

# Columbia County Ag Reporter



May/June 2016

## WHAT'S INSIDE...

Agricultural newsletter for Columbia County landowners and residents

### This issue's highlighted articles:

- ◆ **Moo Day Brunch—6/18 (p. 6)**
- ◆ **Minimizing Wheel Traffic Damage to Alfalfa (p. 7)**
- ◆ **2016 Important Year for Farmland Preservation Program Participants (p. 17)**



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## Ag Reporter Calendar of Events

April	20	Begin planting corn
	25	Begin planting soybeans
May	1	Optimum corn planting date
	8	Mother's Day
	15	Corn yield decrease .5 bu/day if not yet planted
	20	Have soybeans planted by this date
	30	Memorial Day
June	1	Corn yield decreases by 2.5 bu/day if not yet planted
	4	Cows on the Concourse – Madison
	18	Moo Day Brunch, 9-1, Miller Farm, N1484 O'Connor Rd, Lodi
	18	Reedsburg butter Festival
	19	Father's Day
	22	District 5 Holstein show, Columbia Co. Fairgrounds



The Columbia County **Ag Calendar and Deadlines'** webpage is located at

<http://columbia.uwex.edu/ag-calendar-and-deadlines/>.

This is also where you can find the weekly **Ag Reporter Snapshots**.

## One-on-One Food Safety Technical Assistance Available for Fresh Produce Farmers

Interested in one-on-one assistance with developing a food safety plan for your farm, and/or preparing for a Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) audit? Have you attended a Wholesale Success or other food safety workshop and would like some additional support? Thanks to funding from the USDA Risk Management Agency through a grant to Family Farmed, Kelly Maynard of the UW Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems has time available to help until the end of August!

Please contact Kelly at [kelly.maynard@wisc.edu](mailto:kelly.maynard@wisc.edu) or 608-262-5202 with questions and to get started. Assistance can include but is not limited to:

- guidance as you develop your food safety plan or standard operating procedures
- a farm visit to help identify potential areas of concern
- review of requirements for a USDA or Harmonized GAP audit
- sharing a variety of food safety and GAPs resources.



## DriftWatch™



DriftWatch™ is a program that allows beekeepers and farmers who grow sensitive crops to register online, letting pesticide applicators know where their operations are located. It is a way for these two groups to communicate, and adds an extra layer of protection against damage to sensitive crops or bee yards.

You can find more details on the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture website here: <http://datcp.wi.gov/uploads/Plants/pdf/DriftwatchFactsheet.pdf>. Farmers can register their fields or apiaries, and applicators can look for sensitive locations at the DriftWatch™ website: <https://wi.driftwatch.org/signup>. Together we can farm responsibly.

## Alfalfa Stand Assessment: Is this stand good enough to keep?

Dan Undersander, Craig Grau, Dennis Cosgrove, Jerry Doll, Neal Martin  
Excerpts from UW-Extension Publication A3620. The Entire publication can be found on the UW-Extension Learning Store Website <http://learningstore.uwex.edu/Assets/pdfs/A3620.pdf> or can be acquired from George Koepp, by contacting him at the Columbia County Office.



### Estimate Yield Potential from Stem Count

The relationship between stem density and yield potential is constant, regardless of stand age, making this a reliable method for estimating yield potential. To use this method, select three or four representative areas of the field, marking off a 2-square foot section in each area. You may find it useful to build a square measuring 17 inches by 17 inches using ½-inch PVC tubing or weld a cable into a ring that is 19 inches in diameter. Count only those stems that are tall enough to be harvested by the mower (over 2 inches tall). Remember to divide your count by 2 to get stems/square foot. Calculate the average stem count for the field and use the graph to estimate yield potential.

