

# Town & Country

Hamilton County Soil & Water Conservation District

Spring 2017

## Native Plant Kit Sale

Native plant kits take the guess work out of creating your native plant garden. Get a selection of tried and true native plants to create your own pollinator, shade, prairie, or rain garden.

### Pollinator Garden Kit:

Columbine  
Skyblue Aster  
Lavendar Hyssop  
Purple Prairie Clover  
Wild Bergamont/Beebalm  
Stiff Goldenrod  
Purple Coneflower  
Golden Alexanders  
Common Milkweed\*  
Prairie Dropseed

### Rain Garden Kit:

Marsh Milkweed\*  
Ohio Goldenrod  
Fox Sedge  
Purple Coneflower  
Blue Flag Iris  
Dense Blazingstar  
Orange Coneflower  
Purple-stemmed Aster  
Prairie Dropseed  
Culver's Root

### Prairie Garden Kit:

Nodding Onion  
Butterflyweed\*  
Smooth Blue Aster  
Purple Coneflower  
Wild Bergamont/Beebalm  
Yellow Coneflower  
Orange Coneflower  
Little Bluestem  
Prairie Dropseed  
Ohio Spiderwort

### Shade Garden Kit:

Columbine  
Inland Sea Oats  
Tall Bellflower  
Broad-leaved Aster  
Bottlebrush Grass  
Sweet Joe Pye Weed  
Blue Stemmed Goldenrod  
Ohio Spiderwort  
Culver's Root  
Golden Alexanders



\*Butterflyweed



Bee Balm/ Bergamot



\*Milkweed



Prairie Dropseed



**\*Monarch Habitat**— The iconic Monarch butterfly is threatened by extinction! We can help by providing the habitat they require to survive. Did you know that monarchs require milkweed species to feed and reproduce? By providing milkweed in our gardens, we can help sustain Monarch populations as they migrate.

### Kit info:

50 plants per kit  
(5 plugs of each species)

\$120.00 per kit + tax

Pick up plant kits in Noblesville  
mid/late May (TBD ~ May 13th).

### How to Order:

Fill out form and submit with check to  
SWCD or order and pay online at  
[www.hamiltonswcd.org](http://www.hamiltonswcd.org).

**Orders & payment due: April 29th**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Quantity:

\_\_\_\_\_ Pollinator

\_\_\_\_\_ Rain Garden

\_\_\_\_\_ Prairie

\_\_\_\_\_ Shade

Total # kits ordered: \_\_\_\_\_

x \$120= \_\_\_\_\_

+ 7% tax = \_\_\_\_\_

Total due = \_\_\_\_\_

**Board of Supervisors**

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*Urban Agriculture Associates*

**Town & Country**

Published quarterly and distributed to landowners, farm operators, teachers, local agencies, public officials, conservation organizations and other interested individuals.

1717 Pleasant St. Suite 100  
 Noblesville, IN 46060  
 317-773-2181  
 soil.water@hamiltoncounty.in.gov

**Know Your Soil Needs**

*Mark McCauley, Resource Conservationist*

It's Spring, Folks ! Even though it may not feel like it on certain days, nevertheless it is here, and with that many of us are beginning to make our garden, lawn, tree maintenance and other outdoor planting plans. While there are several things to consider in any landscape management (location, species, right plant in the right place, etc.) it really all begins with the soil! In fact, soil is vital to all living things, so that makes it a pretty important resource, right? We all depend on the soil and the functions it provides us, whether it be growing our food, feeding livestock, purifying our ground water, growing our lawns and gardens, providing a home for wildlife, etc., so it might behoove us to know a little more about the soil under our feet.

There are actually 28 different soil types identified in the Soil Survey for Hamilton County, including names like Brookston, Miami and Crosby. These can vary in several different characteristics, including slope, drainage class, texture, erodibility, percent sand, silt, and clay, etc. However, in urban developed areas, the original soil features have been altered in many cases through earth moving and reshaping, leaving a soil type that does not match any of the original soils that were in place before man's involvement. There is a name for these soils, and they are called Orthents. No matter where you live, urban or rural, you have some type of soil around you that you may wish to use for some purpose. In most cases, that is for growing things, and growing things need to "eat" and "drink" from the soil in order to thrive, so that makes knowing how well the soil can provide those things important.

