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Spring 2021 Newsletter

Arbor Day

Arbor Day is a celebration that is internationally recognized. Just like most dates on the calendar, it has changed over the course of time, but how and why it started is a mystery to some. Arbor day first started in Nebraska in the 19th Century as Americans were moving and settling into the Great Plains. This “new” environment was unlike anything they had encountered out East.



Around 1854 a couple by the names of J. Sterline and Caroline Morton, started planting trees and plants and preaching about the values of trees. Their opinion was contagious and within a short period of time, they were convincing their neighbors to be good stewards of the land. Pretty soon, farmers, ranchers, and landowners all over were planting trees. Trees help hold the soil in place, preventing dust storms, and retain moisture for the soil. They also serve as shade for crops from the scorching rays of the sun, and cut down wind.

In 1872, Morton proposed a day dedicated to planting trees every year and the State Board of Agriculture approved it! April 10th was named Arbor Day for Nebraska. By 1920, 45 states had adopted Arbor Day as a State Holiday. The date was eventually changed to April 22nd (Present day Earth Day) which was Morton’s birthday. Today, all 50 states and Puerto Rico celebrate Earth Day on the last Friday of April. Arbor Day is for planting trees with the goal of conservation and forestation. Trees and leaves have motivated people for years to travel hundreds of miles, camera (phone) in tow to embark in their beauty. Let’s hope it continues that way!

Food Plot, Native Grass and Forb Seed Mixes

The Douglas SWCD has food plot seed available for landowners. Two different deer mixes are available, a perennial mix and an annual mix. The perennial mix includes Alsike Clover, Lanino Clover, Medium Red Clover, White Dutch Clover, and Chicory. The annual mix includes Forage Peas, Radish, Turnips, and Haybet Barley. There is also a Pheasant/Turkey mix containing Wildlife Sunflower, Wildlife Grain Sorghum, FSG Pearl Millet, and Sugar Graze II Sorghum Sudangrass. Each mix is packaged in one acre bags. Food plots are important to retain wildlife in your area after crops are harvested in the fall and to provide food for wildlife throughout the winter.

Native grass and forb (flowers) seed mixes are available to landowners for conservation practices. SWCD Staff will work with landowners on what type of seed mix is required for the practice they are enrolling into. Typically we have set mixes for the different practices, but we can work with landowners on custom mixes if desired. Native grass and forb plantings provide optimum habitat for wildlife and their deep root systems make them effective with erosion control.



Stewardship Week 2021!

For 80+ years, Minnesota's Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) have been hard at work protecting our natural resources by working with landowners on conservation related programs, implementing best management practices and providing technical support. The Douglas SWCD honors and celebrates that work as part of Soil and Water Stewardship Week, which is April 25– May 2, 2021. This year's theme is "Healthy Forests—Healthy Communities."

Trees are the biggest plant on the planet. They are vital in absorbing carbon from the atmosphere, retaining and stabilizing soil, filtering water, providing healthy habitat for wildlife and so much more!

Douglas SWCD staff are the boots on the ground in local conservation. Our staff understand local issues and challenges that come up and are willing and able to assist landowners with projects that meet their needs and help improve natural resources in Douglas County.

This annual Soil and Water Stewardship week is organized by the Douglas SWCD in partnership with the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) to promote preservation and natural resource conservation across the country.

Douglas SWCD takes Stewardship week as a outreach opportunity. Each year, we host a poster and mural contest, to all the local 5th and 6th grade students. This year, the classroom presentations have been virtual, to school restrictions. Top posters are displayed at the County Fair booth! For more information about Stewardship Week, or ways to get involved, contact the office today!



Roots down and boots on the ground!

This year Douglas SWCD got right to work and started planting trees as soon as possible! We had a few sites to kick off the tree season that were all hands on deck. With just about 14,000 bare root red pines and white spruce that needed to be hand planted, we were very fortunate to have the two different Conservation Corps Minnesota and Iowa (CC) crews from Duluth to assist with some of the first few days of planting.

The weather was beautiful and perfect for planting! Part of the requirement to have the CC help is to have an education component for every project they work on. Douglas SWCD staff were able to fulfill that requirement by teaching the proper way to plant a bareroot seedling tree, use a tree spade, and answer questions as they arose during the week about what programs, practices and projects we work on and accomplish in the office. The most asked question we get in the office is how to you plant and care for the trees. The best way to ensure survival is plant the seedlings roots down, pack in the soil and gently step around the tree and water it!



Did you know?