#### Stand Density (stems/ sq ft)

>55  
40-55  
<39

#### Action

stem density not limiting yield  
some yield reduction expected  
consider replacing stand

## Garlic Mustard

Lisa Johnson, Commercial Horticulture Agent,  
UW-Extension Milwaukee/Waukesha Counties

*What is garlic mustard?* Garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolate*) is a European woodland plant introduced to North America by early settlers for its culinary and alleged medicinal qualities. In North America, European insects and diseases that control the plant's population are not present. Garlic mustard starts growing earlier in the season than our native plants, and outcompetes them. It also produces large quantities of seed. For these reasons, garlic mustard spreads rapidly in wooded areas, forming tall, dense stands that smother native wildflowers and native tree and shrub seedlings. It can overrun a forest floor in a few years, destroying a previously healthy ecosystem by eliminating many plant species. In addition, animals, birds and insects that depended on a diversity of plant species for food and shelter can then no longer live in the infested area.



*What does garlic mustard look like?* Garlic mustard is a biennial plant with a two-year life cycle. The first year, it forms a rosette of round, scalloped-margined leaves that stay semi-evergreen through winter. The second year, it sends up a flower stem with triangular toothed leaves that bears tiny white flowers with four petals. The plant dies after producing long narrow seedpods. At maturity, garlic mustard plants may be 3 to 4 ft tall and bear up to 500 seeds per plant.

*How can I control garlic mustard?* Repeat any control method for several years since garlic mustard seeds can survive in the soil for up to 7 years. Hand-pull small infestations, but do not compost the plants because most compost piles do not get hot enough to kill the seeds. Dispose of pulled plants by burying deeply in an area that will not be disturbed, or landfilling. Call the Bureau of Endangered Resources at 608-266-7012 if you need permission to landfill garlic mustard. To burn collected plants, burn them while still moist, because dried garlic mustard seedpods can burst open and spread the seed. If you use an herbicide, spray early in spring or late in fall, because our native plants are dormant at these times, but garlic mustard is still green and vulnerable to sprays. A 1-2% solution of a glyphosate-containing herbicide is very effective. Glyphosate is a nonselective herbicide, so avoid spraying nontarget plants. Read and follow all label directions on the herbicide product. Encourage your community to scout for garlic mustard in your area and remove it, if found.

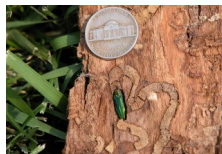
For more information on garlic mustard: See UW-Extension brochure #2000—"Garlic Mustard, a Major Threat to Wisconsin's Woodlands," or contact your county Extension agent.

## Homeowner Guide to Emerald Ash Borer Insecticide Treatments

R. Chris Williamson and PJ Liesch, UW Entomology

### **Emerald ash borer insecticide treatment considerations.**

Several insecticide products are available to homeowners for control of emerald ash borer (EAB). Since the presence and infestation level of EAB is quite difficult to determine at early stages of an infestation, insecticide treatments may be merited to mitigate damage by EAB. However, not all ash trees should be treated as some may be too extensively compromised or in poor condition to receive treatment. Tree location, value, and health, as well as the cost of treatment are all factors to consider. Due to the expense of yearly insecticide treatments, one should consider the value of a particular ash tree in relation to insecticide treatment costs before making any treatments. In addition, consider the health of each tree before treating. Research suggests that insecticide treatments are significantly more effective on EAB-infested ash trees with less than 50% canopy thinning. Insecticide treatments are **not** suggested for trees with greater than 50% canopy thinning should be removed and destroyed in accordance with established guidelines. For a more detailed discussion on this topic, see University of Wisconsin Garden Facts XHT1215, "Is My Ash Tree Worth Treating for Emerald Ash Borer."



Most of the products available to homeowners are systemic insecticides containing imidacloprid and are applied as soil drenches around the base of an ash tree. A few granular products are also available. Recent university research suggests that spring applications of imidacloprid may be most effective. Research also has demonstrated that soil applications of imidacloprid-containing homeowner products provide excellent EAB protection for ash trees that are less than about 47 inches in circumference [i.e., 15 inches in diameter at breast height (DBH)]. Due to differences in application rates and label restrictions, treatment by a tree care professional (e.g., arborist) may be the best option for larger trees. For best results, treatment of trees should begin before trees become infested. Lastly, insecticide treatments must be repeated each year.

