



# Windham County Conservation District

Spring 2020

Newsletter



## EQIP deadline 4/6



*Do you own or manage farmland or forest land in Vermont? Could you use some technical and financial help in managing it more effectively? The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) encourages you to sign up for conservation assistance through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Applications may be submitted at any time during the year; however, the next ranking batching date is April 6, 2020.*

EQIP is a voluntary conservation program that provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers and forestland owners to address natural resource concerns through an array of conservation practices. Assistance is available to support private landowners and managers in addressing farm, field, forest, wildlife, water, and/or plant management issues.

Interested applicants who are already USDA customers can submit applications online via [Conservation Client Gateway](#). New customers can contact their local USDA Service center and conduct business via phone and mail. Please contact Joshua Allen, NRCS Soil Conservationist in Brattleboro at [joshua.allen@usda.gov](mailto:joshua.allen@usda.gov) or 802-689-3022. You can also contact Windham Conservation District Manager Cory Ross at [ross.wcnrcd@gmail.com](mailto:ross.wcnrcd@gmail.com) or 802-689-3024.

Vermont NRCS State Conservationist Vicky Drew also announced that farmers in two Vermont watersheds are eligible for up to 90 percent payment assistance for selected conservation practices. The 2018 Farm Bill amended the Food Security Act of 1985 to add a provision providing for the protection of source water through targeted conservation practices in identified watersheds. "In Vermont, NRCS worked in collaboration with drinking water partners and the members of the USDA State Technical Committee to identify two priority areas for source water protection," explained Drew

## Wetlands Restoration and Conservation Initiative



The Windham Conservation District has secured grant funding to support wetland restoration and conservation projects in Vermont in partnership with the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets (VAAFMM) and the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). If you are an agricultural producer in Windham County, do you:

- Have areas on your farm that flood every spring?
- Have low or wet areas that fail to produce adequate yield?
- Have a spot where your tractor gets stuck periodically?
- Want some additional revenue for your farm?

If any of these apply to you, there may be funding available to set aside portions of fields that flood for wetland restoration and protection and put some extra money into your budget. Contact District Manager Cory Ross at [ross.wcnrcd@gmail.com](mailto:ross.wcnrcd@gmail.com) for further information and a consultation.

## (Continued)

The two watersheds eligible for specialized EQIP assistance are the Headwaters Passumpsic River watershed in the northeastern part of the state and the **Vernon Dam watershed** in the southern part of the state, both in the Connecticut River Watershed.

Through this special initiative, NRCS can provide increased incentives for practices that relate to water quality and quantity and protect drinking water sources while also benefitting producers. Eligible producers in the two identified Vermont watersheds may receive up to a 90% payment rate to install key conservation practices such as:

- Conservation Crop Rotation
- Cover Crops
- Ground Water Testing
- Riparian Forest Buffer
- Filter Strip
- Heavy Use Area Protection
- Nutrient Management
- Integrated Pest Management
- Agrichemical Handling Facility
- Well Decommissioning

## The Conservation District is now signing up farms for 2020-2021 Nutrient Management Plan Assistance

Are you a “Certified Small Farm Operation” (CSFO), or are you a non-certified small farm that mechanically spreads manure or fertilizers on farm fields? If so, we’d like to help you learn more about nutrient management and develop a Nutrient Management Plan for your farm while funds are available to cover the tasks associated with this effort. This program can help:



- **Farms of all sizes adopt new techniques to manage nutrients and protect water quality downstream**
- **Certified Small Farm Operations meet State requirements to have Nutrient Management Plans.**
- **Balance nutrients on fields for better crop yields**
- **Get soil samples done for all farm fields**
- **Cut costs by reducing unnecessary fertilizer applications.**

Sign up now to take advantage of the opportunity for assistance to prepare you for a 6-session Nutrient Management Class (NMP) led by UVM Extension in January-March of 2021. Farmers who attend this class leave with greater knowledge of their fields, of the nutrients available on their farm, and how to best manage these resources to maintain crop yields and protect water quality.

The VACD RCPP program will cover the costs of all the preparation for the class including soil and manure samples, maps, required documentation, a one-year subscription for the GoCrop software used during the class, as well as the cost of the classes. We will also provide assistance to you throughout the class. To sign up and for further information please contact Cory Ross at [ross.wcnrcd@gmail.com](mailto:ross.wcnrcd@gmail.com) or 802-689-3024.



