

On The Rebound



PHOTO: BRENDA K. JOHNSON
Logs from last season's Missouri River flood washed onto shore at Lewis & Clark Lake, with cleanup continuing through fall. Workers at Lewis & Clark Recreation Area stacked logs and other brush on this 100-foot x 100-foot x 12-foot-high pile.

Homeowners May Consider Planting Ideas From The L&C Staff, Who Are Cleaning Up After An Eventful Year

BY BRENDA K JOHNSON
P&D Correspondent

As Lewis & Clark Recreation Area staff prepare for the new season, South Dakota Game, Fish & Parks' (GF&P) Shane Bertsch, District Park Supervisor; Dale Dawson, Conservation Foreman; and Tanner Hanson, Conservation Technician, discussed some of their plant projects.

Last season at Lewis & Clark Recreation Area, logs, debris and reeds washed onto shore and challenged workers during and after the Missouri River flood.

"Last summer park staff spent two days a week cleaning debris from park beaches," Bertsch said. "This fall and into January, we cleared the rest of the logs along the entire park shoreline."

Keeping lake water clear was important beyond boating and recreation. "We cleared debris from the rip-rap along the shoreline because the changing lake levels would cause the logs to float again and go back in the lake," Hanson said.

"Typically water levels (in Lewis & Clark Lake) rise in the off season," Bertsch said. "Logs caught in the rip-rap end up on beaches and cause other problems. Initially last summer, when the surge of logs came, the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers pulled the logs into the shoreline or docks and then we'd pull them out (of the water)." He said that the steady stream of logs lasted all summer.

"We have a big pile of logs along with brush we've cut," Bertsch said. He thought the pile might be 100 feet x 100 feet x 12 feet. high. "We have worked with a company that just finished grinding and hauling the wood chips away. It's an alternative to burning the pile here and it all gets cleaned up."

Tree loss from flooding is minimal. "Here at Lewis & Clark Recreation Area, we didn't have much tree loss from flooding," he said. "The shoreline is heavily rip-rapped."

Upstream, Springfield had more damage. "Half of the Springfield Recreation Area campground was closed all season the entire park was closed for three weeks. The park had erosion and dock damage from the high water levels."

"We removed some trees (at Springfield) damaged by flooding; mostly hackberry," Dale Dawson said.

"We also sandbagged at Chief White Crane," Hanson said. This unit is downstream from Gavins Point Dam. The GF&P administrators Chief White Crane, Pierson Ranch, and the Lewis & Clark Recreation Area.

TREE PLANTING

"Last season we removed about 160 trees and planted about 150 trees," Bertsch said. This is in addition to trees spaded from their tree belts and re-located around the camp sites. "The trees removed were dead, damaged, or a couple were too close to a pad or near a road. We plant 100-150 trees a year in the park district."

"We've started planting new trees near ash trees, planning for the Emerald Ash Borer," Bertsch said. "From a study, we have about 10-12 percent ash trees (here), and we haven't planted any since 2004. As the new trees mature, the ash trees will be removed."

"We also had a lot of deer damage this fall," Dawson said. "Instead (of ash) we've planted several kinds of elm, burr oak, hackberry, Ohio Buckeye, Kentucky Coffee tree, catalpa, native cottonwood, several kinds of pines, Black Hills spruce, and Colorado Blue spruce."

He added that some of these trees come from Big Sioux Nursery in Watertown. Local resources for trees include County Conservation Districts or tree outlets such as Jay Gurney's Yankton Nurseries and Diane's Greenhouse Fordyce, Neb.

TREE BELT OR FARM

"Besides the tree planting, in the past 20

What To Plant Instead Of Ash

No ash trees have been planted at Lewis & Clark Recreation Area since 2004 with future concern for Emerald Ash Borer. Trees listed are planted for diversity and appearance, adaptability to the Great Plains, and low maintenance. Descriptions of Great Plains trees, shrubs, and perennials are available at Big Sioux Nursery (605) 886-6806. Your local Conservation District, Jay Gurney's Yankton Nurseries, and Diane's Greenhouse Fordyce, Neb., are other sources: Accolade Elm, Kentucky Coffee Tree, Ponderosa Pine, Princeton Elm, Little Leaf Linden, Austrian Pine, Japanese Elm, Native Cottonwood, Scotch Pine, Ohio Buckeye, Swamp White Oak, Black Hills Spruce, Hackberry, Burr Oak, Colorado Blue Spruce

years, we've spaded (and re-located) 1,500 trees from shelterbelts located throughout the park," Bertsch said. These include deciduous trees and evergreens. "We've spaded Ponderosa, Austrian, and Scotch Pines, and Black Hills and Colorado Blue Spruces throughout the park."

Last fall, Dawson and Tanner moved 85 Scotch Pines out of our fenced-in shelter belt that were 4-5 feet tall."

"Some of our shelterbelts have trees of a certain caliper (diameter) that have been moved to thin the belt and use them around the park," Dawson said.

"Jeff VanMeeteren (Regional Park Supervisor) planted some of those belts back in 1998-2000," Bertsch said. "Now we're spading 8- to 12-foot tall trees (from the shelterbelts) and putting them right on site."

