

# Shore Stewards News

GUIDELINES AND RESOURCES FOR LIVING NEAR WATER | ESTABLISHED 2003

## Winter 2022

*This newsletter is written by Jerilyn Ritzman, WSU Extension Island County Shore Stewards Program Coordinator.*

## New Year's Reflections & Resolutions



*Figure 1: New Year's offers a great time to reflect on the past year and plan for the year ahead.*

### Reflections

New Year's is a time of beginnings and endings, a time to reflect on the past year and a chance to look forward into the future. 2021 was a year of extreme challenges. We faced another year under COVID-19. An unprecedented heat wave threatened human safety and endangered plants and local wildlife. Extreme winds caused lengthy power outages and extensive property damage for many. Most recently a winter storm caused a week of snow and ice and record low temperatures.

Despite these challenges, we have seen great and inspiring things in our community. Restoration work has continued in several key areas around the county. Volunteer groups have adapted to COVID restrictions to continue their projects. Again and again, I have seen offers from generous neighbors

and strangers to help those impacted by our extreme events.

As we look into the future and think about how extreme events like these will in all likelihood become more commonplace, we might use the idea of New Year's reflections and resolutions to give us the incentive to do something new on our properties and beyond. Our motivation may be to protect our properties as financial investments, to preserve the environment around us for future generations, or maybe something else entirely. All are valid. Whatever your motivations may be, continue reading for just a few ideas of small changes we might choose to make in the coming year.

### Resolutions

#### Spend more time in nature

Spending time in nature has been frequently cited as a way to deal with stress, and with good reason. More time in nature has been positively associated with improved mental and physical health. Its importance has come into sharper focus over the last two years. During the COVID-19 pandemic and associated business

closures, outdoor recreation areas such as trails were some of the only recreational opportunities available to many residents outside their homes.



*Figure 2: Barnum Point on Camano Island is just one example of the many beautiful recreational spaces in our county. Here, a system of trails leads you through forested areas, grasslands, or along the beach. Image Credit: Jerilyn Ritzman.*

As the world slowly emerges from the pandemic, we would do well to remember the benefits that time in nature can provide. We live in a beautiful region, and there are many resources available to help us experience more of it in our lives. The following are some great places to start:

Washington State Parks:

- [PDF brochure comparing all state parks](#)
- [Park search based on features](#)
- [ADA-accessible park search](#)

[Washington Trails Association - Hike Finder Map](#)

[All Trails - List and map of hikes in Washington](#)

## Conduct a household waste audit

Reducing your waste can be a rewarding experience, but it can be difficult to know where to start. One of the best ways to start a waste reduction journey is to conduct a waste audit for your household. This can help you identify which types of waste, such as packaging or food, might be easiest to reduce first.

There are different approaches to a household waste audit depending on how much information you want to collect. A typical approach might last a week and involve sorting waste (including recyclables) into categories and then weighing them or counting certain items. After reviewing your results, you can then create personalized strategies for reducing waste and run another audit anytime you want to check your progress.

[Shorter guide from Earth911](#)

[More in-depth guide from Conserve Energy Future](#)

## Start a compost bin



*Figure 3: Master Gardener volunteers mix compost in a variety of bins. Image Credit: WSU Extension Master Gardener Program. WSU Libraries.*

Did you know that food waste is a significant contributor to global greenhouse gas emissions? It's tempting to think that food, an organic material, would break down in a landfill just as well as any other place, but that is not the case. When food and yard debris are sent to a landfill, they break down very slowly in an anaerobic process that causes the release of methane, a greenhouse gas. In addition to intentional shopping habits and smart food storage, starting a compost bin can decrease the amount of material headed towards the landfill. As an added bonus, you will then have a great soil amendment to keep your plants or gardens flourishing.

[Backyard Composting—WSU Extension Publication free download](#)

If traditional compost piles or bins aren't for you, you could also try:

[Vermiculture: Composting with worms!](#)

[Build your own food scrap digester](#)

## Plant native plants

Planting native plants on your property can be a boon for both yourself and local wildlife. Native plants often require less maintenance in the long run than non-native plants, saving you time and money. They can also help contribute to water quality, resist pests and diseases, and provide natural foraging opportunities for animals. If you're looking to start adding more native plants to your landscape, or to improve what you're already doing, here are some great resources to start:

[WSU Master Gardener Program](#)

[Washington Native Plant Society](#)

[Example landscape plans from King County](#)

[Great Plant Picks](#)

[Natural Yard Care guide: Plant right for your site](#)

[Natural Yard Care guide: The Plant List](#)

## Share your time and knowledge

One of the most important things we can do as Shore Stewards is to share our time and knowledge with others in our community. This can be done in formal or informal settings, or even in your everyday life with family, friends, or coworkers. Sharing your knowledge helps magnify what you have learned, spreading information to people who might not otherwise have access to the same resources. You also gain the opportunity to learn from them. Sharing knowledge also helps reinforce each other's commitment to protecting the environment by including them on a shared journey.

Volunteering can also be a very rewarding experience for those with time to share. While the Shore Stewards program does not include a volunteer component, there are many local organizations (associated with WSU and beyond) dedicated to protecting our environment. If you find one that matches your particular interests and skill set, joining can further deepen your connection with the environment and spread your impact beyond your own property and social circle.

## Come up with your own

The resolutions in this newsletter are only a small set of examples. There are many things we can do to improve our properties or the environment. Come up with your own eco-resolution and make it a reality!

## Bibliography

Ewert, Alan, and Yun Chang. 2018. "Levels of Nature and Stress Response." *Behavioral Sciences* 8 (5): 49: 13 p.  
<https://doi.org/10.3390/bs8050049>.

Fyfe-Johnson, Amber L., Marnie F. Hazlehurst, Sara P. Perrins, Gregory N. Bratman, Rick Thomas, Kimberly A. Garrett, Kiana R. Hafferty, Tess M. Cullaz, Edgar K. Marcuse, and Pooja S. Tandon. 2021. "Nature and Children's Health: A Systematic Review." *Pediatrics* 148 (4): Article e2020049155: 72–94. <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2020-049155>.

Natural Yard Care. 2021. "Natural Yard Care Neighborhoods." Last modified November 1, 2021.

<https://www.naturalyardcare.org/Default.aspx>.

Washington Native Plant Society. 2020. "About Native Plant Gardening." Last modified February 28, 2020.

<https://www.wnps.org/native-gardening>.



Thank you for reading [Shore Stewards News](#)

Shore Stewards, Washington State University, Pullman, WA  
[Accessibility](#) | [Copyright](#) | [Policies](#)

WSU Extension programs and employment are available to all without discrimination. Evidence of noncompliance may be reported through your local WSU Extension office.