Be aware that many insecticide products available at hardware stores and garden centers look alike. Carefully check all product labels before purchase to make sure that you have selected the correct product/active ingredient. ALWAYS read and follow the pesticide label directions on the product that you select!

Finally, note that although ACECAP 97 Systemic Insecticide Tree Implants are available to homeowners, we do NOT recommend that homeowners use these because they require physically drilling into a tree during their application.

## Using on Farm Culturing to Improve Mastitis Treatment



In spite of considerable improvements in milk quality, mastitis continues to be the most frequent and costly disease of dairy cows. The use of on farm culturing to direct treatment of clinical mastitis gives farmers the opportunity to make better treatment decisions and reduce costs associated with milk discard and treatment of microbiologically negative cases.

UW-Extension Milk Quality Veterinarian [Pam Ruegg](#) has developed a series to guide individuals [Using On Farm Culturing to Improve Mastitis Treatment](#). Watch [videos](#), download guides and submit questions to [Ask the Expert](#).

The newest edition to the Using on Farm Culturing to Improve Mastitis Treatment Series is the *Using on Farm Culturing to Improve Mastitis Treatment Guides*, available in English and Spanish:

Volume 1: [How to get started and collect sterile milk samples \(Spanish Version\)](#)

Volume 2: [How to set up, read and interpret culture plates \(Spanish Version\)](#)

Use the following link for more information and details: <http://fyi.uwex.edu/dairy/using-on-farm-culturing-to-improve-mastitis-treatment-2/>.

## Moo Day Brunch, Saturday, 6/18

When: Saturday, June 18, 2016 **PLAN TO ATTEND!!**  
Where: John, Dawn, Tyler, Rachael, and Samantha Miller Farm  
N1484 O'Connor Road, Lodi, WI 53555  
From Lodi: Take Hwy 60 West 5 miles to O'Connor Road, turn north and go about 1.5 miles to farm.  
Brunch: 9 AM – 1 PM



**Help needed. Sign up as individuals, families or as part of a club or group.**  
**Children's Games**                      **Face Painting**  
**Helium Balloons**                      **Clearing Tables**

Contact Debi Stiemke at 608.635.2858. Please let Debi know in April if you can help!

## Minimizing Wheel Traffic Damage to Alfalfa

Dan Undersander, University of Wisconsin

### What damage is caused by wheel traffic?

Wheel traffic is known to increase soil compaction which, on some soils, reduces macropore air permeability, soil water infiltration and root development of alfalfa, all of which reduce yield. However, our research has indicated that the largest effect of wheel traffic is to break off regrowing alfalfa stems, thereby reducing next cutting yield.

### How much is yield of next cutting reduced?

We compared harvesting (wheel traffic) at 2 days after cutting vs 5 days after cutting. As the graph shows, yield of the next harvest was reduced about 6% for each day delay in traffic application after cutting. Yield loss was largely due to reduction in number of stems from breakage by the tires.

### What is recommended to reduce yield loss from wheel traffic?



We believe the following management recommendations will reduce yield loss due to wheel traffic:

- 1) Plant traffic tolerant varieties (check <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/forage/> for test results).
  - Wheel traffic will cause some soil compaction (and associate yield loss) for grasses but will not break off stems as occurs with alfalfa, so yield loss will be much less for grass than for alfalfa.
- 2) Use small tractors when possible to reduce soil compaction.
- 3) Avoid unnecessary trips across the field when harvesting:
  - Mowing and conditioning in a single operation.
  - Loaded wagons/trucks should be driven off the field in as little distance as possible.
  - If bales are dropped, collect with least driving possible and as soon as possible.
  - Do not drive on alfalfa field when harvesting crop of adjacent field.
- 4) Consider using larger harvesting equipment to reduce the percent of field covered with wheel tracks (however, the affected area has greater weight applied to it). This could be another benefit of contract harvesting.

