



P.O. Box 280 | 100547 Airport Road
Scottsbluff, NE 69363-0280

PRSTD MKTG
Postage
PAID
Permit No. 10
PrintWorks

CONTACT US

PHONE
308.632.2749

FAX
308.632.4346

EMAIL
npnrd@npnrd.org

WEB
<https://www.npnrd.org>

OFFICE HOURS

Monday – Thursday
7:30 A.M. – 4:30 P.M.
Friday 7:30 A.M. – 4 P.M.

VISIT US

In person,
NPNRD.ORG, or at



North Platte
NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT

JUNE
2026

IMPORTANT DATES

BOARD MEETINGS

3:00 p.m.

Second Thursday of each Month

GREENHOUSE TOURS:

Call to schedule

NITRATE SAMPLING:

On going

CHEMIGATION INSPECTIONS:

Begins 6/1/26

BOTANY FOR GARDENERS:

6/13/26

10 a.m. - 12 p.m.

At the North Platte NRD

HYDROPONICS WORKSHOP:

7/11/26

10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

At the North Platte NRD

FLORAL DESIGN WORKSHOP:

8/8/26

10 a.m. - 12 p.m.

At the North Platte NRD

ANNUAL WATER EXPO:

8/15/26

9 a.m. - 2 p.m.

At the North Platte NRD

FLOWMETER READS &

MAINTENANCE:

Begins 10/1/26

WATER LEVELS:

Begins 10/15/26

YOUR RESOURCE REPORT

Protecting Lives - Protecting Property - Protecting the Future

Groundwater Recharge: Why It Matters in Western Nebraska



This is a recharge pond project of the North Platte NRD. It gets filled with surface water from the Enterprise Irrigation District, with temporarily leased water rights.

Groundwater is the quiet resource that keeps Western Nebraska running. Most of our homes, farms, and communities rely on the High Plains Aquifer. Because we live in a dry region, the water that soaks into the ground is incredibly important.

Recharge happens when rain or snowmelt sinks into the soil instead of running off. Healthy soil acts like a sponge. It holds water, filters it, and slowly lets it move down toward the aquifer. Native grasses, wetlands, riparian areas (vegetated areas along creeks and rivers), and well managed fields all help this process work the way nature intended.

When soil is compacted or bare, water can't soak in. It runs off quickly, taking soil and nutrients with it. That's lost water we can't get back. Simple land management choices make a big difference: leaving crop residue, planting cover crops, rotating grazing, and keeping perennial vegetation in place all help keep soil open and absorbent.

Timing matters too. In Western Nebraska, late winter and early spring moisture is especially valuable. Plants aren't using much water yet, so more of it can move deeper into the soil profile. Snowmelt that slowly infiltrates can contribute meaningfully to groundwater levels.

As drought cycles become more common, protecting recharge areas becomes a community priority. Landowners, towns,

and conservation districts all play a role. By improving soil health, preserving natural vegetation, and managing water wisely, we help ensure that the aquifer beneath us stays strong.

Summer Lawn Irrigation Tips

With Western Nebraska facing ongoing drought conditions, small changes in how we care for our lawns can make a meaningful difference. These tips help conserve water while keeping the lawn healthy enough to bounce back when conditions improve.

- Water early in the morning (4–9 a.m.) to reduce evaporation and wind loss.
- Water deeply but infrequently to encourage stronger, drought-tolerant roots.
- Raise your mower height to 3–4 inches to shade the soil and retain moisture.
- Check sprinkler systems for leaks or misaligned heads that waste water.
- Prioritize trees and shrubs if water is limited; lawns can safely go dormant.
- Don't worry about brown grass, dormancy is a natural drought response.
- Consider drought-tolerant grasses like buffalograss for long-term water savings.

Meet the Staff

Kaden Vowers

My name is Kaden Vowers. I am 26 years old, and I am the Western Assistant Community Forester with the Nebraska Forest Service. I also help work with the NPNRD tree department throughout the year. As for education, I graduated from high school in Sidney, NE, in 2018, then went on to go to college at Chadron State College, where I earned a Bachelor of Science with a Comprehensive Major in Rangeland Wildlife in 2021. I have worked at the High Plains Ag Lab, Chadron State Park, Conservation Technician with the Game and Parks, Assistant Wrestling Coach for Chadron High/Middle School, and now my current job. Most of my family lives in the panhandle. I am the middle child with two sisters, and I am an uncle of two nephews and two nieces. I enjoy hunting, fishing, arrowhead hunting, cooking, and watching most sports, especially the Huskers.

