

## Carlton Plants Investing in Conservation

Carlton Plants is constantly involved in various conservation projects. As a company we are personally invested in conservation and have enjoyed many diverse benefits from the different trials we've done over the years. The practice of stewardship and sustainability are woven into the culture at Carlton. It benefits the business as well as the community to protect the land, water and beneficial animals, insects and birds.

Probably the most important and oldest conservation project for the nursery is the cover crops. With the annual rainfall average at the nursery between 40 to 50 inches a year, seeing the soil washed away is a major concern. Cover crops are utilized year round in the fields and scion orchards. They stabilize the soil in the winter and throughout the year they loosen compaction, add nutrients, shade out weeds, control nematodes and attract beneficial insects. We use several types of cover crops including sorghum, sudan, buckwheat, mustard, wheat, poco barley, rye and corn. Visually, the favorite cover crops are the fields of sunflowers and marigolds. You won't visit the Carlton office in the summer without encountering a large bouquet of sunflowers on a desk or two.

Seeding the ditches with grass is another stabilization and filtration system. About 12 miles of ditches have been seeded with low-lying grass that requires little mowing. It filters runoff that will ultimately end up in the groundwater reservoirs and local streams.

Reducing our impact through recycling is a way to address waste disposal and save on expenses at the same time. Recycling is taken seriously at the nursery, not only in purchasing but disposing as well. Glass, wood, metals, paper, plastic, poly film, straw, sawdust and even kitchen scraps are recycled. Cull and excess plant material is chipped and added to the compost as well as leaves, winery dross, feedstock, cow and horse manure and cherry pits. Composting at Carlton has evolved over the last decade into a large and valuable asset and resource. It has become a large scale, intensely managed supply of microbe packed compost utilized for soil building and crop enhancement throughout the nursery fields.

Plenty of attention is given to water restoration and wildlife habitat. Several pond banks around the properties are planted with native shrubs and trees to shade and cool the water for the fish and aquatic life downstream.

Raptor poles for perching owls and hawks are placed around the ponds, scion orchards and nursery fields helping to reduce the rodent population and giving the birds a place to rest. Birdhouses for ducks, owls, songbirds and other small birds and a few bat houses are hanging throughout the fields and buildings, helping keep down the insect population.

Another fun and rewarding project is a hedgerow utilizing wildlife attracting plants all from the nursery. Birds and small mammals are provided with shelter and a smorgasbord of berries, seeds and nuts. The hedgerow also acts as a shelterbelt or windbreak for the nursery rows. Plans are to continue building more of these throughout the nursery.

There are many more conservation activities Carlton is involved in now and has planned for the future. Stewardship is an approach to maintaining the ground and the planet but there is an aspect of self-interest as well. It is rewarding to be a part of taking care of the earth for our use and for future generations.