## 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Windham County Conservation District Plant Sale!

Saturday, May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2020

9:00am – 12:00pm

Pickup at Green Mountain Orchards in Putney, VT

Join the WCNCRCD for our annual plant sale this year at Green Mountain Orchards! We offer plants for their landscape value, conservation value, revegetation value, and food value, for ourselves, bird species and other wildlife. The best way to maximize your planting success is to match the right plant with the correct soil and light

conditions. If you have any questions concerning type of soil, water needs or care for the listed species contact the Conservation District at 802-689-3024.

### Notes:

- All nursery stock is bare root. Trees and shrub stock are delivered in a dormant state; this prevents transport shock. Plants may appear brown and leafless but once planted will quickly produce green leaves and shoots. Bare root stock plants should be planted immediately.
- If there is a plant species that is not listed and you would like to obtain it, call the office early so every effort can be made to secure that variety for you.
- Herbaceous Perennials die down to ground level each autumn/winter and start to re-grow the following spring. They normally increase in size each year, because they will be re-starting life with a larger root system left over from the previous year. Most perennials are low maintenance. They require little more than basic care, which includes fertilizing, mulching and a general overall grooming from time to time.
- Plant supplies are limited, and we will fill orders as they come in.

***Orders will be taken until April 25<sup>th</sup>. Pick-up of stock will be from 9:00-12:00 on Saturday, May 9<sup>th</sup> at Green Mountain Orchards in Putney, VT. The District will not be responsible for stock once it is removed from the pick-up site and reserves the right to refund money for stock that becomes unavailable. No refunds will be made on any orders not picked up by the designated date.***

- **Please note on your calendar the date and time of pickup. Saturday, May 9<sup>th</sup> from 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.**
- Please send payment with your order and make a copy of your order form for your records.
- Order forms are available for download at <http://windhamcountynrcd.org/continuing-programs/plant-sale/>
- You can also request an order form mailed to you by contacting the District office – 802-689-3024, [ross.wcnrcd@gmail.com](mailto:ross.wcnrcd@gmail.com)



# Birding on the Farm



The Cheshire County Conservation District, Windham County Natural Resources Conservation District, Antioch Bird Club, and USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service invite the public to participate in a series of free workshops in 2020. This “Birding on the Farm” workshop series will host one workshop per season to highlight a variety of bird species and will be hosted on different farms

located on either side of the Connecticut river in NH & VT.

This workshop series is intended for all levels of “birders,” including new ones. Participants will learn about the role farms play in providing habitat for wildlife, which birds utilize different farming practices (grazing pasture, row crops, hay field, and orchards) and how and when these resources are used and explore the seasonality and natural history of wildlife in our region.

The first workshop in this series was held Sunday, March 15<sup>th</sup> from 9am-11am, at Miller Farm in Vernon, VT. Our next two editions of this popular series are now scheduled:

- Wednesday, May 13, 7:30 am – 9:30 am. Old Ciderpress Farm, 119 Thompson Rd, Westmoreland NH.
- Saturday, June 27, 7 am – 9 am. Upper Meadows, Rockingham, Vermont. Meet at the Herrick’s Cove Parking Area.

Binoculars and boots are recommended, and please come dressed appropriately for the weather. *(Unless we experience an extreme weather event, this event is rain/snow or shine).* Please check the conservation district’s webpage or Facebook page for registration information when this event draws near.



# COVID-19 District Update

In keeping with the policy of Social Distancing, the Windham Conservation District Office is closed to the public and not being staffed regularly. Conservation work is continuing from outside the office via fieldwork and telework. You are encouraged to use email to contact the District during this time period: [windhamcountynrcd@gmail.com](mailto:windhamcountynrcd@gmail.com)

We will use our website and Facebook page to provide updates on District activities as they become available. The plant sale remains scheduled at this time, but may be subject to future Stay Home Stay Safe Orders from the Governor.

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Sign up to receive our quarterly newsletters here:

<http://windhamcountynrcd.org/e-newsletter/>

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

Like us on Facebook: *Windham County Natural Resources Conservation District*

## **Gardening Tips from Charlie Nardozzi for the Vermont Community Garden Network**

### **Work Smarter, Not Harder, in the Garden**

Although we all are itching to get into the garden and start digging, we also know that after even a little work, aches, pains and frustrations can set in. Garden fatigue can turn your May enthusiasm into July malaise. One way to spend more time harvesting, eating and enjoying your garden and less time weeding, fighting diseases, insects and animals is to work smarter, not harder. A little planning and forethought now can go a long way in reducing the amount of work you have to do to for a successful garden. And a successful garden will be one that everyone wants to participate in! Here are some tips on working smarter, not harder this year.

