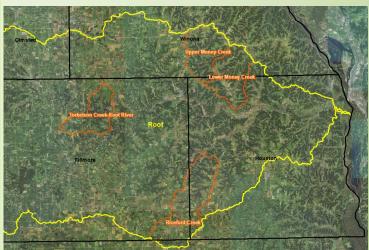
ROOT RIVER SWCD CONSERVATION HIGHLIGHTS

Root River Watershed Conservation Planning Initiative

Since 2018, the Root River SWCD has been working with a grant that was formed from a partnership between the State and NRCS, called Watershed Conservation Planning Initiative (WCPI). The State chose seven watersheds to have special conservation planner positions that focus on outreach and whole farm walkovers within those watersheds. The Root River watershed was one of those chosen. Dan Wermager and Bob Scanlan from the SWCD are doing the conservation planning work, until the end of 2021, when the grant is set to expire. As stated, the mission of the WCPI workload is to conduct targeted outreach within the Root River watershed, and partner with other counties' SWCD and NRCS offices. Initially, priority watersheds were chosen to focus these outreach efforts upon. In 2021 an additional priority watershed was chosen to broaden outreach even further.



In each watershed outlined in orange, the process was the same. First, letters were sent to each rural landowner within the watershed that owned 5 acres of land or more. If Wermager did not hear back from a landowner, he would follow-up the letter with a phone call. If a landowner was interested, Wermager and Scanlan would schedule a

time to meet them on their property. There they would follow the steps of conservation planning to create a conservation plan for their farm, or just for one problem area if the landowner preferred.

The NRCS steps of conservation planning are: Identify Problems and Opportunities, Determine Objectives, Inventory Resources, Analyze Resource Data, Formulate Alternatives, Evaluate Alternatives, Make Decisions, Implement the Plan

These conservation plans led to quite a few projects, which otherwise may not have ever been started. Even the plans which did not lead to projects are still beneficial, because they "planted the seed" for ideas for projects that the landowner may pursue in the future. These plans also give the landowner a clear idea of how they can manage their property over the long run, and the plans show the State that these landowners are making progress in addressing resource concerns on their property.

Part of the grant agreement was also to host at least two workshops or outreach events per year. These were completed and allowed Wermager to present to the public about the importance of conservation planning and soil conservation.

The grant is set to expire on 12/31/2021, but so far these are some of the results broken down into a table:

Grant Deliverable	# Completed
Outreach Letters Sent	760
Follow-Up Phone Calls	485
Conservation Plans	164
Workshops/Events	7
Watershed Team Meetings	10

If you are interested in a whole farm plan, or if you have an erosion issue that you would like us to look at, do not hesitate to give us a call.

NOVEMBER 2021

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Root River SWCD

Office Location:

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Caledonia, MN 55921

HOURS

7:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Monday—Friday

(507) 724-5261 ext. 3

https:// www.co.houston.mn.us/ departments/soil-and-water/

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BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Cecil Graf, Chair Matt Feldmeier ,Vice Chair Jerry Welke, Secretary Glenn Kruse, Treasurer Ken Anderson, Reporter



Crooked Creek Watershed Project Nears Completion

After many years of planning and preparation the latest Crooked Creek Watershed Project is nearing completion. Following the extreme flood event of August 2007, the Crooked Creek Watershed Managers decided to prioritize areas of the watershed where improvements in flood control and reduced sedimentation could be realized. One of the sites chosen is located in Section 1 of Winnebago Township and was chosen because of continued devastation due to increased heavy flood events since the 2007 flood.



On private land owned by two individuals, a grade stabilization structure commenced construction on July 6, 2021. The Root River SWCD & Crooked Creek Watershed Board (Board) began conversations with the landowners approximately 10 years ago. Through those conversations a sense of trust and "buy-in" was built between the Board and the landowners. The nearly-complete structure stands on property owned by Joe Hammel and Gary and Sandy Klinski with a vast majority of the structure located on the Klinski land. Without a doubt, one of the most notable highlights of the project has been the immense cooperation of the landowners who have given up a portion of their lands so that downstream landowners may see the benefits of reducing flood flows and lower sedimentation into Crooked Creek. Without complete landowner cooperation, projects such as this don't get past the planning stages and a project of this scale is certainly no exception.