## Wheel Traffic Damage to Alfalfa—cont.

- 5) Avoid use of tractors with dual wheels.
- 6) Harvest (drive on field) as soon after cutting as possible:
  - Make silage from higher yielding fields, hay from lower yielding fields.
  - Use wide swath to allow hay/haylage to dry faster.
  - Make wrapped bales to allow harvest of wetter hay.
  - Apply manure immediately after harvest.

## Wisconsin Soybean Marketing Board Continues Free Nematode Testing Program for 2016

Four out of every five animals on earth today is a nematode so it is not surprising that agricultural fields are home to many nematode species. Fortunately, most nematodes are beneficial to crop growth and soil health because their activities help decompose crop residues and cycle nitrogen and other nutrients. Pest nematodes do not threaten yield if their numbers remain low. The key to avoiding population explosions of nematode pests is to be proactive – know what the situation is and take appropriate measures when nematode numbers indicate a problem is brewing.

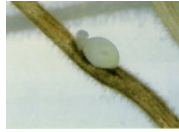
The WSMB sponsors [free nematode testing](#) to help producers stay ahead of the most important nematode pest of soybean, the soybean cyst nematode (SCN). Eggs of SCN persist in the soil between soybean crops, so a sample can be submitted any time that is convenient. The soil test report indicates the number of eggs in the sample and is useful for selecting the right variety for the next soybean crop. Retests of fields planted with SCN-resistant varieties over multiple years shows how the nematode population is responding to variety resistance and provides an early warning should the nematode population adapt to host genetics.



In 2016, the WSMB is again offering the expanded nematode testing program to include other pest nematodes in addition to SCN. These nematodes are less damaging to soybean than SCN but can cause enough yield loss to warrant treatment. As is the case for SCN, there are no rescue treatments for nematodes so the primary purpose of this year's soil test is to plan for next year's crop. Soil samples collected in corn for nematode analysis have predictive value for explaining yield if they are collected before the corn V6 growth stage. Sampling early in the season will provide information about the risk potential for the current corn crop AND the next soybean crop.

## Free Nematode Testing—cont.

The assays used to recover nematode pests other than SCN in soil require that the nematodes are alive. So, it is important to keep the samples moist and at least room temperature cool. Collecting a sample that includes multiple cores ensures that there will be plenty of root pieces to assay. It is not necessary to include live plants in the sample. The soil test report will indicate which pest nematodes are present and at what quantities and their damage potential to soybean and corn based on the numbers recovered.



Free soil sample test kits are available now and can be requested at ([freescntest@mailplus.wisc.edu](mailto:freescntest@mailplus.wisc.edu)).

For more information on [SCN testing and management practices](#) to help reduce the losses from this pest, please contact: Shawn Conley: [spconley@wisc.edu](mailto:spconley@wisc.edu); 608-262-7975 or visit [www.coolbean.info](http://www.coolbean.info).

### Things a Good Farmer Knows

- Always drink upstream from the herd.
- A bumble bee is considerably faster than a John Deere tractor.
- Life is simpler when you plow around the stump.

## Armyworms for 2016

Information from Bryan Jensen, UW-Extension Department of Entomology and Integrated Pest Management as shared at the November Pest Management Update Meetings.

We saw considerable 1<sup>st</sup> generation problems in 2015 even in some soybean fields. They were not a widespread problem, but were severe in a few locations. Be sure to monitor corn planted after rye or other grass cover crops, no-till corn after alfalfa, and areas of grassy weed growth. Monitor their migration to WI by watching the WI Pest Survey Bulletin to get a heads up before they hit Wisconsin.



