

Behind the Scenes

December 2020



Dear Friend,

The end of the year often brings up a mix of emotions, and 2020 is no different. On the one hand, I find myself filled with excitement about new possibilities and hope for once again being able to join together for in-person events. But I also feel a twinge of sadness (okay, a very tiny twinge!) at saying goodbye to a year that, for all its heartache and difficulties, turned out to provide so many opportunities to explore different paths and find new ways to connect with each other.

Though this year was fraught with challenges for delivering our Education and Outreach programs, it also allowed us to become better at making our events accessible to a greater number of people through Zoom and YouTube. In the coming year, we look forward to continuing to broaden our reach with virtual events and, we hope, a return to more in-person volunteer activities. We are also excited to celebrate another special occasion with you - the 20th anniversary of the LWC! Stay tuned for more information about how we are marking this milestone, including the launch of our very first Love Your Watershed photo contest this Spring!

May you and your loved ones have a safe and joyful holiday season!

--Suzanne Teller, LWC Outreach Coordinator (contact me at Outreach@LuckiamuteLWC.org or 503-837-0237)



Last minute gift ideas from the LWC!



There is still time to get those on your 'nice' list the perfect gift - one that shows off your love for your watershed and for your watershed council! You can now purchase LWC t-shirts, hooded zip-up sweatshirts, baseball caps and visors, plus beautiful hand-sewn face masks at www.LuckiamuteLWC.org/LWC-store. Plus, as a Friend of the LWC, you will get a 10% discount on all of our inventory! Look for a special discount code included in this month's *Behind the Scenes* email or inside the mailing envelope. **Happy Shopping!**



Upcoming **Love Your Watershed** Events:



The Power of Partnership: 20 years of Restoration with the LWC

January 28 @ 6:30 - 8:00pm
Early registration open for Friends!



Virtual Native Plant Workshop

February 9 @ 2:00 - 4:00pm
Zoom registration link coming soon!

During this *Sips 'n' Science* pub talk, LWC Executive Director Kristen Larson and Project Manager Jean-Paul Zagarola will talk about how the LWC and its partners have approached restoration planning over the past two decades. You will also see and hear about some examples of the many projects implemented over the years!
Register at www.luckiamutelwc.org/lwc-20-years

In this virtual workshop, you will learn how to identify your soil types and pick the best native plants for your yard and garden! You'll also hear about some of our favorite natives, why they are important, and where to plant them. *Workshop partners include North Santiam Watershed Council and Marion, Benton and Yamhill Soil & Water Conservation Districts*

Your Land. Your Rivers. Your Community. Your Watershed.

Watershed Notes

Winter Planting in the Watershed

by Suzanne, LWC Outreach Coordinator

You may not think of winter as a great time for plants. After all, it's the time of year when plants have lost their leaves and color, and even completely disappear from sight. With the exception of our conifers, winter solstice comes at a time when plants simply do not look their best.

However, when it comes to many of our native plants, the coldest and wettest time of year is actually the best time to plant! In late fall and early winter, the soil is continuously moist and has not yet lost all of its warmth from the long days of sunshine. Plus, the lack of leaves and new growth on top allows the plant to focus all of its energy on its root structure, which is incredibly important towards ensuring that it can take up enough water and nutrients in the spring, when plant growth really starts to take off. Good root establishment during the cool, dark months helps plants get a head start in spring growth before the weeds start to emerge. In fact, some of our native plant species—including osoberry (also known as Indian plum) and many of our native wildflowers—are so well adapted to this strategy, that they are ready to start flowering before winter is even over!

For this reason, winter is an important time of year for watershed restoration work. While our office is buzzing with wrapping up annual reports, grant applications, and end-of-year fundraising efforts, restoration crews are out on project sites putting thousands of native trees and shrubs in the ground. Last week, crewmembers focused on a unique type of restoration planting process often utilized this time of year. Rather than using seeds or bare-root saplings, they cut and transplanted young branches from certain native trees and shrubs that can easily propagate from cuttings.

By starting with cuttings from mature plants, the project areas will be able to fill in with native trees and shrubs much faster. Faster vegetation growth will result in the disturbed areas within these sites more quickly reaching their full potential for controlling erosion and providing quality habitat for birds, fish, and other resident wildlife.

At the LSNA floodplain restoration site, Project Manager Jean-Paul Zagarola, Juan Franco and the crewmembers of D. Franco Contracting, Inc. spent three days taking cuttings from willow, Douglas spirea, red osier dogwood, twinberry and Pacific ninebark trees and planting 8,000 of them within project sites at Luckiamute State Natural Area (LSNA). These native cuttings will soon be submerged as the Luckiamute River rises and overtops its banks. The high water table and layer of silt that is deposited by winter floodwaters as the river levels rise and fall will help these live stakes absorb the moisture and nutrients they need to develop a strong root system before bursting forth with new leaf growth in the spring.



D. Franco Contracting, Inc. crewmembers plant live cuttings within a newly constructed swale at the LSNA Floodplain Reconnection Project site.



An increased level of beaver activity is already being observed at the Upper Ritner Creek project site! Beaver dams, like the one pictured above, provide important habitat for native salmonids, as well as countless other plant and wildlife species.

Similarly, at our Upper Ritner Splash Dam Recovery project site, crewmembers from Kuznetsov Thinning Company used 2,800 live willow cuttings to replant the riparian (streamside) areas that had formerly been covered in invasive reed canary grass. In addition to increasing the speed of forest regeneration, the hope is that this area will once again harbor dam-building beaver—for whom willow is an important food source. Beaver dams provide incredibly valuable habitat for native salmon and trout, as well as countless other aquatic and riparian species. This portion of Upper Ritner Creek has been identified as having some of the highest potential for salmonid habitat recovery in the entire basin, and the re-colonization of this area by beaver would be a huge step towards the recovery of our vulnerable steelhead, coho salmon and cutthroat trout populations, and would help store water for slow release later in the summer.

LSNA Floodplain Restoration Project webpage: <https://www.luckiamutelwc.org/lsna-reconnection.html>

Upper Ritner Creek Splash Dam Recovery webpage: <https://www.luckiamutelwc.org/upper-ritner-project.html>

Interested in learning more about how you can propagate native plants from seeds or cuttings on your own land? Oregon State University Extension Office has a great summary of the plant propagation process and procedures for individual native species at <https://blogs.oregonstate.edu/treetopics/2014/08/26/propagating-native-shrubs-seed-cuttings/>