The drainage area of the site includes 1,010 acres which is a mix of tilled farmland, CRP, pasture, and forestland. The site has excellent upland treatment as over 75% of the drainage area is adequately treated with

practices that keep soil erosion below maximum tolerance levels. Even with adequate upland treatment, the area in the valley has seen dramatic gully erosion over the years. With construction of the dam the Watershed can expect much less sediment to be de-



posited into Crooked Creek thereby improving trout habitat and drastically reduced flood flows during heavy rain events. The constructed dam is approximately 550' long, 28' high with a 4'diameter reinforced concrete drain pipe through the center. It is expected to hold back a 50 year flood event with a 56% out flow reduction. Larger events may go over the emergency spillway and outlet into an existing dry run and newly constructed grassed waterway. The dam features a 60 ml synthetic liner on the pool side to aid in hydraulic protection. The liner was



recommended by GGG engineer to meet DNR Dam Safety Standards. This is due to the dam location in respect to shallow topsoil over bedrock at the site. In addition the dam is considered a "dry structure" in that the drain pipe was built into and through the dam at ground level. This will reduce the potential of dam failure and sinkhole formation due to the hydraulic effects of pooling water over shallow topsoil as there will be no retention of water behind the dam.

Final construction of the site will be the end of summer of 2022 when the new grassed waterway will be connected to the outlet pipe. Once the project is complete ongoing inspections and routine maintenance will be required as with other flood control structures located within the watershed. The Board would like to thank all partners involved with the project including the engineer firm, GGG Engineering from Chatfield, contractor Ryan Oian, owner of Generation X Construction from Rushford, the Hammell and Klinski families, the numerous state and federal agencies including Corps of Engineers, MN DNR, Houston County, and others, and the Regional 1Watershed, 1Plan Policy Committee, who was instrumental in helping to fund the project. Last but not least, the Board would like to thank the property owners in the Crooked Creek Watershed who provide funding for projects such as this through property taxes levied within the Watershed.



Soil Health Field Day Held by Local Producers

Several local producers partnered with the Root River SWCD to hold a soil health field day on October 16, 2021. Separate topics and issues were discussed at each stop. The day started off with a short presentation by SWCD Soil Technician and Conservation Planner, Dan Wermager, who talked about strategies and cost savings of a good soil health program.

The tour then got under way with the first stop at a farm operated by Bob and Greta Mierau. This farm highlighted three fields that have been under no till management for 20 years but are being managed slightly different in that one is conventional no till, the second field is organic no till and the third field is now back into a minimum till organic management. Periodic soil infiltration testing and soil health testing is being conducted to compare the different scenarios over time.

The second stop was at the Aaron Klinski farm where he seeded a multi specie cover crop mix following cereal grain harvest in July.

The third stop was at the Wermager Farm near Hokah where a cover crop was interseeded into corn at V5 this past June.

The fourth stop of the tour was on the Joan Heim-Welch Farm near Brownsville where Joan worked with the U of M to develop a prevent plant test plot featuring several individually seeded species including oats, crimson clover, sorghum/sudangrass, millet, and rye. The plot was part of a state-wide study used to help producers determine which specie might provide the most biomass for late summer harvest when planting dates are delayed. Joan also presented the outcome of a three month soil health/underwear study. The results were fantastic with 99% of a pair of cotton briefs devoured by the soil microbial population!



The last stop of the tour was on the Connor McCormick farm where Mr. McCormick is doing a study to compare spring seeded no till alfalfa with minimum till alfalfa on soybean stubble and to compare spring seeded no till alfalfa with minimum till alfalfa into corn stubble from last year. This is a three year study in conjunction with Root River SWCD to measure biomass throughout the study. First year results show no discernable differences between no till and conventional till seeded alfalfa.

For more information on soil health practices or to enroll acres into a cover crop program call Bob Scanlan, Root River SWCD at (507) 724-5261.







The Gerard's

The Root River SWCD is proud to announce this year's Conservationist of the Year, the Gerard's, Tom and Shirley & Jeff Gerard and Judy Tollefsrud. Currently, they manage around 500 acres of owned farm land in Wilmington Township that consists of row crops, hay, pasture, and a 300 head dairy beef and dairy heifer feeding operation.