Meet the Staff

D'Nesha Douglass

Hello, my name is D'Nesha Douglass, and I have been a part of the North Platte Natural Resources District since September 2025 as the Accounts Receivable Clerk. I was born and raised here in Scottsbluff, Nebraska, by my wonderful grandparents, Dane and Annie Kihlthau. Dane grew up on a farm in his early childhood and raised me to have a great appreciation of the agriculture here in Nebraska. I graduated from Scottsbluff High School in 2021, and shortly after began working as the Lead Toddler Teacher at The Learning Tree in Gering, Nebraska, until August of 2025. Now I am currently pursuing my accounting degree at Western Nebraska Community College.

My life outside of work is full of exciting and meaningful experiences that keep me happy and motivated. I have been with my partner, Samuel Sell, for almost 7 years now. He is a plumber, soon to be a journeyman at SELlect Plumbing and Heating. We enjoy spending time watching movies and going on trips together. When I'm not working or spending time with Sam and family, I enjoy gardening, painting, and volunteering for The Rock Church on the worship team and Kidz Rock team

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Roger Eirich—Chairman

Sub-District 4 since 2013

Kent Andreas—Vice Chairman

Sub-District 4 since 2013

Pete Lapaseotes—Secretary

At-Large since 2005

Ryan Reuter—Treasurer

Sub-District 1 since 2018

Lane Darnall—Director

Sub-District 3 since 2023

Dave Deines—Director

Sub-District 3 since 2005

Chuck Henkel—Director

Sub-District 2 since 2013

Dan Weinreis—Director

Sub-District 1 since 2009

Mark Westphal—Director

Sub-District 2 since 2019

NPNRD STAFF

General

Scott Schaneman – General Manager

Travis Preston – Assistant Manager

Paul Safford – Source Water Protection Specialist

Water Department

Craig Uhrig – Water Resources Coordinator

Seth Popp – Water Project Specialist

Jody Fiscus – Water Resources Technician

Lynn Okicki – Water Quality Specialist

Keelie Williamson – Water Quality Specialist

Ethan Woehrlé – Water Resources Technician

Terry Yeager – Water Operator & Resources Technician

Resource Conservation Department

Todd Filipi – Resource Conservation Coordinator

Ken Ridgeway – Resource Conservation Technician

Kaden Vowers—Western Assistant Community Forester

Geographic Info. Systems Department

Lydia Hendrickson – GIS Data Coordinator

Administration Department

Danielle Madden – Office Manager

Renay Smith – Secretary/Accounts Payable Clerk

D'Nesha Douglass—Office Assistant & A/R Clerk

Greenhouse & Special Projects

Kirstee Moore-Schutte – Horticulture & Ed. Splst in Greenhouse

Data Management and Outreach Dept.

Kyle Ann Hopkins – Data & Outreach Coordinator

Paula Kihlthau – Data Specialist

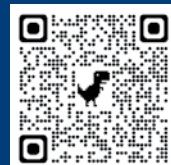
Macy Elliott – Public Communications & Data Specialist

NPNRD & NRCS Clerks

Geri Alworth – NRCS Clerk, Oshkosh

Becky Schaneman – NRCS Clerk, Scottsbluff

Unless specifically noted or credited, articles printed in this newsletter are not copyrighted and may be reproduced without permission if the proper credit is given to the North Platte Natural Resources District as the source of the article. The NPNRD can be reached by phone at (308) 632-2749; by email at melliott@npnrd.org.



The Fire Triangle and Options After a Wildfire

by Todd Filipi, Resource Conservation Coordinator

My heart goes out to everyone affected by the recent wildfires. I hope by the time that this article reaches everyone, that pastures are greening back up, fences and infrastructure are getting rebuilt, and that the rains have returned.

Most folks have heard of the fire triangle or what's sometimes called the combustion triangle. The basis, as most folks know it, is that the basic ingredients to fire are heat, fuel, and oxygen. Combine the three at a certain level, and you get a reaction, aka fire. The name of the game when fighting fire is thus to remove or greatly reduce at least one of the three ingredients to hopefully put the fire out or prevent it from starting to begin with. Most will agree that it is a fairly easy, straightforward concept. I don't disagree. What gives me anxiety, though, is that I fear we oversimplify it a bit too much when we look at both fire prevention and evaluation of a fire after the fact, especially with regard to range management.

Most will agree that management of fuels is probably one of the biggest things we can do as managers when thinking about fire. Remove or reduce fuels, which should equate to a reduced fire risk, correct? Maybe?