One of the simplest things you can do is have your soil tested. Let's say you want to plant a vegetable garden. Well the best time to test AND apply any needed amendments (fertilizer, lime, iron, etc.) would be before you plant, right? When the ground is bare and has no obstacles (plants) to work around, this is a great time to apply and work into the soil any needed amendments. Now we are not the only place that offers a soil testing program, but if you do decide to use our services it is pretty simple. The instructions on how to take a representative soil sample are on our web site <https://www.hamiltonswcd.org/soil-testing.html> Results are usually back from the lab within about a week, so it is a pretty quick turnaround time!

When you do receive your results, they will show your soil's current levels of nutrients, organic matter, pH, and more (depending on which test you have done). They will also be accompanied with recommendations for the amount and type of fertilizer you need for the intended use, instructions on when to apply, and any additional amendments to raise or lower the pH to optimum levels. Tests are currently \$30 for the basic and \$40 for the complete. If you would like to have your soil tested just follow the link above and the instructions listed on our web page. Then drop off your sample(s) at our office at 1717 Pleasant Street, Suite 100, Noblesville, and we will take it from there. Happy Spring Everyone!

**2017 Annual Meeting Update**

The 2017 annual meeting was a success with 100 attendees at the workshop and meeting. Education sessions were given on urban agriculture, pest management in cover crops, seed starting basics, and Indiana plant parasitic nematodes. An overview of 2016 activities, financial report, and staff introductions were all given. John Harbaugh was recognized for hosting the soil judging contest, Charles Spartz was honored with the River Friendly Farmer Award, and Garrick Mallory was recognized as a Friend of Conservation. Ann and Carl Bruhn were recognized as the Outstanding Partners of Urban Conservation. Rodney Rulon, our board chairman, was presented with the Supervisor of the Year Award from the Indiana Conservation Partnership. This honor recognizes one exemplary district supervisor each year. Jared Kakasuleff was re-elected to the board of supervisors by acclamation.



Rodney Rulon is presented with the Supervisor of the Year award by award sponsor Indiana Prairie Farmer's Tom Bechman.

## Private Well Owner Workshop, First of Many

Ginger Davis, District Administrator

The Private Well Owner workshop held on March 22<sup>nd</sup> was an opportunity for concerned well owners to hear about well testing opportunities, basics of wells, the health department role in wells, along with an interesting perspective of wells in public health history. The last speaker of the day, Kevin Spindler, presented the current program that the State is working on to evaluate groundwater chemically. Kevin indicated that 86% of tests performed by the State in the groundwater monitoring program came back with no apparent water quality issues. However, arsenic and nitrates have been found in some Indiana Wells above the Maximum Contaminant Limit set by the United States Environmental Protection Agency. Participants learned that there are many types of wells, and all have a chance to become contaminated if basic maintenance and care are not followed. There are resources available to individuals interested in having their well assessed. The Soil and Water Office is developing a program designed to help people identify what to test for and why. If you are interested in a well assessment, or would like some further information about well ownership, maintenance, or testing contact [ginger.davis@hamiltoncounty.in.gov](mailto:ginger.davis@hamiltoncounty.in.gov).



### Well Owner Webinars:

Is My Water Safe to Drink? - Common Questions about Private Wells <http://privatewellclass.org/safe>

April 24, 2017, 2:00 pm (Can't make it- don't worry it will be recorded)

### Applications now available for Specialty Crop Block Grants

**INDIANAPOLIS (March 23, 2017)** — The Indiana State Department of Agriculture (ISDA) is now accepting applications for the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program, funded by USDA. These grants are available to nonprofits, producers (must impact multiple producers), academic institutions, government agencies and others to fund projects that will enhance the competitiveness of Indiana's specialty crops.



"While many farmers continue to plant traditional row crops, more and more are considering diversification in their operations to increase profitability," said Ted McKinney, ISDA Director. "These funds will create additional growth opportunities for them while strengthening specialty crop production in the state."

