

WHAT'S IN THIS YEAR'S ISSUE:

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VOLUNTEERS MAKE THE WORLD GO 'ROUND

At our annual Cider Pressing event, PCSWCD honored Dan Rosebush (pictured alongside Board Chair Toby Hall and ED Sarah Robinson) as our Volunteer of the Year. Dan helps in several ways, including volunteering his time and equipment to keep the Law Farm Nature Trail parking lot plowed and maintained, allowing for year-round public access to the trails. Volunteers like Dan help us deliver our essential work in many unique ways.

We hope you enjoy reading all about PCSWCD efforts, our work with local partners, news directly from District partners and much more. FMI on the PCSWCD or how you can volunteer please reach out to sarah.robinson@piscataquisswcd.org

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Dover-Foxcroft, ME 04426
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MEET THE PISCATAQUIS COUNTY SOIL AND WATER STAFF AND BOARD MEMBERS:

OUR HARD-WORKING STAFF



From left to right: Sarah Robinson, Executive Director; Kacey Weber, Education Coordinator

OUR DEDICATED BOARD MEMBERS



From left to right, top row Supervisors: Toby Hall, Chairman, Mike Pouch, Sue Mackey Andrews, Jensen Bissell, Jim Ferrante

From left to right bottom row Associate Supervisors: Sam Brown, Donna Coffin, Steve Tatko, Amber Hines, Kim Merritt, Kent Black, Molly London

WE WORK TOGETHER TO CARRY OUT OUR MISSION, PROVIDE EXCELLENT PROGRAMMING AND BE RESOURCES TO OUR COMMUNITY FOR NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION.

**Stay Tuned for PCSWCD's 2023
Events, Programs, Trainings & More!**



MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, SARAH ROBINSON



I'm so excited to join you in this read of our Cooperator Newsletter, as there has been so much "cooperating" happening in Piscataquis County!

2022 seemed like a fairly normal year, with PCSWCD programming, events and education work at full swing, reaching well over 800 constituents. It was so refreshing to see the familiar and new faces that joined us in person for our events this year—thank you to those that could come in person and those that followed along on our social media platforms from home. Your support means the world to us.

PCSWCD has gained serious momentum with our land management long-term goals and received several funding sources to push them forward.

We hope everyone is enjoying the 400 acres of Community Forests that we work hard to manage for recreational and educational opportunities for the public. Read all about our progress in the *Updates, Progress and Change Happening at PCSWCD Public Lands* article in this newsletter!

With cooperation from The Nature Conservancy, we have secured another grant cycle to continue our Stream Restoration and aquatic organism passage efforts in the Piscataquis watersheds. Funding for this project comes from the WATRSS grant through collaboration with the Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS). Our efforts in the last year have allowed us to free up a total of 18 upstream miles, increasing eastern brook trout and Atlantic salmon habitat.

Thank you to everyone that participated in our 2022 Annual Appeal and our Tree & Plant Sale

fundraiser! With your help we are able to continue bringing conservation education and technical services to landowners, foresters, farmers and youth in Piscataquis County. I can't tell you how proud I am to be a part of the work our team at PCSWCD is committed to delivering. Come take a look for yourself—visit one of our recreational trails, bring your energy and volunteer, or reach out and let us know how we can keep serving you and our community as we all focus on building resilient farms, forests and healthy soils and water. I want to thank you for your new or continued support in furthering our mission in 2023. Together, we can achieve great things.

All the best,
Sarah



WHAT AND WHO IS A COOPERATOR?

Cooperators are individuals (or entities) who have an agreement with PCSWCD, NRCS or FSA. The individual or organization "cooperates" with the USDA offices by developing and managing their lands in ways that reflect land and water suitably with good management practices.

The PCSWCD, NRCS and FSA assist cooperators to meet their land use goals by providing them with technical guidance related to the land uses with which they participate. The USDA offices also may provide cost-share assistance for some land use activities.

In providing cooperators with technical assistance, the District acts independently or coordinates with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. District staff can help cooperators learn about NRCS programs available to them, such as the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) that provides financial assistance to land managers to help them install conservation practices addressing resource concern.