Jeff and Tom began working on conservation projects early in their farming career during the mid to late seventies in cooperation with the Soil Conservation Service (now Natural Resources Conservation Service NRCS) and SWCD. Some of the projects implemented over 40 years ago are still the same as many of the projects being built on the ground today. An 818 ft. long waterway in 1976 and a grade stabilization structure project in 1979 were two major projects from the early years. Later, in the early to mid-eighties other projects were enacted. A diversion above the farm yard diverted water away from the buildings below and a separate "farmable diversion" made life easier while diverting water and collecting sediment. The eighties and nineties also brought many more waterway and structure projects along with some conservation tillage and feedlot work.



The Gerard's have always had a focus on beef production so it seemed natural to include some feedlot improvement work to their facilities to reduce runoff potential. In the late nineties, Gerard's implemented practices to better manage the nutrients produced by the cattle feedlot. At the same time they developed a waste management system with roof gutters and a solids settling basin to collect manure solids that come off the feedlot. They also enrolled in an NRCS nutrient management program that enabled them to better track all the nutrients on the farm including manure and commercial fertilizer. Around that time they also enrolled in a pest management program to aid in tracking all pesticide (herbicides, insecticides, etc.) use on the farm. This was in addition to thousands of feet of installed waterways, terraces, and diversions. The 2000's have brought more of the same commitment to conservation with projects that include thousands of feet of additional waterways, in addition to improved nutrient management, and enrollment in CRP, cover crops, and no till soil management programs.



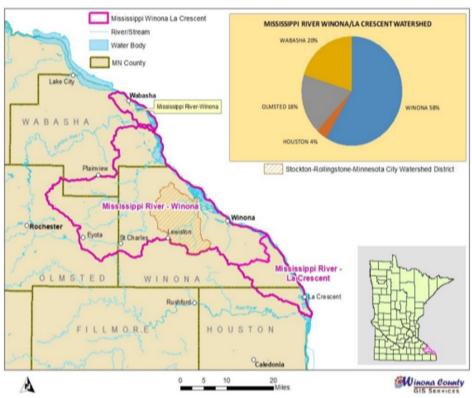
The Gerard farm, though mostly crop land, also includes some highly erodible, non-tilled areas. These areas serve as pasture for the dairy heifers and dry cows that are custom-fed on the farm. The pasture is rotationally grazed, thereby eliminating over-grazed areas that can be problematic for runoff in permanent pasture systems. In addition some of the small, odd shaped fields have been enrolled in CRP thereby creating areas for wildlife including upland birds and pollinators. Each area of the farm has had individual attention. Whether an area of the farm is currently being used to produce feed, safely direct water, provide wildlife habitat, or graze cattle, the Gerard's have put some conservation-minded thought into it. When asked why they've continued to do the conservation work that they do, Jeff says it's, "The way it should be done".

That practical way of thinking is why the Gerard's are this year's Conservationists of the Year!



Mississippi River Winona/La Crescent (WinLaC) One Watershed, One Plan

In 2021, the process began of creating a new comprehensive watershed management plan (also called One Watershed, One Plan). This plan that is being created is for the Mississippi River Winona/La Crescent watershed. It is a 479,700 acre watershed that covers parts of Houston, Winona, Olmsted, and Wabasha counties. It encompasses several rivers, streams, and creeks – including Pine Creek near La Crescent in Houston County - which all drain into the Mississippi River.



All SWCDs, counties, watershed districts, and major cities within this planning area are partnering with a hired consultant to create a plan for this watershed that will address the foremost environmental issues that occur there. This plan will be complete by mid -2023, and once it is complete, it will channel \$100,000's from the State for conservation projects that address issues identified in the plan. Currently, partners are working together and with the public to compile and rank a list of natural resource issues for the watershed. So far, a few of the main issues that have been identified include sediment/ nutrients/bacteria in surface water, nitrates in groundwater, cropland erosion, streambank erosion, loss of soil organic matter, flooding, and invasive species. A public kickoff meeting was held in Winona on September 20th. Additional smaller public meetings, intended to gather more public input, will be held in the near future. One will likely be held in La Crescent. We want all the public input as possible to be included in this plan, so look for future notices and please attend if you can!