Besides thinning shelterbelts, in 2005, staff established a centrally located, fenced "tree farm" at the park. Trees are planted

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SHANE BERTSCH

bare root and grow until needed. "They grow a 4-7 years and then the trees are spaded in near camp sites," Dawson said.

"Last fall our tree farm had a lot of trees the right size for spading," Hanson said.

"We can spade and move a 2-3 inch caliper tree with a 44-inch tree spade, especially if it doesn't have a huge root system," Dawson said. "The advantage of having a tree farm is the work. It's easier to maintain the young trees with water and fertilizer in the tree belt (than all around the park). Trees are more protected from deer. Then when you move the tree to the site, it survives. One of the challenges of planting 4- to 5-foot trees on site is that the deer wreak havoc with them. Weed eaters and mowers can also damage bark."

"Tree farm trees are in a central location for all the units," Hanson said. Trees are adapted to the park growing conditions.

"For homeowners (considering to) move in a tree over three-inch caliper, is that the tree is adapted where it is, and will struggle if you move it," Dawson said. "You have to remove a greater percentage of roots when you move a large tree. The general rule of thumb is, for every inch of caliper equals a year for that tree to recover. That's contingent on the variety of tree and how adaptable it is. Our elms have taken off great."

NATIVE GRASS PLANTING

"If you look at the native grass stand by the rural fire station, we've seen that Eastern Red cedars (which are invasive in the area) haven't regenerated there as much," Bertsch said. "Every five years or so we will burn the native grass area." The benefits of burning include getting rid of weeds and young cedar trees, encourage native grass seed set, and recycles nutrients tied up in the grasses. Jim Gunderson (Physical Plant Manager) planted the mixture of native grasses. They include: Big Bluestem, Little Bluestem, Indian grass, and Side Oats Grama."

"We've also reclaimed a 3-4 acre area to the west of the fire station that you can see along Highway 52," Dawson said. "After two years, it looks good. We had some weeds that I sprayed last fall with broadleaf herbicide. We're restricted on what we can use for combating weeds. We'll burn it back to rejuvenate the area."

Other native grass stands at the park include east of the entrance road to Gavins Point and at the Gavins Point Nature Trailhead.

Seeding native grasses and forbs such as wildflowers together can be a challenge. "The struggle I have is maintaining both grass and flowers, while keeping weeds at bay," Dawson said. "What I've read is that if you keep an area black for two years mechanically or chemically and then plant, you'll increase the chance of getting the forbs to grow. This is hard to do here. Typically we'll mow it, burn it, and then put new grass in."

GAVINS POINT NATURE AREA

"For the Gavins Point Nature Trail, usually every couple years we put on a couple of inches of wood chips on the trail and we've done that for next season," Bertsch said. "We keep the trail mulched so that even if it's wet out there you won't get muddy. The mulch will settle as it decomposes."

"(At the trailhead) we've been taking out Eastern Red cedars," Hanson said.

"We want to reclaim some of the natural areas in the park from cedars," Dawson said.

"Cedars have been steadily taking over the park for years," Bertsch said. "When you looked at the hills around here when the dam was put in, there were no trees. Some cedars were planted, but mostly they came up from turkeys and other birds' droppings re-seeding them."

"We're trying to establish native grasses at the trailhead," Hanson said.

"We're grinding and removing cedar stumps," Dawson said. "What's left are all hardwoods and 60-foot Ponderosa pines. You can see them now."

"They were planted in the early 1960s with the rest of the tree belts that you see in the campgrounds," Bertsch said. "Then we'll plant a blend of native grasses."

"We'll use a no till drill designed specifically for drilling in the native grasses," Dawson said.

"The other thing I'd like to do with the trailhead is to put in some patches of wildflowers," Bertsch said.

NEW SEASON

"Last year with the flooding, we were down (in visitors) a little bit. We look forward to a good year this year," Bertsch said. "Last year we added 41 campsites throughout the park. We've put in three new 12-foot x 16-foot cabins. One is in the Gavins unit and two are in the East Midway section."

Bertsch welcomes suggestions to improve the park. "We have comment cards at the comfort stations, Welcome Center, and entrance booths. Volunteers also pass them out. Last season someone asked for a light in an area and we're looking at installing one in that location. We usually get back about one hundred cards a season. Most comments are good. We encourage everyone to come out and enjoy the park."

Pruning Clinic Set For Crofton March 15

CROFTON, Neb. — The Crofton Tree Board will be hosting a Pruning Clinic in Crofton at 6 p.m. Thursday, March 15, in the City Auditorium.

State Forester Steve Rasmussen, will present a power presentation in the auditorium and have handouts available. Due to daylight savings time kicking in the weekend before, there should be time to do some outside touring also.

The tree presentation is open to everyone.

'Greenhouse Crops' Workshop In Sioux Falls

SIOUX FALLS — A workshop on "Nutrition for Greenhouse Crops" will be held at the SDSU Regional Center 200 E, 8th Street Sioux Falls, on Thursday, April 5, running from 1-4 p.m.