MARR POND FARM HONORED AS PCSWCD'S 2022 COOPERATOR OF THE YEAR

Each year, the Piscataquis County Soil and Water Conservation District (PCSWCD) recognizes and honors a Cooperator (land manager) in Piscataquis County who has implemented exceptional conservation practices on their land. This award offers a chance to both honor producers who invest time and energy into natural resource conservation and showcase their on-farm or forest projects that have improved farm productivity and the overall health of their land. This year, PCSWCD honored Marr Pond Farm as our 2022 Outstanding Cooperator of the Year.



Marr Pond Farm, located in Sangerville, ME, was established in 2016 and is owned and operated by Ryan Clarke and Courtney Williams. They produce MOFGA certified organic mixed vegetables, cut flowers, culinary herbs and forest grown shiitake mushrooms. They manage their land with an emphasis on soil health and sustainable management practices, which include cover cropping, composting and reduced tillage to minimize erosion and impact on the local watershed. Ryan and Courtney manage the land using best management practices and have utilized programs offered through the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) to address resource concerns. They completed and installed a Micro-Irrigation system in 2021 that draws from Marr Pond, an 80-acre pond, serving as their water source.

Additionally, they have previously constructed 3 high tunnels with a fourth on the way, which are used to extend the growing season. Marr Pond has shown a commitment to their community through their involvement with the East Sangerville Grange, local farmers markets, and working with University Maine Cooperative Extension and PCSWCD. Over the last four years, Marr Pond has stayed connected with PCSWCD in a variety of ways. Courtney and Ryan have donated over 1,000 flower seedlings for the Law Farm Pollinator Garden, they have participated in soil health initiatives and have volunteered their time and equipment on volunteer work days for PCSWCD's public lands. Marr Pond Farm has been very dedicated to the continued sustainable agriculture education by working with partners on events and hosting their own workshops and events on the farm. Most recently, Ryan and Courtney participated in and offered their farm as a learning site for the University of Maine Cooperative Extension's Maine Climate Adaptations Practices course.



PCSWCD held a celebration to showcase and honor Marr Pond Farm on Wednesday, October 19th from 4-7PM. Their fields and high tunnels were brimming with people who came to learn about and see the farming practices they implement, which produce beautiful products, all while protecting natural resources. Folks in attendance enjoyed a tour of the farm, lead by Ryan and Courtney.

Cooperator of the Year Article Continued...

After the tour, we heard from Tom Molloy of UMaine Cooperative Extension, as Tom worked closely with Ryan through the Maine Climate Adaptations Practices Course. We also heard from Seth Jones, District Conservationist with USDA NRCS, who worked with them on NRCS projects such as the high tunnels and irrigation system on their farm. After the presentations, representative Paul Stearns presented them with a legislative sentiment marking their achievement and PCSWCD Executive Director Sarah Robinson and Board Chair Toby Hall presented them with their award. After tours, speeches and awards, attendees enjoyed a lovely spread from PCSWCD featuring Marr Pond Farm vegetables and beverages from Bissell Brothers Three Rivers. We talked, celebrated, feasted and enjoyed tunes from the Timberdoodle Band inside one of Marr Pond Farm's high tunnels, lit up with Christmas lights. It was a beautiful event celebrating hard working people in our community who are making positive impacts. Congratulations Courtney and Ryan!



UPDATES, PROGRESS AND CHANGE HAPPENING AT PCSWCD PUBLIC LANDS

Piscataquis County Soil and Water Conservation District (PCSWCD) owns and maintains 3 large parcels of public land, the Law Farm in Dover-Foxcroft, Bailey Hill and Williamsburg Forest in Williamsburg, which are familiar to those of you who have been following us. Another thing we are sure of is that landowners resonate with us when we say owning land, and specifically enhancing that land, is a BIG job. We value our public lands, appreciate their many gifts, but also admit they are a massive undertaking to keep clear, safe and welcoming. The past few years, we have received help from volunteers, partner organizations and grants, which have all helped to maintain AND enhance these public spaces. Read about all the exciting changes below!

Williamsburg Forest

Wait, Williamsburg Forest? We are jumping right into one of the major changes to the public land we own in Williamsburg - changing the name of the parcel from the Demonstration Forest to Williamsburg Forest. Soon, you will see updated Maine DOT signage and signage at the entrance indicating the new name. The name change is the first of many changes and updates, as this 180-acre parcel has needed some attention for quite a few years now. Thanks to a Maine Community Foundation grant, PCSWCD was finally able to make some major improvements to the access road, which leads to the outdoor classroom, and are working to update signage along the trails. The goal of the grant project is to improve accessibility and market the land as a *"Forest for Everyone, Managed by Women,"* encouraging women to explore and participate in skill building activities, forestry demonstrations and have a safe place to enjoy the outdoors.