- **Make A Plan-** While it may be fun to pop plants and seeds in the garden in May willy-nilly, making a plan isn't just for the uber-organized. Making a plan on paper of what plants will be planted where and how many you'll need will help you space plants properly and fit all you can into the space allotted. Too often we try to fit too many plants in our beds because we have extra seeds or plants. A plan keeps you to your word and will be a good reference. It will lead to healthier plants that need less maintenance all summer.
- **Grow the Best Varieties-** When hunting for the varieties to grow, look for ones adapted to your locale. Check regional seed companies for their recommendations. Look for varieties that will mature quickly in your area. Check for varieties that have good resistance to diseases, such as early and late blight ('Iron Lady' tomato), to reduce the need for spraying. Remember to always rotate crops, not planting the same family of vegetables in the same spot for 4 years.
- **It's All About the Soil-** I can't stress this one enough. Fertile, healthy, organic soils will be teaming with microbes that enhance water drainage and retention and nutrient availability for your plants. You'll have to use less fertilizer to correct problems, because you should have fewer of them. You'll also do less watering during droughts.
- **Raise It Up-** On all but sandy soils consider growing your plants in raised beds. Any vegetable, except potatoes and sweet corn, is easily grown in raised beds. The beds heat up faster and drain water quicker in spring. The plants can be placed closer together and you can concentrate your fertilizing, watering and weeding into a smaller area. Plus, they're more productive!
- **Water Deeply and Infrequently-** If you must water do use deeply and infrequently. Place the hose under large plants, such as tomato or squash, and let it trickle water for 5 to 10 minutes per plant so the water sinks at least 6 inches into the soil. Water row plants, such as beans and lettuce, in the morning so any moisture evaporates off the leaves before the evening. Wet leaves going into the evening can lead to diseases.
- **Weed Early and Often-** Weed between plants and on unmulched rows early and often. By weeding thoroughly in late spring and early summer, you'll kill most of the tough weeds so you'll have to do less, heavy weeding later in the season.

- **Mulch Mulch, Mulch-** To save time weeding and to save on watering, mulch your paths and around plants once they're established. For cool season crops, such as broccoli, cabbage, pea, kale, lettuce and root crops, use an organic mulch such as straw (hay has weed seeds), chopped leaves, and untreated grass clippings. These will keep the soil cool and moist, prevent weed growth and decompose to add nutrients into the soil. For warm season crops, such as tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, melons, squash, and sweet potatoes, consider dark plastic mulch. Plastic mulches heat the soil quickly to temperatures these crops love. Although they don't decompose to add to the soil's fertility, the plastic also prevents weeds from growing.
- **Don't be Soft Hearted-** In our short growing season we need to succession plant to get the most out of our beds. This means not being soft-hearted and pulling out or turning under crops when they're finished with their main harvest. Once the lettuce starts to bolt, yank it and plant root crops. Once the bush beans are mostly finished, turn them under, even if a few beans remain, to have room for a fall kale planting. If a plant has insects or disease problems that can't be fixed, it's better to pull it than risk having it spread to other plants.
- **Give'em A Boost-** Long season vegetables, such as tomatoes and squash, benefit from a little boost of fertilizer during the growing season. Sprinkle some organic granular fertilizer around the drip line just as the plants are flowering and setting fruits to increase their yields.
- **Keep a Watchful Eye-** Visit your garden as often as possible, even for 5 minutes a day, to watch for pest problems. If you catch an insect or disease attack early you often can fix it without having to spray.
- **Put up Your Barriers-** Insects can often be thwarted with simple barriers. Cardboard collars around pepper, broccoli and basil seedlings will stop cutworms. Floating row covers over broccoli, cabbage and kale can prevent cabbageworm adult butterflies from laying eggs. Erect your barriers early in the season to stop pests before they become a problem. This especially goes for 4-legged pests such as deer, rabbits and woodchucks. Fences are the ultimate answer, but barriers help with small plantings.
- **Pick Away-** A simple way to get more produce from your garden is to stay on top of the harvesting. Many vegetables such as tomatoes, pepper, eggplant, beans, squash and cucumbers will produce more fruits if you continually pick the ripe ones. If left on the vine to get over mature, the plant will stop producing new fruits. So, pick, even if you can't use it. You can always give it away or tuck them into your neighbor's mailbox.

*Developed by Charlie Nardozzi for the Vermont Community Garden Network 12 North St. Suite 5 • Burlington, VT 05401 • 802.861.4769 • [www.vcgn.org](http://www.vcgn.org) • VTGardenNetwork*