I'm here to maybe try to convince you to put some more consideration into it. I hear the story quite a bit; it was a hot, dry summer, so I grazed down the pasture a little more to reduce my fire risk. That has some merit and practicality. The pasture may still have lit, but my fuels were such that it shot quickly across the pasture with such low intensity that it didn't light the fence or the house on fire when it shot past. That's a win in a lot of situations, right?

Let's look at the other side of it, though. You cut the head off of all of your perennial vegetation reducing your fuel loads but in turn you reduced your ground shading causing more heat, more evaporative losses of your moisture, potentially increased your surface air flow thus increasing your oxygen, plus further stressed your pasture and range opening the door for cheat grass and many of the other short window annual grasses that only increase extreme fire potential on the backside. You reduced one prong of the triangle, but at the cost of an increase to

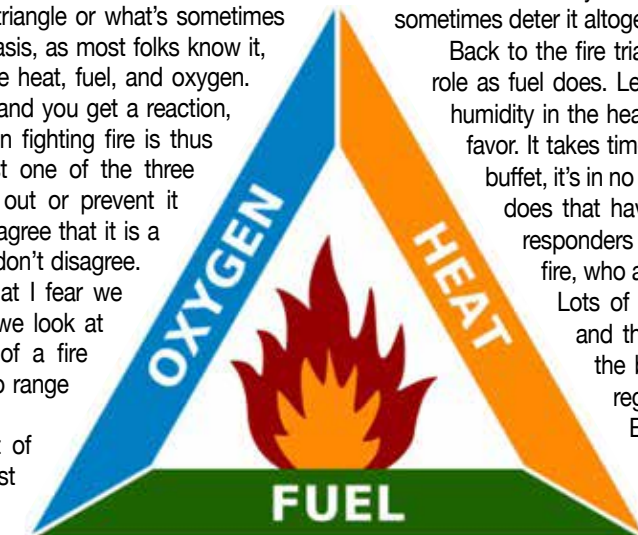
the other two. Did you limit fire or increase its potential? You may say, well, all vegetation can burn, and when it does catch fire, you have a fire with much more intensity. I won't argue that point, but what I will argue is that we can actually drastically slow a fire with more vegetation and sometimes deter it altogether, too.

Back to the fire triangle. Heat and oxygen can play as big a role as fuel does. Less heat, less oxygen, and generally more humidity in the heavy fuel may strike a balance back in your favor. It takes time to burn fuel. When fires break out at the buffet, it's in no hurry to leave until the buffet is gone. What does that have to do with anything? Think about first responders and those brave men and women who fight fire, who are trying to get out in front of these things.

Lots of factors to consider. Deeply rooted plants and those in the best shape are going to have the best vigor and recovery on the back end, regardless of whether they got burnt or not. Broadleaves will generally hold moisture content longer in the season than our annual grasses. Back to reducing heat and oxygen. Not every situation is the same, but I hope people will get out and take a look at the burn scar with

a critical eye. Why did it burn the way it did? I still believe protecting critical infrastructure through fuel removal is a powerful tool, but maybe we can bring multiple different approaches to the table to better equip ourselves going forward. What works at the house may not be the best for what works out in the pasture.

With that said, I know folks have lost an awful lot in these fires and in those of the past. Please keep in mind the NRDs Nebraska Soil and Water Conservation Program (NSWCP) as perhaps a tool to help remediate some of the damage in the name of conservation and rebuilding that which was destroyed. It's a cost share program with a wide array of conservation related practices for things like windbreaks, cross fencing in the name of range health, grass planting assistance for things like burn lines, plus a whole host of water related activities. The program is 50% cost share up to a \$5,000 max per year. Reach out to the NRD or your local NRCS office for more details and assistance.



This is a fire triangle with three components, oxygen, heat, and fuel, that all feed fires.

Native Plants that Attract Butterflies and Birds

If you're looking to add color and wildlife to your yard this summer, native plants are one of the easiest ways to do it. They're adapted to Western Nebraska's climate, support local pollinators, and often require less maintenance than traditional ornamentals. Here are a few great options to consider:

- Purple coneflower – A hardy prairie flower that draws butterflies all summer. In fall, goldfinches flock to the seed heads.

- Showy or common milkweed – Essential for monarch butterflies, providing both nectar and a place for them to lay eggs.

- Serviceberry (Juneberry) – A shrub or small tree with early season berries that

attract robins, cedar waxwings, and other songbirds.

- Little bluestem – A native grass with bluegreen summer color and seeds that birds rely on through winter.

- Blackeyed Susan – Bright, cheerful blooms that feed butterflies and provide late season seeds for birds.