According to USDA, specialty crops are fruits and vegetables, dried fruit, tree nuts, horticulture and nursery crops (including floriculture). Eligible plants must be intensively cultivated and used by people for food, medicinal purposes and/or aesthetic gratification. A list of specialty crops is available, along with a companion list of ineligible commodities, on USDA's website.

Applicants are encouraged to develop projects pertaining to the following areas:

- investing in specialty crop research, including research to focus on conservation and environmental outcomes;
- developing new and improved seed varieties and specialty crops;
- pest and disease control;
- increasing child and adult nutrition knowledge and consumption of specialty crops;
- improving efficiency and reducing costs of distribution systems;
- improving the capacity of all entities in the specialty crop distribution chain to comply with the requirements of the Food Safety Modernization Act, for example, by developing "Good Agricultural Practices," "Good Handling Practices," "Good Manufacturing Practices," and in cost-share arrangements for funding audits of such systems for small farmers, packers and processors;
- enhancing food safety and;
- sustainability.

Grant proposals are due May 10, 2017 by 5:00 p.m. (EST). For more information about the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program, please visit [www.in.gov/isda/2474.htm](http://www.in.gov/isda/2474.htm) or contact Hannah Ferguson at [hferguson@isda.in.gov](mailto:hferguson@isda.in.gov) or 317.234.7707.

### 2017 Photo Contest

The SWCD will be holding its fourth annual photo contest this summer. Categories are being finalized and will be announced soon. All contest information, rules, and entry forms will be available on our website [www.hamiltonswcd.org/photo-contest.html](http://www.hamiltonswcd.org/photo-contest.html) by mid-April. Photos will be due July 1st and displayed at the county 4-H Fair. Winning photos in adult and child divisions for each category will be awarded with prizes.

# SUSTAINABILITY WORKSHOP

Saturday, April 29th

Hamilton County 4-H Fairgrounds Exhibition Hall C

2003 Pleasant Street in Noblesville

8:30 am — 12:00 pm

Check in begins at 8:00

\$15 per person

## Sustainable Growth for Backyard Chicken Flocks

### Sessions:

**A Real Life Perspective on Managing a Backyard Flock— 5 Years in the Making**

*Jon Whitesel, Circle City Farm*

**Know your Product: Marketing for Profit**

*Liz Brownlee, Nightfall Farm*

**Resources for Backyard Growers: Connecting Producers  
to Experts & Information**

*Jeffrey Deutschman and Chelsie Lawyer,  
Indiana State Poultry Association*

**HAMILTON COUNTY**  
*Soil & Water*



**CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

**PURDUE**  
EXTENSION

**HAMILTON COUNTY**

### Registration Form:

Name (s): \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Please mail this form and payment to:

Hamilton County SWCD • 1717 Pleasant St. Suite 100 Noblesville, IN 46060

Make checks payable to Hamilton County SWCD.

**Register & pay online at:**

**[www.hamiltonswcd.org](http://www.hamiltonswcd.org)**

**Questions? Call 317-773-2181**

**[claire.lane@hamiltoncounty.in.gov](mailto:claire.lane@hamiltoncounty.in.gov)**

**or [turnerda@purdue.edu](mailto:turnerda@purdue.edu)**

### Community Engagement—Make your own seed bombs

Join the Hamilton County SWCD as we create seed bombs on Monday, May 22<sup>nd</sup> from 4:00 – 5:00 p.m. in the Centennial Pavilion at the Hamilton County 4-H Fairgrounds. Seed bombs can be a strategy to fight the disappearance of bees. Bee populations have been dropping for about a decade. Scientists think there are a number of contributing factors to colony collapse, including the proliferation of certain pesticides, parasites, and even stress. But a decline in natural habitat—along with the loss of bees' preferred wildflowers—is also a big factor. Seed bombs are an easy way to plant wildflowers and help the bees.

The event is free and all ages are welcome. For more information contact Amy Shankland at [amy.shankland@hamiltoncounty.in.gov](mailto:amy.shankland@hamiltoncounty.in.gov).