Some control hints include: Look for feeding damage and/or frass (bug poop) on the corn or bean plants. They are nocturnal feeders and like to hide in the whorl. Economic threshold for treatment is 1 larvae on 75% of the plants or 2 or more on 25% of the plants. Best control is when larvae are less than 1 inch. This also gives us the best return on investment for a treatment. There are multiple insecticide options for treating an armyworm attack. Refer to UW-Extension publication A3646 "Pest Management in Wisconsin Field Crops" for recommendations.

## Tillage: The Final Frontier



Summary of a presentation by Francisco Arriaga, Extension Soil Scientist, during the December 2015 soil, Water and Nutrient Management Meetings.

1. Crop Residues are valuable as they provide organic matter to soil and help recycle plant nutrients. However, tillage might be necessary in many situations to deal with heavy residue and wet spring conditions.
2. Optimizing management practices can improve soil properties over time and tweak production factors, which can lead to better soil and economic performance.
3. Although some options, such as strict no-tillage, might not be palatable or possible under some circumstances, other management options are available (ex. crop and tillage rotations, cover crops, etc.) that can help manage soil "tilth" effectively.

## Best Management Practices for Controlling Pigweed Species

By Mark Renz, Extension Weed Specialist and Dan Heider, Senior Outreach Specialist at the November 2015 Pest Management Updates.

1. Start with clean fields
2. Use an effective pre-emergent herbicide
3. Timely post emergence herbicide applications
4. Tank mixing residual products with the post emergence herbicide program
5. Scouting, scouting, scouting ... and not just from the truck seat
6. Use additional post emergence applications as needed
7. Clean harvest and tillage equipment regularly



Why are we seeing so many reports of waterhemp in WI fields?

1. It has higher relative growth rates than most weeds – 1 inch per day
2. Produces 1.5 times more seed than other pigweeds
3. Seeds can remain in the soil for 4 years and still be 95% viable
4. It emerges faster and later into the season than redroot or smooth pigweed. This allows some plants to escape pre applications. It flourishes after post applications of non-residual herbicides.

## Corn Agronomy - Looking ahead to 2016: Planting date decisions

Posted on [April 21, 2016](#) from the Wisconsin Crop Manager

We started planting corn on April 14. Recent planting progress statistics from USDA-NASS indicate that corn planting is progressing slowly in the northern Corn Belt. Only 1% of corn acres had been planted in Wisconsin as of April 17.



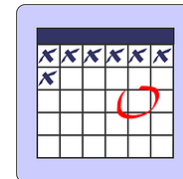
The date that produces maximum corn grain yield varies by field, tillage practice, hybrid and latitude. Every year since 1991 we have established a planting date experiment at Arlington, WI. On this farm, if you could plant all of your corn on one date and wanted to maximize yield, then the best date would be May 1. As expected, we have observed a step increase for yield every decade. However, the maximum yield planting date has not shifted much (April 28 to May 4). The economic optimum is going to be earlier than these dates, because typically earlier planted corn is drier at harvest. The planting date "window" when we can be within 95% of the maximum yield is between April 18 and May 16. Grain yield decreases 0.5 bu/A per day on May 15 and accelerates to 2.5 bu/A per day on June 1.

For southern Wisconsin we typically recommend to begin planting anytime after April 20 as long as field conditions are fit. For northern Wisconsin anytime after April 30 is appropriate. Soil temperature is not a consideration after these dates. However, we do pay attention to the short-term weather forecast. If cold, wet conditions within 48 to 72 hours of planting are predicted, it is prudent to wait until weather is more favorable. We lost trials at Seymour and Fond du Lac in 2006 when we planted ahead of a snow storm; the only corn that survived was over the drain field. This phenomenon is called **imbibitional chilling**. There is not a lot of field data to support this practice and it has only happened to us twice over the last 20 years. The challenge as to when to begin planting is what to do between April 10, when insurance coverage starts, and the typical April 20 (southern) and April 30 (northern) start dates. Soil temperature is a good guide during this period. Corn doesn't grow much when temperatures fall below 50 degrees F.



