

# SHORE STEWARDS NEWS

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Island County, Washington

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## Shoreline Property Winter Checklist

Fall has arrived and not far behind are several months of wind and rain. Those who live on shoreline property often look at this change in weather with a bit of apprehension, knowing that heavy rains can bring about erosion and landslides. There are several steps that you can do to “winterize” your property, minimizing the chances of such problems.

Make sure all gutters and drains are cleared of leaves and other debris before the storm season, and that they are functioning properly. If buildings do not have gutters and drains, consider having them installed so that you may channel the water away from your house and bluff. Storm water runoff from impermeable surfaces (roofs, driveways, and patios) should be directed into a collection system to avoid soil saturation, if at all possible.

If you have a tightline (plastic pipe) that channels your gutter and drain water over your bluff and down to the beach, check it before the winter storms to see if there are any cracks or breaks in the line, and to make sure that it is anchored properly. If possible, have someone pour a few gallons of water into the tightline near the house while you check to see if it drains properly at the beach end of the pipe. Check it again throughout the winter after any heavy storm. Small slides under the pipe can cause it to break, and the large amounts of water that flow through the pipe during heavy rains can cause significant erosion in a short time. Make sure that the bottom end of the pipe does not just pour onto the beach like a fire hose; this can cause significant erosion in a short time. The water should flow through a diverter or onto gravel, rip-rap, or other such materials to disperse the energy of the water before it reaches the beach. This will also protect fragile marine life. Never have the water channeled behind your bulkhead or other armoring, as it will undermine the structure and shorten its life significantly.

On the beach, visually inspect all seawalls, bulkheads, soft shore armoring, etc. for signs of distress, material loss, exposed reinforcing steel, or obstructions in drainage. You should inspect these structures before the storm season and following every storm. If you detect significant problems, you may want to contact an engineer for maintenance suggestions. On your bluff top, visually inspect any retaining walls, surface drains, wall drains, culverts, ditches and other drainage channels for obstructions or other signs of malfunction. You should do this before the storm season and after every storm event.

Check your sloped areas for signs of surface cracks, slumping, and new gullies. Inspect your patios, driveways, sidewalks, and other such surfaces for signs of rotation or cracking. These signs may indicate slope movement, and if you have these problems you may wish to have them inspected by a geotechnical engineer.

If your yard has large bare areas, these could be sources for mudflows during a storm event. Fall is a great time to plant many of our native plants, and to put down mulch. You may be able to vegetate bare areas prior to the heavier winter storms. For native plants you can plant now, the Washington Native Plant Society is having their fall plant sale at Magnuson Park in Seattle from 10 am – 4 pm on October 14<sup>th</sup>; information and directions can be found at [http://www.wnps.org/chapter\\_info/chapter\\_sales.html](http://www.wnps.org/chapter_info/chapter_sales.html)

## Proper Winter Boat Moorage

As a steward to our environment, you already take the proper steps to make sure that you do not spill any gasoline or oil into the marine waters. If you have a boat that is anchored on a long-term basis, or tied up to a mooring buoy, you may be doing damage that you are not aware of.

The line that holds your boat tightens and slackens with tidal changes, and winter tides and currents move your boat around in circles. When slack, this loose line acts like a slow-moving “weed whacker”, scouring the bottom of the Sound and killing many of the organisms who live there. If you are moored over eelgrass, you can destroy the habitat that much of our marine life depends on and uses to survive. One solution is to take your boat out of the water during the winter months. If that is not possible, you can see about tying the boat off to two anchors or mooring buoys on opposite sides of the boat, lessening the chance of a loose line scraping a circular swath in the sand below. If you take actions to make sure your mooring line is secure, you will help contribute to a healthy marine environment.

## Get Rid of Your Leaves and Protect Your Plants

After the fall winds have subsided, many of us get out into our yards to rake all the leaves into big piles. Some set fire to the leaves, which is not a good idea if you accidentally do so over your septic system’s drainfield. The plastic pipes are not too far below the surface, and are subject to melting, which is hazardous to the health of your septic system. A better idea is to turn the leaves into mulch, which can be used to suppress weeds and help your plants through the winter.