Seed bombs are created by mixing native wildflower seeds with clay. You can drop seed bombs anywhere you want wildflowers to grow!

### Discounted Rain Barrels Available to Noblesville Residents/Business Owners

Noblesville residents and business owners may purchase substantially discounted rain barrels while supplies last thanks to the Noblesville Clean Storm Water Program. In order to qualify for this program, residents/business must pre-order their barrel at the Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District starting on April 3rd. To complete a pre-order, residents need to 1) provide a City of Noblesville Wastewater Utility bill that shows his/her name and address, 2) take one or more of the online clean water improvement pledges at [www.clearchoicescleanwater.org](http://www.clearchoicescleanwater.org) and show email/print confirmation of the pledge, and 3) pay \$30.00 (cash or check preferred). There is a limit of one rain barrel per address and quantities are limited (75 available).

Participants will need to return to the SWCD office on Friday May 12<sup>th</sup> between 1pm and 6pm to pick up their barrel.



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Pamela Dunn-Louks

SA Certified Arborist

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EM: [pam@in2trees.com](mailto:pam@in2trees.com)

Website: <http://www.in2trees.com>

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*If one person can make a difference,  
think what thousands of us can do, working together!*

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## Urban Conservation Spotlight

Claire Lane, Urban Conservationist



### Grown up Earth Day— Free movie screening on pollinators and habitat

Have you ever noticed that most Earth Day events are for kids? We are excited to partner with our friends at Clear Choices Clean Water to host a special event just for adults to get in the Earth Day spirit this year. Join us for a screening of *Hometown Habitat— Stories of Bringing Nature Home* on April 18th at 6:30pm at Flix Brewhouse in Carmel. Your first round of nectar (beer) is provided. Seating and food/beverage orders begin at 6pm.

Through its profile of 7 hometown habitat heroes, this film will help show how you can help protect pollinators in your own backyard. The narrative thread of this 8-part documentary is provided by renowned biologist Douglas Tallamy, Ph.D. whose research, books and lectures about the use of non-native plants in landscaping sound the alarm about habitat and species loss. Tallamy challenges the notion that humans are here and nature is someplace else. Tallamy says, "It doesn't have to and shouldn't be that way."

This event kicks off CCCW's new pollinator protection campaign where you can pledge to protect or establish pollinator habitat. Seats are limited so register today at <http://tiny.cc/habitatmovie> or check out the events page at [www.hamiltonswcd.org](http://www.hamiltonswcd.org) for more info.

### Rain Barrels Available—Repurposed barrels and urn style

A one inch rain falling on a typical 2,000 square foot house results in 500 gallons of water. Why not capture and hold back some of that water for your irrigation needs? Rain barrels are available for purchase at the SWCD. We have 55 gallon repurposed food grade barrels available for \$75 and 65 gallon urn style barrels with planters on top available for \$110. Rain barrels are great sources of fresh water for your garden, landscaping, or other household chores. One rain barrel can save you about 1,300 gallons of water during peak summer months.



Diverter systems for easy installation of your rain barrel are also available at the SWCD for \$25. Diverters install into your downspout and connect to your barrel allowing a portion of the water running down your downspout to divert into your barrel for storage. When your barrel is full, water keeps moving down the downspout avoiding overflow out of the barrel. Stop by the office today to purchase your rain barrel system. Barrels are available while supplies last.

### Grow Native

Grow Native seeks to promote the use of native plants and discourage the sale or purchase of invasive species. The program has expanded across Indiana this year featuring retailers that sell natives or, more ideally, sell natives and also DO NOT sell any species listed on the Indiana invasive list. Visit [www.GrowNativeIndiana.org](http://www.GrowNativeIndiana.org) to find retailers near you. Don't forget to tell retailers you found them on Grow Native and encourage those not listed to meet the requirements of the program and join.



You can learn more about natives, find Grow Native participants, and register your business at [www.GrowNativeIndiana.org](http://www.GrowNativeIndiana.org).

Other sources of native plants can be found on the "Where to Find Native Plants" page of our website under Urban Conservation.