Article Continued on the next page...

Updates Article Continued...

The grant paid for the access road to be significantly improved and partners William London & Sons, Maine Inland Fisheries & Wildlife Landowner Relations and the KI Riders ATV Club, all worked alongside us to share the costs and maintenance of this huge undertaking. In addition to the access road, which is now an all-vehicle access road, there is also parking at the classroom. PCSWCD is working to update signage at the forest as well, so stay tuned for some new and engaging educational signage along the trails in 2023.

For more information about all the exciting work being done through this Maine Community Foundation Grant at the Williamsburg Forest, we encourage you to read this article produced by the National Association of Conservation Districts:

<https://www.nacdnet.org/2022/07/25/woman-owned-woodlands-and-developing-the-next-generation-of-forest-landowners/>

Law Farm

There has been so much happening at the Law Farm Nature Trails as well! The biggest news to report is our brand-new Outdoor Education



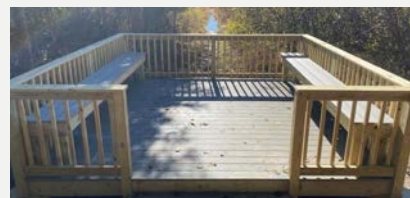
Classroom! We have shared information and updates on this in previous newsletters, but we are happy to report it is entirely completed and it looks amazing. We enjoyed using the space for several 2022 District events, including Cider Pressing, our Forestry Series and a Yoga at the Law Farm event. We are grateful for Corey Hill of Mountain View Correctional Facility and the trades crew for all their effort constructing the classroom. Having a spot to get out of the elements, store equipment and more is going to be a game changer for the 2023 PCSWCD events season and for the community!

Corey and his team have also restructured the bog walk trail overlook.

Originally, there was a boardwalk at the end of the bog walk trail, which jutted out into the bog area and then connected back to the main loop trail. At the end of the boardwalk there was an observation deck, which folks could walk out onto and check out the wild critters who call this area home. Considering the boardwalk was constructed right in the water over a decade ago, unfortunately, it very rapidly deteriorated and in Fall 2021, PCSWCD had to block off the last part leading to the observation deck for safety reasons. We discussed the situation at our bimonthly Land Management meetings, and it was decided that the boardwalk and observation deck would be removed, rewilding the bog area. From there, the trail would be rerouted around the bog and a new observation deck would be constructed, which still offers views of the marshland.

Once again, we reached out to Corey Hill, and him and his crew constructed a great new observation deck, complete with benches. This new space, which PCSWCD calls the “Bog Walk Overlook,” offers a lovely place to stop, sit and listen to and watch the birds. This area will also have new educational signage that explains the importance of habitat, rewilding, wildlife and wetlands. The Bog Walk connector trail, complete with new bog bridging, was completed by PCSWCD board supervisor Jensen Bissell, associate supervisor Kent Black and new volunteer Coleton Holman. This new section of the trail will be easier to maintain and was constructed using long-lasting materials. The Staff and Board Members of PCSWCD are excited to announce the reopening of this new and improved, safe trail system that is open to the public to enjoy!

Article Continued...



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Updates Article Continued...

PCSWCD holds annual volunteer workdays at our public lands, which offer a chance for volunteers to come together and prepare the land, trails and public buildings for the coming seasons. At the 2022 Law Farm workday, volunteers focused their efforts on the Law Homestead area of the property, which was donated to PCSWCD in 2018 from Pleasant River Lumber Co. PCSWCD worked with IF&W Landowner Relations to arrange for a dumpster that could be used to remove large items from the homestead area, such as tires, an old satellite dish, trash and an abandoned shed that we dismantled and discarded. Volunteers worked swiftly to remove debris and materials and the space now looks beautiful! The workday also focused on planting a brand-new educational apple orchard! PCSWCD approved and purchased trees from this year's Tree & Plant Sale with customers buying and supporting the Educational Orchard project by purchasing a Backyard Orchard mix to support the goal. PCSWCD Staff worked with Alaina Kresovic, NRCS Soils Scientist and CJ Walke, orchard specialist, to plan and prep the soil and location for the new orchard. These trees will be used for demonstrations in the future such as our Orchard 101 Series and Cider Pressing events. The funds from a settlement of an enforcement action taken by the Maine Department of Environmental Protection for violations of Maine's Protection and Improvement of Waters law also helped PCSWCD rehabilitate the preexisting well on the homestead, which is now cleaned, water tested and with some volunteer power (thank you Andrew Robinson), had a new hand pump installed. This new source of water will be a supply for new trees and plantings, a possible irrigation system and livestock water supply for the future. This is not a public drinking water supply.

