

Upper Puget Sound

Duane Weston

“With our mixed species planting we started with straight rows of cedar between rows of Douglas fir. The deer would walk down the row and get every tree. Cedar is loved by deer and considered lettuce. What worked for us was to plant a mix of Douglas fir and hemlock, planting two rows of fir and one row of hemlock.



“We would have the planters follow up, planting cedar with 20-foot spacing and trying to plant in the square of the other two species. With 10-foot spacing, we had roughly 260 Douglas fir, 130 hemlocks and 100 cedars. We kept that up for a number of years. I would say the deer only find 30 percent of the cedar, which means 60 to 70 percent of it can grow to maturity, keeping up with the hemlock. It would be nice to have more cedar in the forest than hemlock, but until we have a system that repels deer, we will not have it,” observes Duane Weston.

Duane milked cows while growing up on his family’s small farm and later worked on a wheat ranch in West Spokane County. The experience confirmed that dairy and wheat farming were not for him. He enlisted in the Marine Corp Reserves and served six months active duty in San Diego and Camp Pendleton, California. Farming was in his blood; it just required modifying the genre, and in 1962 Duane graduated with a degree in forest management from University of Washington.

On December 6, 1962, Duane was hired as a reforestation forester at the Pilchuck Tree Farm (PTF) north of Seattle in Arlington, Washington. At the time the farm was just short of 9,000 acres, and now stands as one of Washington State’s largest family-owned tree farms.

The PTF presented a challenge. It was classified High Site Land, meaning it should grow trees in the shortest amount of time. Duane, “It also grew brush very well and all kinds of competing plants that bother conifer trees. My responsibility was to find the formula we needed to succeed in reforesting the plantation. By 1964 we had that figured out. At the end of 1965, when the chief forester left the farm, I was asked to take over the tree farm’s forest management responsibilities.”

In 1980 Duane became general operations manager of the PTF, and by 1983 he was promoted to vice president of Pacific Denkman Company, the corporation name for the PTF. At that time there was a total of 11,500 acres. By 1989 they had increased that to 15,000 acres.

John H. Hauberg, Jr. is the founder of the Pilchuck Tree Farm. He was born in Rock Island, Illinois in 1938 and came west to work on Weyerhaeuser lands in southwest Washington. After serving three years of military duty in WWII, he returned to Washington State with a desire to own his own forestland. He became a board member for Weyerhaeuser and attended the University of Washington earning a degree in forestry, which would serve him well as a forester and board member of Weyerhaeuser.

In 1948, during his senior year of college, John purchased the first 1,100 acres of what became the Pilchuck Tree Farm. The land had been logged the first quarter of the century and had reseeded itself naturally. With the help of consultants, John handled the management duties until he hired his first full-time forester in 1955. Duane was hired in 1962 as a reforestation forester. At that time, 70 percent of the land was covered in hardwoods.

Duane, “When I came in 1962, they were attempting to clear-cut alder and reforest with Douglas fir. They were having very poor success. Initially Douglas fir does not grow very quickly. In three years, the alder would be 12-feet high and the Douglas fir would be 3-feet high.

“My job was to learn how to grow Douglas fir. I started by applying what I learned in college and from planting for Weyerhaeuser along with observing the ways of nature and by the process of trial and error to find solutions. What evolved was to begin with good planting stock, plant on ground that had been properly prepared by broadcast slash burning, dozer clearing, aerial chemical spraying, or a combination of all three, followed by successive treatments of brush control for the next five years so the seedling plantations would be successful.”

In the mid-seventies Duane and his wife Anna Marie purchased a 50-acre parcel of land, where they built a house and live to this day. They quickly had the property designated as forestland and planted trees in 1978. Duane joined the Upper Puget Sound (UPS) chapter to take advantage of the Washington Farm Forestry Association’s educational programs and meet other foresters. He became active on the board and served as UPS president from 1995 to 1996.

Duane has dedicated his life to the art of growing trees. He is currently replanting mixed stands rather than straight Douglas fir. In his opinion, this strategy is healthier for the land and more productive. He offers field trips and forestry tours to encourage the public to experience the Pilchuck Tree Farm.

STILLY VIEW FOREST

Duane Weston, born August, 1938

Anna Marie Weston, born November, 1938

President Upper Puget Sound Chapter, 1991

Washington State Tree Farmer of the Year, 1992

Vice President/General Operations Manager Pilchuck Tree Farm