Bear Creek Site #3 Project Repair is Complete

A combination sinkhole/dam rehabilitation project was completed this past June at the Bear Creek #3 site. The site, located on private land in section 15 of Spring Grove Township, is part of a "Watershed Flood Prevention Opera-



tions" (WFPO) Project sponsored through a partnership between Winneshiek and Houston County. The original dam was planned in 1998 and built in 2010 and controls 153 acres of drainage. The main focus of the Bear Creek Watershed Projects is to provide flood and sediment control to downstream properties. This site, along with others in the watershed, features a formation called the St. Peter Sandstone near the surface of the property. It is susceptible to weathering, dissolution, and formation of voids near the surface. These characteristics are common in the formation of sinkholes. When water moves over or is pooled on top of these formations, sinkholes are common. A sinkhole formed in the pool area of the

Bear Creek #3 dam site a number of years ago. Over time the sinkhole became a burden to the property owners and also compromised the integrity of the dam.

Through the Watershed Partnership a plan was developed to address the situation and funding was earmarked through Iowa NRCS in early 2020. This plan, developed by the State of Iowa Conservation Engineer, aimed to reconstruct the dam, creating a "dry structure" by lowering the drain pipe that runs through the dam. In addition, a plan was put together to fix the sinkhole. The sinkhole repair consisted of



excavation of the sinkhole, installation of a pipe and inlet up through the center of the sinkhole, placement of various sizes of rip rap and drainfill rock to fill the hole and then placement of geotextile and finally fill material at the surface. The combination of turning the dam into a "dry" structure and addressing the sinkhole will enable the site to continue to be protected from heavy rain events by the existence of the dam. Mahr Excavating did the work on the project and should be commended for a job well done!



Root River SWCD Welcomes New Board Supervisor

The Root River SWCD began its year welcoming Ken Anderson as the newly elected board supervisor for District 3. Anderson, of Wilmington Township, has served on several boards and councils in Houston County over the years and brings a wealth of knowledge and enthusiasm for conservation.

As a District 3 supervisor, he is representing Black Hammer Township, Spring Grove Township & Village and Wilmington Township. Ken is only the eighth supervisor (plus an additional three that completed others' terms) this district has seen during the 82 years of the Root River SWCD's establishment.

Anderson is serving a four year elected term and has the opportunity to serve consecutive terms with no limit to the number of terms he can serve upon re-election. Ken joins

Chair, Cecil Graf
District 2
Brownsville
Twp. & Village
Crooked Creek Twp.
Jefferson Twp.



Vice Chair, Matt Feldmeier District 5 Houston Twp. &Village Money Creek Twp. Sheldon Twp.



Treasurer,
Glenn Kruse
District 4
Caledonia
Twp. & Village
Eaten (Eitzen) Village
Mayville Twp.



Secretary,
Jerry Welke
District 1

La Crescent Twp. & Village
Hokah Twp. & Village
Mound Prairie Twp.
Union Twp.



Financial Assistance Program for Private Well Treatment or New Private Well Construction

What is Nitrate?

Nitrate is a compound that naturally forms when nitrogen combines with oxygen or ozone. While nitrogen is essential for all living things, high nitrate levels (10mg/L) in drinking water could pose harmful risks, especially to infants and pregnant women.

Nitrate can occur naturally in surface and groundwater without causing health problems. However, high nitrate levels in well water often result from improper well construction and location. Improper disposal of human and animal waste or the overuse of chemical fertilizers can further

increase nitrate levels. Sources of nitrate that can enter your well include fertilizers, septic systems, animal feedlots, industrial waste, and food processing waste. After flooding, wells could become more vulnerable to contamination, especially if the wells are shallow, poorly constructed, dug or bored, or submerged by floodwater for long periods.

The Olmsted, Fillmore, Goodhue, Root River, and Wabasha Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) and Winona County collaborated and formed a new "Tap In" initiative with goals to improve drinking water throughout Southeastern Minnesota. Participating counties and SWCDs received fund-

ing through the MN Department of Health Clean Water Fund to assist private well owners with nitrate contamination problems.

To qualify for the funding, applicants must have a water quality test report indicating that their nitrate contamination exceeds the state and federal Health Risk Limit (HRL) of 10

mg/L. The water quality test will be considered valid if the analysis was performed by a certified laboratory within the last 3 years. Test kits may also be requested from the Root River SWCD. The private water supply must also be used as a source of potable drinking water for the residence to

qualify for financial assistance.

Additional cost share is available for private well owners that meet financial hardship criteria. For more information on how to apply, please visit the Root River SWCD website, https://www.co.houston.mn.us/departments/soil-and-

water/. If you have any questions, please contact Jean Meiners at meinersja24@gmail.com.







Order your conservation trees TODAY Orders are first come first serve. Some species have a limited supply available. Special orders are welcome.