PCSWCD also worked with local farmer Christine Cannon of Wildrose Flower Farm to help identify, flag and protect heirloom roses that were established in this area by Stephen Law. Steve was president of the Maine Rose Society when the club existed and an old friend of the Law family told PCSWCD staff that some of the roses on the property were "Yellow Rose of Texas," "Old Garden Roses" and one or two of the roses as you entered the property were from Steve's grandmother, which could have dated back to the 1800s. Staff have been working to restore the historical rose beds by clearing woody debris such as honeysuckle and tall grasses from around the roses, and have begun mulching and pruning them with Christine's assistance. This work will continue into 2023 and we look forward to seeing the progress with these special flowers!



PCSWCD's short term plan is to connect the Law Farm Homestead and Educational Apple Orchard to the preexisting trails for another option for a looping trail that showcases the historical value of the property. This work will be completed in 2023 and a new kiosk at the parking area will showcase all these new trail updates!

Article Continued on the next page...

Updates Article Continued...

PCSWCD is thrilled to announce that we are underway on another partnership with University of Maine School of Forest Resources! In October, Executive Director Sarah Robinson assisted Jay Wason, Assistant Professor of Forest Ecosystem Physiology, with installing a research plot at the Law Farm. This project will be ongoing for the next three years and is one of six plots across the state of Maine to assess the impacts of extreme climate events on tree regeneration in the Northern Forest. The goal of this project is to determine how tree regeneration in the Northern Forest will respond to extreme drought, heat, and midwinter warming events to better inform Forest Management. The first step was to install the space where 160 trees will be planted in the spring. By summer of 2024 we will be implementing heat and drought waves to 10 different trees to determine which are susceptible or will sustain. If you would like a chance for your school group to participate or to help volunteer with the tree planting in the spring, email katherine.weber@piscataquisswcd.org for more information.



Jay wason, Assistant professor of Forest Ecosystem Physiology with Sarah Robinson, PCSWCD Executive Director

FARM SERVICE AGENCY STAFF:
Scott Speck, Executive Director
Janice Ramirez, Loan Officer
Mark Warren, Program Technician
Contact FSA: 207-564-2151 x2 or
207-474-8323 x2

FARM SERVICE AGENCY COUNTY COMMITTEE:
Lenore Worcester, Chair
Sean O'Donnell, Vice Chair
Wendy Russell, Member

FSA PROGRAMS FOR FARMERS & LANDOWNERS

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) is offering price support payments through the Dairy Margin Coverage Program (DMC).

- Eligible dairy operations receive a payment each month when the difference between the national price of milk and the average cost of feed falls below the level selected by the eligible dairy operation, and;
 - Issued payment amounts are based on the farm's actual historical or expected dairy production.
 - More information is available online at www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/dairy-margin-coverage-program/index
- FSA is also enrolling farmers and ranchers in the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP).
- NAP provides financial assistance to producers of non-insurable crops to protect against natural disasters that result in lower yields, crop losses, or prevented planting.
 - Losses eligible for payment include damaging weather such as drought, freeze, hail, excessive moisture, excessive winds, and more; Adverse natural occurrences such as flood or earthquake; and conditions related to damaging weather or adverse natural occurrences such as excessive heat, plant disease, and insect infestation.
 - More information is available online at <https://www.farmers.gov/blog/is-noninsured-crop-disaster-assistance-program-right-you>
- All areas within Piscataquis County qualify for these programs. You can reach out to the Farm Service Agency at 207-474-8323 x2 for more information about these and other programs to support farming and ranching.

UPDATES FROM THE DISTRICT CONSERVATIONIST

*Written by District Conservationist
Seth Jones*

Happy fall to everyone!