Many people confuse the terms mulch and compost. When mulch decomposes, it eventually becomes compost. But mulch and compost have two distinct functions. Compost is thoroughly decomposed organic matter, and provides your plants with nutrients to help them grow. Any seeds that are covered by compost sprout quickly in this ideal environment. Mulch on the other hand is *not* thoroughly decomposed. Mulch helps to suppress weeds, and protects plants from cold, heat and wind. It also holds moisture in the soil, so watering is not needed as frequently. Mulch also reduces compaction from the impact of heavy rains, lessening the problems of water runoff and its erosion.

Leaves used for mulch should be shredded; unshredded leaves pack down, preventing air and moisture from reaching the soil. Shredded leaves have less of a tendency to pack down, and do not blow away in the wind as easily as whole leaves. It is best to shred your leaves when they are dry. A leaf shredder is ideal, but a lawn mower will do the job just fine. Spread the leaves in rows about two feet wide and one foot high. Set the lawn mower wheels at their highest setting and run over the leaves a time or two. Use a mower bag if you have one, and you’ll have a bag of ready to use mulch. You can also spread it on a tarp, pulling the edges together so you can gather the leaves. Use your shredded leaf mulch under trees, shrubs, annuals and perennials to help them overwinter. If the mulch has decomposed and turned into compost over a period of time, work the compost into the soil and apply another layer of shredded leaf mulch that fall.

Are you thinking about getting rid of some of your lawn so that you can plant more native plants, but don’t want to spend a lot of time cutting and removing the sod? Try this: Cut the grass you want to remove at your mower’s lowest setting. Cover with newspaper 10-16 sheets thick, overlapped about 6 inches at the seams. This will smother the grass. Apply 4-6 inches of mulch. The leaf mulch will eventually turn into an organic soil layer, and the newspaper will also break down over time and turn into an organic layer. A thick layer of mulch, 6 - 8” or more, can often do the same thing without the newspaper. A good rain will wet the mulch and paper and help hold it in place.

## Free Shore Stewards Signs Available

Do you have a Shore Stewards sign in your yard or on your bulkhead? Island County Shore Stewards recently received 150 new signs for distribution to Shore Stewards who do not have one. These colorful 12" x 18" aluminum signs are free and can be picked up at the WSU Extension Office in Coupeville or at the Island County Annex on Camano. Contact Scott Chase, Shore Stewards coordinator, at any of the phone numbers or email addresses at the end of this newsletter. You will be sent a certificate for your free sign.

To see what the sign looks like, go to the Home Page of the Island County Shore Stewards: <http://www.shorestewards.org/island/> . Two more photos can be seen from the Home Page by clicking on "Membership".

## Calendar of Events

**September 28, 2006: CLIMATE CHANGE, WATER, AND THE CHOICES AHEAD with William (Bill) Ruckelshaus**, Thomas Berry Hall, Whidbey Institute. 7:30 pm , cost: \$5 at the door. This lecture will address the issues of water quantity and allocation. William (Bill) Ruckelshaus was the first administrator of the United States Environmental Protection Agency. He currently serves as the Chairman of the Salmon Recovery Funding Board for the State of Washington. In 2003 he was appointed to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Science Advisory Board. In 2005, he was appointed by Governor Gregoire to co-chair the Puget Sound Partnership to organize the cleanup of Puget Sound. Please contact the Whidbey Institute for details. [info@whidbeyinstitute.org](mailto:info@whidbeyinstitute.org) or 360-341-1884

**September 30, 2006: Sound Gardening Workshop.** 9:30 am to Noon. Enjoy a free guided tour of two nature-friendly Camano Island gardens, one low-bank waterfront property and one high bluff waterfront property. Learn how to provide a natural, healthy habitat for birds, wildlife and fish. Enjoy a lush, thriving landscape with little or no pesticides or chemical fertilizers. See how native plants and trees are used for bluff stabilization. Find out how to use compost and mulches to save time and trouble, and to reduce water usage. This popular program is sponsored by Island County Shore Stewards, WSU/Island County Waste Wise program, WSU Beach Watchers, and Backyard Wildlife Habitat Program. Registration required! Call (360) 387-3443, ext 258.