The workshop will be presented by Geoffrey Njue, SDSU Extension Specialty Crops Field Specialist.

High quality plants are critical to the profitability of greenhouse grower. Producing a quality crop in the greenhouse is dependent on the overall nutrition of the plants.

If you grow plants in the greenhouse and would like to learn how to manage plant nutrition to produce quality plants, plan to attend this workshop. Topics include: Substrate (growing media) monitoring, identifying nutrition disorders, and correcting nutritional disorders.

For more information or to register, contact Njue at (605) 782-3290 or geoffrey.njue@sdstate.edu .

Vegetable Seeds Available For Programs

BROOKINGS — To assist educational gardens across the state of South Dakota, SDSU Extension is offering 20 vegetable seed packets per project, for up to 30 gardens.

The donated seeds are intended only for newly starting and established educational gardens.

Eligible projects include gardens for schools, learning centers, day-cares, 4-H clubs or other non-profit groups, where the produce will be used as part of the program or freely shared with those of need in the community.

Qualified projects must include an educational component, meaning they must have a regularly scheduled program with participants learning skills of growing food. Youth and adult programs will qualify.

To apply participants must complete the Seed Bank Application located at http://igrow.org/up/articles/2012_Seed_Bank_App.pdf. Deliver or mail the application to the SDSU Extension Regional Center in Sioux Falls, at 2001 E. 8th St., Sioux Falls, SD 57103. Or email the application to Christina.Zdorovtsov@sdstate.edu.

Participants must complete a short follow-up report to summarize participation and project impact within 30 days after the project completion to be considered for future granting.

Seed packets were donated from a number of individuals across the regions to assist with these types of community gardening efforts. The Extension Service is storing the seeds and coordinating the seed bank effort.

If individuals are interested in donating seeds packaged for the 2012 growing season, contact Zdorovtsov at 605-782-3290 or Christina.Zdorovtsov@sdstate.edu. Seeds less than one year old are preferred.

'Renovate' Trees, Shrubs With Careful Pruning

BY LEE REICH

For The Associated Press

A desire to tidy up the garden and do something outdoors — even before anything much is really happening there yet, garden-wise — drives many of us out to prune now.

Good.

March is a fine time for pruning from the perspective of most plants. Certain pruning questions predictably pop up this time of year.

A LILAC MAKEOVER

Lilac sometimes get overgrown with neglect. Can a tangled mass of stems with awkward posture and few flowers be brought back to its former glory?

Yes, it can. There are two options in "renovation pruning" such a shrub.

The first is the drastic one: merely lop the whole plant to within 1 foot of the ground. Now. The renovated lilac will hardly be worth looking at for a year, perhaps two. A few vigorous shoots will grow this season, fueled by an established root system. Late next winter, thin out some of those stems, and you're on your way to a "new" shrub, full of blossoms and with a graceful growth habit. You will soon have what amounts to a whole new plant from the ground up.

The second option is to renovate the shrub over a period of four or five years. Although this takes more time, the plant will look decent and flower throughout the recovery period.

Exercise this option by cutting two or three of the oldest stems to ground level or to vigorous branches low on the plant each year in late winter. At the same time, thin out some of the youngest sprouts growing from ground level, making sure to leave a few as replacement shoots for the old wood you are removing.

After a few years — how many depends on how long the shrub has been neglected — you will have cut away all the old wood and replaced it with new wood. This "new" shrub will be shapely and bear abundant, fragrant blossoms.

OLD APPLE TREES – LIKE NEW

Old apple trees similarly often suffer neglect. Such craggy, old trees do have a rustic charm, but too many of their fruits are pest-ridden, lacking flavor and high out of reach. Can the plant be returned to its former glory?

Again, the answer is yes, with, again, renovation pruning.

But before you pick up your pruning tools, ask yourself whether your efforts will be justified. Is the tree of a particularly good variety? Do you really want a tree where that tree is?

Some young trees could already be bearing in the time it would take to restore this one, so before beginning renovation pruning, consider "pruning" the tree with a saw — at ground level.

If you do decide to renovate the old tree, now is a good time to start. First make some large cuts low in the tree to thin it out and, if you want, to lower it and limit its spread.

Cut one or two major limbs back to their origin or to sturdy side branches. If more major limbs need cutting back, wait a year, and if still more must go, hold off for yet another year. If you cut too much in one year, there is the risk of sunburn on once-shaded bark.

This summer, new sprouts may grow near some of your pruning cuts. Some of these sprouts, especially those of moderate vigor, might be in good positions to make permanent new limbs. Save those and cut away the others, especially when many are clustered near a pruning cut.

With major cuts out of the way for now, progress to more detailed pruning, using a small pruning saw and lopper. Look over the stems and cut back to sound wood any that are diseased, dead or broken. Also remove stems that are overcrowded or weak. Cut back any drooping stem to a branch near the place where the stem starts drooping.

Finally, stand back and admire your work. Cleaned up, an old fruit tree can look even more charming than it did when it was neglected and overgrown. Now give your tree a hug.



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