## Important Dates to Remember

- May 31, 2016 Corn and Soybean Commodity Loan deadline
- June 1, 2016 Make your ARC/PLC 2016 enrollment appointment before this date
- July 15, 2016 Crop reporting deadline
- Nov. 15, 2016 Fall crop reporting deadline



## Make Your Crop Reporting Appointment When Done Planting

After spring planting, producers must file their reports accurately and timely for all crops and land uses, including prevented and failed acreage, and land in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). This is to ensure they maintain eligibility for USDA program benefits.

Spring-seeded acreage reports are considered timely filed when completed by the applicable final crop reporting deadline of July 15, 2016. Prevented acreage must be reported within 15 calendar days after the final planting date. Failed acreage must be reported before the disposition of the crop.



Producers in Columbia County should contact the FSA office in Portage at 608-742-5361, ext. 2, to make their appointment.

All perennial forage, fall mint, fall-seeded small grains, wheat and cover crops must be reported by November 15, 2016 for the 2017 crop year.

Late-filed provisions may be available to producers who are unable to meet the reporting deadline as required. Reports filed after the established deadline must meet certain requirements to be accepted and may be charged late fees.

More for FSA

## 2016 ARC-PLC Enrollment

### Call FSA RIGHT AWAY to Make Your ARC-PLC 2016 Enrollment Appointment (Before June 1)

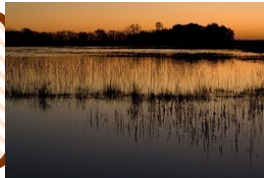


Producers who chose coverage from the safety net programs established by the 2014 Farm Bill, known as the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or the Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs, should call the FSA office right away to schedule their appointment for the 2016 program.

Although the choice between ARC and PLC was completed last year and remains in effect through 2018, producers must still enroll their farm by signing a contract each year to receive coverage. If a farm is not enrolled during the 2016 enrollment period, producers on that farm will not be eligible for possible 2016 financial assistance from the ARC or PLC programs.

For more details regarding these programs, go to [www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc), or contact your local FSA office. In Columbia County, producers should call 608-742-5361, ext. 2, and make their appointment before June 1, 2016. Do not procrastinate as we **cannot** approve late-filed applications.

## Wetland Maintenance or Plowing Up New Fields



**Check with FSA BEFORE Doing Any Wetland Maintenance or Plowing Up New Fields—if not, you take the chance of losing eligibility for ALL USDA programs!**

All USDA program participants are required to have a conservation system in place on all highly erodible land (HEL). Renting new cropland, purchasing new land, breaking out additional land, changing crops, and changing or removing existing conservation practices can result in compliance issues.

Contact the Columbia County FSA office before taking any of the above actions. It is also important that you contact FSA before modifying, tilling, draining, dredging, filling or leveling any wetland or drainage ditches. Failure to obtain advance approval for any of these activities can result in loss of all federal payments, including crop insurance premium support, and USDA program eligibility.

## Primary Nesting Season Requirements

### FSA Reminds CRP Participants of Primary Nesting Season Requirements



Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) participants are reminded that maintenance and management activities on CRP acres must be completed outside of the primary nesting season, which begins May 15th and continues through August 1st.

CRP participants must not engage in any CRP maintenance or management activities during the primary nesting season that is listed in their current conservation plan. Participants with maintenance issues that require attention prior to the end of nesting season must contact the Columbia County FSA office for permission **prior** to performing any spot spraying or spot mowing on CRP acres.

Failure to contact the county FSA office prior to any maintenance on CRP acres during nesting season may result in payment reductions or possible contract termination. For questions or more information about maintenance and management activities of CRP acres, please contact the Columbia County FSA office at 608-742-5361, ext. 2, or visit <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/crp>.