Planting even a small patch of natives can create a mini-habitat that supports pollinators, birds, and the broader ecosystem. It's a simple way to bring more life and beauty into your outdoor space.



This is a monarch butterfly feeding on showy milkweed.

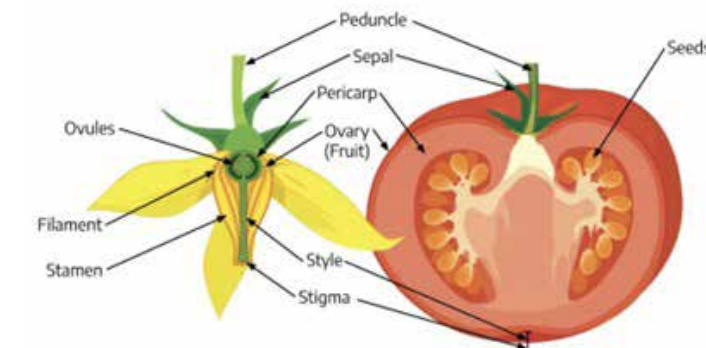
Why Do Plants Flower and Form Fruits?

by Kirstee Moore-Schutte, Horticulture & Education Specialist in Greenhouse

Think about the big picture. Plants flower to produce progenies that are genetically diverse. This will help the species survive when there is a change in the habitat. After flowering, the genetic information for the next generation of plants is neatly packed in the seeds. Protecting these seeds during their development, as well as helping them disperse, is the primary function of fruits.

What is a Fruit?

The botanical definition of fruit is a ripened ovary with enclosed seeds. Fertilized ovules inside the ovary enlarge and develop into seeds, whereas the mature ovary is a fruit.

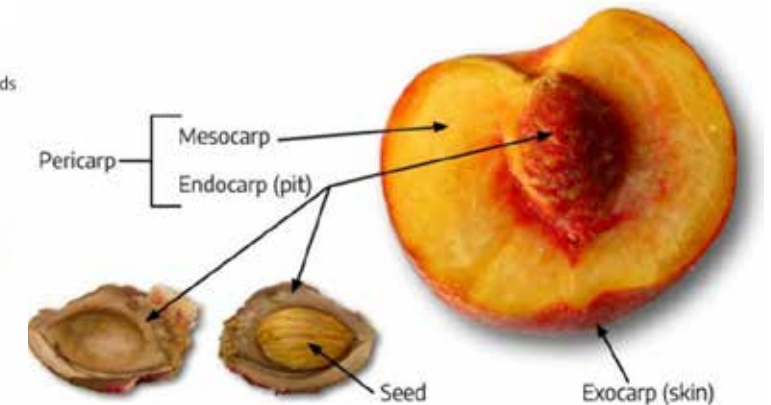


Tomato flower and fruit, © Shutterstock, used with permission. Adapted and labeled by Emily Tepe.

Parts of a Fruit

The ripened ovary wall is called the pericarp. The pericarp of a fleshy fruit has three layers:

1. Exocarp: the outer layer
2. Mesocarp: the middle layer
3. Endocarp: the inner layer



Greenhouse Summer WORKSHOPS

Botany for Gardeners Workshop

The Botany for Gardeners Workshop is on Saturday, June 13th, from 10 AM to 12 PM at the North Platte NRD. The cost of the workshop is \$15. We will be taking a closer look at the flowers in your garden. This is a hands-on workshop where we will dissect flowers to explore their parts, understand how they function, and learn how basic botany can make us better gardeners.

Hydroponics Workshop

The Hydroponics Workshop is on Saturday, July 11th, from 10 AM to 2 PM at the North Platte NRD. Lunch will be provided. The cost of the workshop is \$45 and includes handouts and hands-on instructions. Along with instruction, participants will receive deep water culture hydroponics kits to take home. Registration fee for returning attendees with kits is \$15.

Floral Design Workshop

The Floral Design Workshop is on Saturday, August 8th, from 10 AM to 12 PM at the North Platte NRD. The cost of the workshop is \$15. Explore the art and science of arranging flowers. This workshop will cover basic floral design techniques along with the plant biology behind flower form, structure, and longevity, helping participants create arrangements with both beauty and purpose.

North Platte NRD's Annual Water Expo

Free Event
August 15th, 2026
9:00 am - 2:00 pm

100547 Airport Road
Scottsbluff, NE

Family Friendly day of fun and learning with a Free Lunch provided. For more information call the North Platte NRD at (308) 632-2749 or visit our website at npnrd.org.