### Prairie maintenance temporary signage available

When establishing large native plantings and prairie restorations, maintenance is key for a successful project. During early establishment years, and annually after, a seasonal burn or mowing is necessary to encourage new growth and maintain diversity and health in the planting. The SWCD recognized that sometimes, especially with highly visible projects in parks or HOA's, it's hard to communicate that the mowing and other maintenance is necessary and planned for the success of the project. To help educate the public, the SWCD has created temporary signage that is available to SWCD partners on loan for display during maintenance periods. This signage reads: "Restoration Maintenance in Progress: This planting of native prairie flowers and grasses is undergoing seasonal maintenance. Periodically cutting the vegetation helps manage weeds and encourage new growth. With proper care, this planting supports pollinators and enhances our community." The SWCD website is also listed for further information. For info on borrowing these signs during maintenance work, please contact Claire at [Claire.lane@hamiltoncounty.in.gov](mailto:Claire.lane@hamiltoncounty.in.gov).

### Indiana Children and Nature Network (ICAN) Nature Play Days

In a typical week, only 6% of children ages 9-13 plays outside on their own— instead they are spending more than 53 hours using entertainment media. The Indiana Children and Nature Network is once again inviting parks departments, churches, schools, camps, HOA's, and organizations of all types to register outdoor play events held during June 10th and 18th as Nature Play Days. The events are compiled into a statewide list and map where children and families are encouraged to attend the events and kick off summer with nature play. Register your event or find NPD's near you at [www.IndianaChildrenAndNature.org](http://www.IndianaChildrenAndNature.org).



## Urban Agriculture Spotlight

Andy Fritz, *Urban Agriculture Conservationist*  
Cara Culp, *Urban Agriculture Outreach Specialist*



### Hamilton County Garden Network

The inaugural Hamilton County Garden Network meeting was held on Wednesday, February 22 and was a success. Thirty people attended and a variety of gardens were represented—new and established, church, school, and neighborhood. Attendees were asked to introduce themselves and talk a little bit about their garden. SWCD staff gave a presentation about the District and its Urban Agriculture program and then led a group exercise. Garden managers were asked to list some of the things their garden does well and some of the challenges their garden faces. The responses will be used to help select topics and recruit speakers for upcoming HCGN meetings. The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 26 from 6:30pm – 8pm at the 4-H Grounds in the O.V. Winks building. Call (317) 773-2181 for more information.



HCGN kick off attendees complete an exercise about their gardens strengths and challenges.

### Website:

New online resources are available! Community gardeners are invited to check out [www.HamCoGardenNetwork.org](http://www.HamCoGardenNetwork.org). Those interested in learning about backyard gardening, how urban agriculture can help alleviate food insecurity, resources for gardeners, and more are invited to visit [www.HamiltonSWCD.org/UrbanAgriculture](http://www.HamiltonSWCD.org/UrbanAgriculture).

### Where To Donate:

Last fall, Urban Ag staff contacted the managers of 34 food pantries and 1 food bank in Hamilton County. They were each asked if they would like to receive fresh produce donations from the general public (backyard gardeners, etc.). Staff have created a “Where To Donate” directory of the food pantries that responded yes to that question. This directory is organized by name of city or town and lists the names and addresses of the food pantries as well as the days and times that they accept produce donations. We will be publicizing this directory to the general public later this spring as we get closer to the start of the growing season but in the meantime, you can download the directory on our website ([www.HamiltonSWCD.org/FoodPantries](http://www.HamiltonSWCD.org/FoodPantries)) or stop by the SWCD office for printed copies.

### The Farmers Bank

The Farmers Bank branches in Sheridan and Noblesville are partnering this summer with the SWCD for the new Summer Produce Donation Program. Every Monday from June 12 – September 25 (excluding Labor Day), the public is encouraged to drop off produce donations at The Farmers Bank in Sheridan (987 South White Avenue) from 9am – 4:30pm. Every Wednesday from June 14 – September 27, produce donations will be accepted at the Noblesville branch (16940 Clover Road) from 9am – 5pm. At the end of the day, food pantries will collect the donations and distribute them to local families in need. If you’re a backyard gardener who often has extra produce or if you bought too much produce from a farmers market or the grocery store and don’t want it to spoil, this is an easy way you can help food insecure families. Thank you to The Farmers Bank for their willingness to help the food insecure populations of Noblesville and Sheridan!