LOANS

## Farm-Stored 2015 Grain Loans Available for Low Interest Operating Cash

May 31, 2016 is the deadline to request 2015 Marketing Assistance Crop Loans (MALs) from FSA for all 2015 eligible crops. MAL crop loans provide producers interim financing after harvest to help them meet cash flow needs without having to sell their commodities when market prices are typically at harvest-time lows.

Interest rates for these 9-month low-interest loans on 2015 stored crops are announced monthly and range around 1.5%. FSA loan rates in Columbia County are \$1.89 for corn, \$4.94 for soybeans, \$2.49 for SRW wheat, \$1.44 for oats, \$1.72 for barley, and \$0.40 for wool.

## Grain Loans—cont.

Producers will need to make an appointment to certify or provide evidence of their harvested production. Loans are calculated using the certified bushels, not to exceed the county committee established maximum yields per acre, times the local county loan rate. Monthly spot-checks are conducted to ensure the quantity and quality of the crop being stored.



For more details contact the Columbia County FSA office at 608-742-5361, ext. 2. Appointments are required.



## Now is the Time to Report Farm Record Changes

As spring rolls around and the weather finally starts to warm up, farmers get anxious to get into the fields. Everyone is looking forward to putting winter behind us and start fresh with a new growing season. With the fresh start, farmers make many changes in the farm operation. Sometimes they will bring in a family member so they can start becoming an active member of the operation or they may form a LLC or trust for tax reasons.

We often see a lot of changes in operators or owners of farms, as well. Landowners may sell off a parcel of land or purchase something they hope will work. All of these changes need to be reported to the Farm Service Agency as soon as possible so we can update our records. The staff does not have the time to research County Land Records so we must rely on the landowners and operators to report changes in ownership and land transactions to the office. We are not automatically informed by the County of these changes, so we often don't discover the change until a producer comes into the office to do their business.

In order for us to make changes to operators of a farm, we need to have a written lease agreement from the land owner. For us to change the owner on a parcel of land, we need to have a copy of the deed that was filed with the County.

If formal entities such as a trust, LLC, or corporation have been formed, we need to have organizational papers that show the owners/members of the entity, their shares of ownership, who has authority to sign on behalf of the new entity, and the new ID number, if applicable.

## NRCS Announces Special Cover Crop Sign-up for 2016

The U.S. Dept. of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has announced a special funding opportunity to help landowners plant cover crops for erosion control, soil improvement or other conservation needs. Cover crops are highly effective in reducing soil erosion, as well as suppressing weeds and building up organic matter and soil health. The cover crop may include rye, oats, millet, wheat, red clover, turnips, canola, radishes, or other species, either alone or in combination.

Cover crops reduce wind or water erosion by literally covering the soil. They also use up excess nutrients in the soil reducing risk of runoff, they sequester carbon, suppress weeds, and improve soil structure. They are an excellent tool for helping to improve soil health.

For more information on cover crops, see [Wisconsin Cover Crops](#) factsheet, and “[How to Establish Cover and Green Manure Crops](#)” posted at [www.wi.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.wi.nrcs.usda.gov).

Farmers with crop insurance will need to check with their crop insurance agent to make sure the cover crop is terminated so as not to impact their insurance payments or coverage.

**Sign up at the NRCS office by June 10, 2016** to be considered for this funding. For more information, visit [www.wi.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.wi.nrcs.usda.gov) or contact the local NRCS office at Portage at (608) 742-5361 ext. 3.

#

Helping People Help the Land



USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.





