo, ND 58078
Office 701-282-8118 • Fax 701-282-9119
chrisp@agassizseed.com • Cell 701-388-6323
www.agassizseed.com

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F 701-293-9468
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701-633-5438
embdengrain@ictc.com

WWW.EMBDENGRAIN.COM



COTTONWOOD BEND FARM
facebook.com/cottonwoodbendfarm

Jeffrey Miller and Melanie Kraker
Owners
5447 E River Road
Kindred, ND 58051
jeffreymiller@hotmail.com 701-371-1060