How Do Trees Affect Climate Change

Trees are extremely important to help stop climate change. In addition to the carbon dioxide trees capture, they also help the soil capture and store carbon. Trees benefit the environment by absorb carbon dioxide as they grow. They help the soil capture and store carbon and their wood also stores carbon which helps slow the rate of global warming. Trees reduce wind speeds and cool the air as they lose moisture and reflect heat upwards from their leaves.

Through photosynthesis, trees pull the gas out of the air to help grow their leaves, branches and roots. It is important that the right type of trees are planted to help climate change. Broadleaved species – such as oak, beech and maple – are best because they have a larger surface area of leaves which generates more photosynthesis, whereas conifers absorb more heat.

Trees also give off oxygen that we need to breathe. They reduce the amount of storm water runoff, which reduces erosion and pollution in our waterways and may reduce the effects of flooding. Many species of wildlife depend on trees for habitat. Trees provide food, protection, and homes for many birds and mammals.



Have You Heard Available to Rent Kuhn 20.2 Broadcast Seeder M1 Twin Discs will spread 33-59 ft.



on a trailer for quick access
\$5.00 per acre charge
Available on a first come first serve bases
Contact
Root River SWCD
(507) 724-5261 ext. 3





CONIFERS - TRANSPLANTS

Pine, Norway (Red Pine)	6" – 12"	75 - 100'	Needles are ¹ / ₃ – ³ / ₄ " long. Tolerant of shade. Does best in moist, well-drained, gravelly soils. Drought sensitive. Good wildlife cover and useful windbreak tree. Medium growth rate.			
Pine, White Eastern	6" – 9"	50 - 75'	redles are 3-5" long, very soft and flexible, bluish-green in color. Grows well in rich, moist soil, but es best in moist, sandy loams. Full sun to partial shade. Growth spread ranges from 20 - 40'. Meam growth rate (12 – 24" per year). Good lumber tree. Also, good for wildlife habitat. Used in windeaks, to block farm odor, screens and shade. Soft, picturesque tree.			
Spruce, Colo- rado	7" – 15"	70 - 100'	1 - 1 ½" needle all shades of blue and green with very sharp tips. Prefers well-drained, moist soils at will tolerate dry conditions. Moderately tolerant of shade. Provides a 20-35' growth spread. Meum growth rate.			
Spruce, Nor- way	7" – 15"	40 - 100'	Full sun and drought tolerant 20-50' growth spread. Does well in dry, moist or wet conditions. Fastest growing spruce. Dense draping branches. Needles are ½ to 1" long. Not native.			
Spruce, White	9" – 15"	50 - 80'	Needles are ¹ / ₃ – ³ / ₄ " long. Tolerant of shade. Does best in moist, well-drained, gravelly soils. Drought sensitive. Good wildlife cover and useful windbreak tree. Medium growth rate.			
Arborvitae, Techny	6" – 12"	20'	Maturity width 8 ft. Dark green in color year round. Medium growth rate. Very hardy.			