COLUMBIA COUNTY

Land & Water Conservation

608-742-9670  
FAX: 608-742-9840  
E-MAIL: land.conservations@co.columbia.wi.us  
WEBSITE: www.co.columbia.wi.us

120 West Conant Street  
P.O. Box 485  
Portage, WI 53901

Land and Water Conservation Department  
Updates May/June 2016

## 2016 Important Year for Farmland Preservation Program Participants

Landowners are reminded that 2016 is an important year regarding your compliance status for FPP and future year tax credits. Landowners are encouraged to remember to watch the mail for important FPP information regarding status that they will see coming from the LWCD. As we work on finishing up final status checks, landowners will be asked to sign and return schedules of compliance and/or come in and pick of their new compliance certificates. If you have questions about your status, you are encouraged to call the LWCD and talk with Chris or Harold. Remember to make sure a current 2016 Nutrient Management Plan (590) checklist is on file with us, covering all parcels. **Below are some important things to remember:**

*important*

- 2016 will be an important year for landowners or operators of land that want to remain eligible to claim tax credits. If the land is still not operated under a 590 Nutrient Management Plan and the landowner/operator is planning on completing one for continued compliance, remember soil testing on the five-acre grid must be completed spring or fall of 2016. If you rent your land out and you are not sure of coverage, contact our office and we can explain to you how the process works regarding rented land, compliance and tax credits.
- If you or your tax preparer have questions about eligibility, please contact our office. We have seen several audit letters from DOR going to landowners this year because of inaccuracy of claims. Remember, DOR will be fully implementing the new framework for claiming credits in 2016. This framework requires the landowner claiming credits to have a specific Conservation Compliance Certificate to claim credits going forward. Landowners will be required to enter the number of the claim. This unique number will match approved acres. Our Department will be required to submit a data set of approved certificate numbers/names and acres to DOR annually. If your claim does not match up with our information, it will trigger a letter. It is very important that we make sure you are claiming on eligible acres with proper documentation moving forward. Feel free to call with questions.



## 2016 Tree Sales Program— Success Continues

On April 21, 2016 the Columbia County Land & Water Conservation Department successfully completed our 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Tree and Shrub sales program. Beginning in 1981, this program has continued to be a great tool to help promote tree planting throughout our area.

This year we sold just under 38,000 trees and shrubs. We had the least amount of left-over product that any of us can remember. This year the sales took our lifetime sales over the 1.2 million mark. We appreciate the support of the 500 plus individuals who purchased trees this year.

If you have not purchased from us in the past and would like to be included in our mailing list, feel free to contact our office and we will include you in our database. People who have ordered will be automatically on our list.

Thanks again to all of you and a special thanks to Kelly Maginnis, our Administrative Secretary here at the LWCD. She works hard to put all the pieces together each year to make this program work almost effortlessly. If anyone has some thoughts on how we can make the program even better, please feel free to give us your thoughts.

## Cost Share & Technical Assistance Available

As usual, the LWCD has several different sources of cost share funds to assist landowners in addressing a wide range of resource needs on their land. We have cost share assistance available through both DATCP and DNR. We have several sources of money that are specific to geographical locations in the County.

Available funds can be used for both hard practices and soft practices such as Nutrient Management Planning. Please contact the LWCD if you have questions. We would be glad to meet on site and discuss a potential project.

GOAL PLAN SUCCESS

## *Free, On-Farm Ag and Silage Plastic Recycling Program*

Depending on your location and plastic use, Revolution Plastics will spot and empty a dumpster on your farm or dairy at no cost to you. The program is limited to the collection of the following approved plastics: 1. silage plastics (used bale wrap, ag/ grain bags, most bunker covers and oxygen barrier film), 2. Ag plastics, used irrigation tape and tubing, greenhouse, hoophouse, fumigation and other cover films.

The plan is to pick up the used plastic every four to six weeks. In some cases farmers may need to work together to fill a dumpster in this time frame. It is important to keep plastic clean, free of rocks, soil, and other debris. They are not able to use plastic twine, net wrap, silo covers with scrim embedded or plastic mulch used in vegetable growing due to the large amount of soil associated with it. This material is hauled out of state and made into trash bag liners, rather than being sent directly to landfill sites in WI.

Plans are to deliver dumpsters to the Columbia County area in July and August. Sign up today at [www.RevolutionPlastics.com](http://www.RevolutionPlastics.com) or call 844-490-7873 for more details in information.

### DIRECTORY

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