**September 30, 2006: Plastic Plant Pot Recycling and Exchange.** 9:00 am – 1 pm.. Join WSU Waste Wise volunteers and WSU Beach Watchers at this first-ever event on Camano Island! Recycle your CLEAN plastic flower or plant pots. All sizes and colors accepted. Plastic pots only, please! Pots must be free from dirt and relatively clean. You may recycle those old pots you have in your garage or outside your house, or pick up ones you may need for next planting season! Donations requested. Follow signs from Can-Ku Road and N. East Camano Drive, near CASA Animal Shelter. Questions? Call 387-3443, ext 258.

**September 30, 2006: Recycle your Junk Tires on Whidbey Island!** 9:30 am – 2:30 pm.

WSU Waste Wise & Beach Watcher Volunteers along with the Island County Health Department are sponsoring a fall reduced cost tire collection. Old tires are ideal mosquito incubators, offering persistent standing water, high humidity, warm temperatures, and lack of large predators. Over the course of a warm summer, an old tire can generate over 25,000 mosquitoes. With the potential onset of West Nile Virus (WNV), old tires can pose a very real threat to community health.

## Calendar of Events (Continued)

Currently, the cost for tire disposal at the Island County Transfer Stations is \$6. We will be accepting off-rim passenger and light truck tires for \$2 and on-rim passenger and light truck tires will be \$3.75. Large truck (semi-truck) tires, off-rim will be \$7.00. Holders of Solid Waste Low Income Cards from the Opportunity Council or Senior Services may bring 5 off-rim passenger or light truck tires for free and on-rim passenger or light truck tires will only be \$1 (limit 5). No tractor, plane, or other very large tires. They should be relatively clean and free from contamination. For details, contact Janet Hall [halljn@wsu.edu](mailto:halljn@wsu.edu), or call her at 678-7974 or 321-5111, ext. 7974. Bring to: **Coupeville Solid Waste Facility, 20018 SR 20, behind the Recycling Park.**

**October 4th, 2006: Care and Feeding of Septic Systems** 6:30-8:30 pm. How much do you know about maintaining the health of your septic system? Avoid septic system nightmares by attending this free septic system workshop, courtesy of the WSU Waste Wise program and the Island County Health Department. Pre-register for this workshop by calling the WSU Extension Office, 360-629-4522, Ext 7327, option 8. Workshop will be held at the **Lost Lake Grove Community Club, 1469 Lake Drive, Camano Island.**

**October 12, 2006: Camano 101.** 6:30-8:30 pm. Free. Meet several of the groups on Camano that are working together to make a difference! Info will be given about public beaches and parks, living with septic tanks and well water, wildlife and native plants, noxious weeds, controlling development, reducing waste, protecting the watershed in which you live, and much more! Includes Island County Shore Stewards, WSU Beach Watchers, WSU Waste Wise, and many more! Held at the Camano Center, 141 N. East Camano Drive.

**October 17th, 2006: Care and Feeding of Septic Systems** 6:30-8:30 pm. Pre-register for this workshop by calling the WSU Extension Office, 360-629-4522, Ext 7327, option 8. Workshop will be held at the Sierra Community Club off of West Beach (2685 San Juan St. Coupeville)

**October 26th, 2006: Care and Feeding of your Septic System.** 6:30-8:30 pm. Pre-register for this workshop by calling the WSU Extension Office, 360-629-4522, Ext 7327, option 8. Workshop will be held at the **Terry's Corner Fire Station, 525 E. North Camano Drive, Camano Island.**

*To view archived copies of past Shore Stewards Newsletters, go to [www.shorestewards.org](http://www.shorestewards.org)*

**Island County Shore Stewards is a program of the WSU Beach Watchers and the Island County Marine Resources Committee, and is supported by the Washington State University Extension in Island County and the Island County Marine Resources Committee, with grants from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Puget Sound Action Team, the Salmon Recovery Funding Board, Northwest Straits Commission, the Washington State Department of Ecology, and the Camano Island Watershed Management Program.**

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