

Leveraging field-based research and demonstration to promote forest farming adoption in the pacific northwest

Forest farming systems are common in parts of the eastern U.S. but have yet to become popular in the Pacific Northwest. This is likely due to a greater emphasis placed on timber production and significant opportunity for wild-foraged non-timber forest products in the region. Nonetheless, there is fertile ground for forest farming systems such as log-grown specialty mushrooms and maple syrup production in the lush coastal forests. Forest and farm owners are beginning to explore these practices, either as a hobby or to generate supplemental income. In the last three years, WSU Extension has led or engaged in field-based research examining both systems and, in doing so, created multiple opportunities for hands-on workshops and demonstration. This talk will examine how WSU Extension develops and maintains these opportunities, including funding mechanisms, and the benefits of immersing both Extension agents and landowners in the process of “learning by doing”.



Patrick Shults

Patrick is the WSU Extension Forester for the SW corner of Washington. Since starting in 2018, he has worked to create educational opportunities for small forest landowners in this region through workshops, short courses, field days, research and demonstration, and peer-to-peer learning. Patrick went to Michigan State University, where he earned his B.S. in Forestry. He then went on to earn an M.S. in Forestry (also from MSU) where he conducted research focused on agroforestry and restoring soil with sustainable nutrient cycling. He uses this range of experience and a passion for teaching to develop programming that enables small forest landowners to achieve diverse management objectives.