Once again, as we come up on turning the clocks back, a new fiscal has begun and the leaves decomposing on the ground, I'm forced into the realization that I still have yet to figure out how to stop time and ironically can't find time to put into figuring that out. It just pushes forward with zero regard for what I want.

Looking back at 2022 we had some successes. We managed to get \$995,000 worth of conservation work contracted for Piscataquis County! That money will be put on the ground in the next few years to benefit all of us by not only enhancing and protecting the environmental resources around us, but it is money that typically is utilized locally helping local economies, sustaining jobs and procuring goods and services here in Maine and Piscataquis County. Local foresters, businesses, contractors, farms and agriculture networks benefit from farm bill dollars. Farm Service Agency (FSA) also has programs that bring in money and provides the same benefits of helping sustain agriculture in our community.



In December the Soil and Water Conservation District will be hosting a Local Working Group meeting. The group comes together yearly to provide local insight on where NRCS needs to focus priority to provide the most benefit to the local agriculture community. The same process is in place on the state level as well with the State Technical Committee. If you are seeing or hearing about conservation and environmental needs in our county, please bring those forward to me, the SWCD or plan on attending the meeting to discuss where we can provide the most benefit.

If you are an agricultural producer or own and manage forest in Piscataquis please consider contacting us to discuss areas where we may be able to offer assistance.

We can help with procuring management plans, cover crops, high tunnels, forest stand improvement and a myriad of other practices to help you conserve the resources you manage on your property. You own, manage and protect the environment and resources we all depend on and there are resources available through the Soil and Water Conservation District, Natural Resources Conservation Service and Farm Service Agency to assist you to achieve your objectives.



The Local Working Group (LWG) is made up of farmers, foresters, landowners, personnel from agencies involved in natural resource management, and the general public working in Piscataquis County. The purpose of this group is to provide guidance to NRCS concerning the implementation of conservation programs in Piscataquis County. The LWG advises NRCS on the environmental concerns in the area and determining local natural resource priorities. NRCS advises the LWG of Farm Bill updates, the local application process, including ranking criteria and application periods, and eligible conservation practices. We encourage farmers, foresters, landowners to consider joining us and sharing your feedback!



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- 3) Pay for your first year online or request an invoice. You'll get a call from the director to discuss your specific needs and to determine how the chamber can best support you.

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SPOTLIGHT ON PCSWCD'S CONSERVATION PARTNERS: *Our Work with SeDoMoCha*

Piscataquis County Soil and Water Conservation District (PCSWCD) chooses to highlight a conservation partner each year in the Cooperator Newsletter. This year we wanted to share about some of the unique programs we have been working on with SeDoMoCha.

A big part of our mission is centered around education and therefore, we spend a great deal of our time on education and outreach initiatives. Our Education Coordinator, Kacey Weber, has presented and offered programming at area schools, providing education directly to students of all grade levels. Through these school programs, Kacey introduces and explores natural resource conservation through hands-on lessons in forestry, watersheds, pollinators, soils, agriculture and more. Kacey has had the pleasure of working with a number of Piscataquis schools, but has been able to do some really special work with SeDoMoCha elementary and middle school.



Kacey is entering into a second year working alongside SeDoMoCha librarian Carolyn Clark. Carolyn reached out with an idea to introduce a program she called "Wild Wednesdays" to her library students, bringing Kacey into the school for some outdoor lessons on different natural resource topics. In our first year, the Wild Wednesdays project was offered to 4th graders, and we explored the outdoors while learning about watersheds, tree ID and Maine wildlife. We used Forest Trees of Maine books and other resources to learn what to look for when trying to properly identify trees, we snowshoed the Dot Warren Nature Trails to find