DECIDUOUS TREES

Oak, Red	12" - 18"	60 - 80'	Fastest growing Oak. Does best on moist or well-drained sites in full to partial sun. Valuable wood products tree. Acorns provide excellent wildlife food source. Fall color is red to a winter bronze.
Oak, White	12" – 16"	50 - 80'	Does best in slightly moist to well-drained sites and full sun. Acorns provide excellent wildlife food source. Brown, purple autumn foliage. May hold some leaves over winter. Excellent firewood & valuable wood products tree. Slow growth rate.
Walnut, Black	12" – 18"	70 - 100'	A large tree with medium green, compound leaves. Does best on rich, deep, fertile, well-drained soils. Requires full sun. Widely planted and highly regarded for top quality lumber. Excellent food source for wildlife. Yellow fall color. Rapid growth rate.
SHRUBS			
Serviceberry (Juneberry)	12" – 18"	6 - 20'	Medium growth rate (12" – 24" per year). Maturity shrub growth width 6 – 20'. Full sun or partial shade; moist to well-drained, acidic soil. Tolerates dry sites, occasional drought, and alkaline soil. White flower March – June turning to purple berries June – August. Fall color – yellow, orange or red. Good songbird and wildlife food.
Crabapple, Red Splendor	12" – 18"	20 - 25'	Full sun with sandy loam to clay loam soil texture. Should have moderate drainage with dry, moist or wet moisture regime. Growth width 20'. Pink spring flower precedes red fruit from spring through winter. High wildlife rating. Fast growth rate.
Cranberry Bush Viburnum Trilobum	6" - 12"	8 – 12'	Soft maple-like leaves that turn purplish red in fall, and produce white lacecap flowers mid-May to mid-June, followed by bunches of shiny bright red berries by August, which can be harvested in autumn. To avoid poor fruit production plant more than one. Benefits birds, pollinators. Can serve as a screening hedge (plant 4' apart). Sun to part shade. Maturity width up to 10 ft. Soil type clay, loam, sand. Moderate growth rate.
Ninebark, Common	18" – 24"	6-10'	Sun to Part Shade. Growth width 6–12'. Features small pink or white five petaled flowers appearing in dense flat rounded 1-2" dia. spirealike clusters in late spring. Flowers change to drooping clusters of reddish fruit (inflated seed capsules). Shallow lobed leaves up to 3" long that change to an undistinguished yellow in fall. Noted for its exfoliating bark which peels in strips to reveal layers of reddish to light brown inner bark providing winter interest. Valuable nectar source for pollinators.
Dogwood, Red Osier	12" – 18"	6 - 12'	Attractive red stems with white flowers followed by white berries. Growth spread of 6-12'. Red twigs create winter color. Tolerates almost any location, growing in moist soils and full sun. Effective bank cover holds soil well. Excellent wildlife food source and cover. Fast growth rate.
Plum, American	12" - 18"	10 - 30'	Small tree with an $8-25$ ' spread that produces fragrant white flowers in early spring. Bears 1" red which can be used for jellies. Excellent for wildlife food and habitat. Requires well drained soil and a sunny location. Quite drought tolerant.

Root River Soil and Water Conservation District Tree Order – Spring 2022

S
S
Root River est. 1939

Name:	Home Phone
Address:	
	Work Phone
E-Mail:	

CONIFERS — TRANSPLANTS (Tree information can be found on back side.)

Variety	Туре	Min. Size	Price of 25	# of Bundles	Extended Price
Pine, Norway	Tran	6" – 12"	\$35.50		
Pine, White	Seedling	6" – 9"	\$33.50		
Spruce, Colorado	Tran	7" – 15"	\$39.50		
Spruce, Norway	Tran	7" – 15"	\$39.50		
Spruce, White	Seedling	9" – 15"	\$39.50		
Arborvitae, Techny	Tran	6" – 12"	\$39.50		

Total # of Trees (# of bundles x 25)

DECIDUOUS TREES (Tree information can be found on back side.)

Variety	Type	Min. Size	Price of 25	# of Bundles	Extended Price
Oak, Red (Northern)	Seedling	12"-18"	\$ 33.50		
Oak, White	Seedling	12" – 16"	\$ 33.50		
Walnut, Black	Seedling	12" – 18"	\$ 33.50		

Total # of Trees (# of bundles x 25)

SMALL TREES & SHRUBS (Tree information can be found on back side.)

Variety	Type	Min. Size	Price of 25	# of Bundles	Extended Price
Serviceberry	Seedling	12" – 18"	\$ 34.75		
(Juneberry)					
Cranberry Bush	Seedling	6" – 12"	\$ 33.00		
Crabapple, Red Splen-	Seedling	12" – 18"	\$ 34.75		
dor					
Ninebark, Common	Seedling	18" – 24"	\$ 35.50		
Dogwood, Red Osier	Seedling	12" - 18"	\$ 34.75		
Plum, American	Seedling	12" – 18"	\$ 34.75		

Total # of Trees (# of bundles x 25)

MISCELLANEOUS

Item	Price	Qty	Extended Price
Flags, Fluorescent Pink Bundle of 100	\$ 10.29		

Subtotal	<u> </u>	Total # of Tuess
MN State Sales Tax 6.875%		Total # of Trees
Total		

Trees will be sold on a first come first serve bases.

Trees usually arrive mid-April. We will send out a post card or e-mail notifying you of pick-up dates.

Call our office to check on tree availability. (507) 724-5261 ext. 3

Special ordering available upon request.

We purchase good stock, but make no survival guarantee.

Payment is due in full with order. Make checks payable to: Houston County Treasurer

Mail to: Root River SWCD Phone: (507) 724-5261 Ext. 3

805 N. Hwy. 44/76, Suite 1 Caledonia, MN 55921