### Increased Soil Temperatures: How Gardeners Can Respond

Your garden soils are likely the warmest they have been in at least fifteen years based on soil temperature records at three sites surrounding Central Indiana. In fact, those three sites registered a whopping average of 43.2 degrees Fahrenheit in bare soil from November 1, 2016 through March 20, 2017, which is nearly five degrees warmer than the average over the same period. While air temperatures are expected to rise in subsequent winters and because air temperature is directly related to soil temperature (Karmakar, et al. 2016), your garden soil will be affected in several ways. One way is through the increased decomposition of soil organic matter (SOM), an aspect of soil health of particular concern for gardeners as it holds many of the nutrients your plants need.

The necessary process by which organic material is broken down by bacteria and other microorganisms is sped up in warmer temperatures. A warmer winter means that organic matter, mostly made up of carbon, is being lost to carbon dioxide, leaving less organic matter, and therefore carbon, in the soil for your garden during the growing months. Consider the following strategies to mitigate the loss of SOM and improve soil health:

- **Minimize Tilling:** Tilling increases the oxidation of carbon, which makes up the bulk of SOM. “Unfortunately, [tilling] is [...] one of the most abused methods resulting in soil loss, damage to the soil structure and carbon loss through oxidation when used incorrectly.” (Karmakar, et al. 2016) If you must till, limit the depth to just one inch.
- **Employ microorganisms:** The microorganisms found in your compost bin and in compost create stable forms of carbon from your food scraps and other garden/lawn debris and build humus. “Regular applications of compost and/or compost teas will inoculate the soil with beneficial organisms that build humus and other long lasting carbon polymers.” (Karmakar, et al. 2016)
- **Bare Soils Should be Avoided, Plant Vegetation Cover:** Covering your soil, for example, with cover crops, during the winter AND summer is, “the best way to prevent soil and carbon loss.” In addition, “it is not always necessary to eradicate weeds.” Soils that are covered by vegetation remain cooler during the winter.
- **Add Organic Matter:** Adding leaves, coffee grounds, and other mulching material (i.e. from cover crops), is a great way to build SOM especially as temperatures rise.

Visit our website!  
[www.hamiltonswcd.org](http://www.hamiltonswcd.org)

Follow us on Facebook and Twitter  
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### **Upcoming Events & Deadlines**

- April 3<sup>rd</sup>—Noblesville Discounted Rain Barrel Orders Begin (pg 5), Public Rain Barrel Sales Begin (pg 6)
- April 4<sup>th</sup>—Heartland Backyard Conservation Cost Share Apps Due
- April 18<sup>th</sup>—Hometown Habitat Screening Event (pg 6)
- April 22<sup>nd</sup>— Mission Monarch—Celebrate Earth Day with us at Cool Creek Nature Center  
1-4pm, free milkweed plants, talks, hikes, activities, games, and crafts! Free fun for all ages!
- April 26<sup>th</sup>— Hamilton County Garden Network Meeting (pg 7)
- April 29<sup>th</sup>— Native Plant Sale Orders Due (pg 1)
- April 29<sup>th</sup>— Sustainability Workshop—Sustainable Growth for Backyard Chicken Flocks (pg 4)
- May 12<sup>th</sup>— Noblesville Rain Barrel/Plant Sale Pick Up (to be confirmed)
- June 10<sup>th</sup>- 18<sup>th</sup>— Indiana Children and Nature Network Nature Play Days
- July 1<sup>st</sup>— Photo Contest submissions due

Visit the events page of our website for the most current workshop and event information. [www.hamiltonswcd.org](http://www.hamiltonswcd.org)  
Follow us on Facebook and Twitter as well!

If you wish to be removed from our distribution list, to make a name or address change, or to switch to email newsletters, please call 317-773-2181 or email [soil.water@hamiltoncounty.in.gov](mailto:soil.water@hamiltoncounty.in.gov).

**All programs and services of the Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis without regard to race, color, religion, sex, marital status or disability.**