and ID wildlife tracks and we had some fun with PCSWCD's watershed model, learning about watersheds and water quality. For the new school year, Kacey is teaming up with Carolyn once again and this time, we will be tackling a brand new project with the 4th graders - Trout in the Classroom! SeDoMoCha 4th graders will be working with PCSWCD to learn about, raise and release brook trout. The students will learn about their native (and local) habitat, trout life cycles and information about what they need to survive and thrive. Part of the project is growing trout eggs in an aquarium that will be kept in the library, on display for the whole school. The 4th graders will be in charge of monitoring the tank environment, providing education to the rest of the school and much more. At the end of the project, the students will release the fish into the Piscataquis River. The 4th graders are very excited about it and we are too! Trout in the Classroom is a Trout Unlimited program that we are able to provide through a private award from The Nature Conservancy (TNC). If that wasn't enough fun, PCSWCD is also working with SeDoMoCha through a recent 21st Century grant project the school was awarded. We will be teaming up with our friends from the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) to offer outdoor education through the grant program's Exploratory Weeks. During the first Exploratory week, we met with a group of students enrolled in the program and introduce them to Leave No Trace concepts, played nature awareness games and got them actively involved in updates to the nature trail! Kacey and Katie from AMC provided activities, played games and completed projects with the kids to get them thinking about how they can implement Leave No Trace on their school nature trail...and anytime they are out enjoying nature!

We have no doubt that our work with SeDoMoCha will continue and grow. Thank you SeDoMoCha for helping us build future environmental stewards!

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NATIVE PLANT RESOURCES FOR OUR POLLINATORS

By Laurie Bowen, Food Systems Program Associate
University of Maine Cooperative Extension

Native plants are a great choice for pollinators and the homeowner as well. Native plants are well adapted to the climate, soils and rainfall of a particular region and require much less maintenance, often with less effort and needing fewer resources to grow well. Wildlife also benefits from plants native to a particular ecoregion and help maintain biodiversity.

Native plants are essential food resources for our native pollinators and provide pollen and nectar resources that are 4 times more attractive to pollinators than non-natives. By supplying food sources from early spring, starting in April to the late fall, October, pollinators will have the nutrition they need to not only survive, but thrive as well.

When choosing plants, try to provide a variety of plants that are different sizes, shapes, colors and overlap in their bloom periods, making sure there is always a food source available throughout the 3 seasons. Choose plants with the pollinators in mind. Some of the flowers that may not appear as beautiful to the human eye may contain UV markers that are very attractive to pollinators such as ants, bats, bees or flies. Planting in groups or clusters that are easily visible to pollinators will also help direct pollinators to their food source. The closer the food source the less energy the pollinator will have to expend to forage for their food.

Our native plants can also play an important role as larval hosts too. Some Butterfly and moth larvae need specific host plants to feed on. The Spicebush Swallowtail caterpillar for example feeds mostly on spicebush and sassafras and is an example of host plant specialist.



There are lots of species though that can host many different caterpillars and these are a great addition to your yard. If you notice that some leaves have holes in them, this means those host plants are doing their jobs and you shouldn't be concerned. If you would like to help pollinators and in turn help maintain a diverse environment on your property, consider adding natives to your property either by seedlings or sow your own seeds. To find out more about where to buy native plants and seeds the [UMaine Cooperative Extension Pollinator-friendly Garden Certification webpage](#) has a number of resources listed. Fall and winter are the best times to sow native seeds and the [Wild Seed Project](#) has very helpful information on sowing native seeds as well. Don't forget about the annual [PCSWCD Tree & Plant Sale](#), which provides a chance to purchase native, locally-grown plants AND support the PCSWCD! Adding native plants to your property will not only support pollinators, but add beauty to your property as well. 2023 catalog will debut in May!

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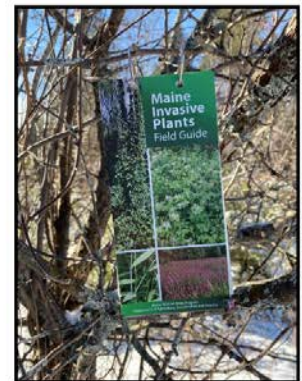
ITEMS AVAILABLE:

- \$16.00 FOREST TREES OF MAINE
- \$24.95 MAINE INVASIVE PLANTS FIELD GUIDE
- \$78.00 RECYCLED RAIN BARRELS-55 GALLON SIZE
- \$63.00 THE EARTH MACHINE COMPOSTING BIN-80 GALLON SIZE
- \$13.00 KITCHEN PAILS-2 GALLON SIZE

MARKING FLAGS: \$20.00 for 100, \$12.00 for 50, and \$8.00 for 25

PLANTSKYDD DEER REPELLENT (OMRI Certified):

- 1 QUART BOTTLE for \$23.00
- 1 POUND GRANULAR SHAKER for \$12.00
- 3 POUND GRANULAR BAGS \$28.00



*Tax is included
in all pricing.
Shipping is not
available.*