The astronauts on Apollo 14 carried tree seeds into space with them. Once back on Earth, the seeds sprouted and grew. The young trees were given away to various state forestry services from 1975-1976, as part of the nation's bicentennial celebration. These trees are referred to as "Moon trees". One of which can be found on the University of Minnesota, Crookston Campus!

Tree Pickup Day

This year Douglas SWCD sold over 30,000 bareroot and potted trees. It took staff about a week to bag up and label the over 240 orders. The annual tree pick up days were on April 30 from 8:30 AM - 4:30 PM and May 1 from 8 AM - 12 PM. With COVID restrictions still in place, staff asked everyone to stay in their vehicles while staff got the names on the orders and brought them out. The overall event was a huge success! People were very excited to get their trees picked up and in the ground. By 8:30 on Friday there was a line of over 30 cars long. On Saturday, the rest of the orders were picked up, which was wonderful tree planting weather although a bit hot, still a nice day to get some trees in the ground!



No-Till Drills Available

Douglas SWCD has purchased a second 10' Haybuster no-till drill to rent out. These drills work well for seeding native grasses, pasture mixes, hay mixes, alfalfa, soybeans, and small grain. The rental rate is \$9.00 per acre (\$100 minimum) in Douglas County, and \$11 per acre (\$150 minimum plus an additional \$150 delivery fee) out of county. The SWCD will deliver the drill, calibrate it for your seed and pick it up when you are finished. Call the Douglas SWCD to reserve one of the drills.



Earth Day

In the 1960's environmental laws were limited especially when it came to protecting our water and air. Most people were coming to terms that polluted or dirty air and water were the new norm. The Vietnam war was raging and causing many protests. Thankfully there were a few in the crowd that were protesting for the good of the environment. Among them was Gaylord Nelson who later was named the "Father of Earth Day".

In 1962 Nelson left his position as the Governor of Wisconsin and was elected into the U.S. Senate and quickly earned the title of "The Conservation Governor". Nelson was intrigued by how successful the anti war "teach-ins" were and decided to start a campaign for a "national teach-in on the environment day." Finally on April 22, 1970, the national office served to promote the grassroots activity and make it an official calendar holiday. There was an estimated 20 million people from 10,000 elementary and high schools, 2,000 colleges and over 1,000 different communities that took part, in their own way, to celebrate Earth Day! April 22 was chosen because it fell between colleges' spring breaks and final exams. Not only was the first Earth Day a huge success, it also brought a unusual demographic of people together for a common goal of saving the earth! What is even more of a shocker, this entire event was organized in a time period where there was no such thing as email, cell phones, internet or fax machines.



Feeling stuck in the mud?

Conservation isn't always fun and games... Even the best of plans can go array. SWCD staff went out to flag buffers and ended up getting stuck!

When we get stuck in our ways, that is when problems occur. With all the new programs, practices, and conservation techniques, there is something for everyone! Call the office today to see what can help benefit your land. Conservation on the land not only prevents you from getting stuck, it also improves soil health and water quality and has long lasting benefits for future generations.



Mark your Calendars!

April 30 & May 1 - Tree Pickup days (See inside newsletter for more info.)

May 6 - Volunteer Lake Monitoring Cooler Kick off! (3-5 PM)

May 10 - SWCD Board Meeting (7:30 AM - At Public Works)

May 17 - Volunteer Lake Monitoring - Cooler drop off day

May 31 - USDA Building and SWCD Closed (Memorial Day)

June 14 - SWCD Board Meeting (7:30 AM)

June 21 - Volunteer Lake Monitoring - Cooler drop off day

June 30 - Native Grass Planting Deadline

July 5 - USDA Building and SWCD Closed (Independence Day Observation)

July 12 - SWCD Board Meeting (7:30 AM)

July 19 - Volunteer Lake Monitoring - Cooler drop off day

August 9 - SWCD Board Meeting (7:30 AM)

August 10 - Douglas SWCD 66th Anniversary for Conservation!

August 14 - Starry Trek - Search for Starry Stonewort and other aquatic invasive species in Minnesota Lakes

August 16 - Volunteer Lake Monitoring - Cooler drop off day

August 17-21 - Douglas County Fair

August 29 - Youth Outdoors Activities Day

September 2 - Free Nitrate Testing Clinic at the SWCD Tree Building (9:00 AM - 4 PM)

September 6 - USDA Building and SWCD Office Closed (Labor Day)

September 13 - SWCD Board Meeting (7:30 AM)

September 20 - Volunteer Lake Monitoring - Cooler drop off day



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