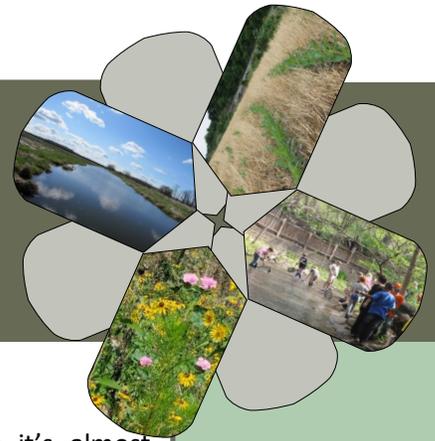


Conservation Kaleidoscope

Volume 28, Issue 2

March/April 2026



Understanding Sun & Soil



Spring is just around the corner, which means it's almost planting season! We are shoulders deep in planning our gardens and choosing what native plants we're going to add this year and if we're going to get one of the native plant kits available this year. When scoping out this year's list, we noticed the growers made slight changes on the soil and sun requirements. This got us thinking: does everyone understand what some of these terms mean?

For your plants to thrive, it is important to pay attention to these requirements when choosing species for your garden and landscape. Let's start with sunlight, which may be more familiar. Plant descriptions typically include three categories:

full sun, part sun or shade, and shade. **Full sun** means the plants need at least six hours of direct sunlight. **Part sun or shade** mean they need about three to six hours, and **shade** means they need less than three hours of sunlight.

Less familiar are the soil terms you might see: xeric, mesic, and hydric.

- **Xeric:** Xeric is the term for dry soils. These soils drain quickly, do not hold moisture well and have more sand content.
- **Mesic:** Mesic soil is more moderate/medium. These have the ideal balance of water and air. They tend to be loamy with higher organic matter content than xeric. Mesic soils retain more moisture but are well-drained so they do not stay sippy.
- **Hydric:** Hydric soils are those that are very wet. They have been formed due to long periods of saturation and flooding causing less air pockets in the soil. They often have a dark top layer with gray/blue layers underneath, and rusty orange spots from mineral oxidation.



Not sure what type of soil you have? Try the simple Squeeze Ball Test. To do this, pick up a handful of moist but not soaking soil and squeeze it firmly into a ball.

- **Sandy, Xeric Soil:** The ball falls apart immediately when you open your hand.
- **Loamy/Mesic Soil:** The ball holds its shape but crumbles easily when poked.
- **Clay/Hydric Soil:** The ball is tight and sticky, keeping its shape even when poked or bounced.

From trees to perennials, choosing the right location is key to getting a long-living, thriving landscape, so take these facts into consideration! And, of course, get in touch if you have any questions or would like more information!



Protecting Soil
Preserving Water
Serving Community

2903 Gary Drive
Plymouth, IN 46563

www.stjosephswcd.org

info@stjosephswcd.org

(574) 936-2024 ext. 4

66th Annual Meeting

Thank you to everyone that braved the cold weather on Friday, January 30th, for our 66th Annual Meeting! It was a fantastic opportunity to connect and share our 2025 achievements.

The business meeting saw the election of our newest supervisor, Jacob Hogan. Jacob is a resident of North Liberty and works as an adviser and broker for Geswein Farm and Land. He is passionate about conservation and places great value on regenerative agriculture and sustainable farming practices. We welcome him to the board!

We also presented two conservation awards this year. The SWCD Friend of Wildlife Award went to Doug Germann for the extensive invasive species removal he has worked on, both at his home property and in public spaces, making a great impact on restoring native biodiversity and reestablishing natural food webs. The SWCD Educator of the Year Award went to Meridith Mansfield for her commitment to inspiring the next generation of conservationists by developing agriculture and natural resource programs and weaving nature into her teaching whenever she can. We are honored to have worked with Doug and Meridith and thank them for all of their conservation efforts.

Following another fabulous Polish dinner from St. Hedwig's came our keynote speaker, Johnny Klemme. Johnny is a farmland real estate advisor, auctioneer, and co-owner of Geswein Farm and Land. He was a producer for the LAND VALUES documentary which showcases the Big Pine Creek Watershed in west central Indiana. He talked about the truly inspiring conservation work done in the Big Pine Creek Watershed and showed the documentary.

Looking ahead, we're excited to continue working together toward our shared goals of conservation. Stay tuned for upcoming initiatives and opportunities to get involved!



Marty Lappin & Doug Germann



Nathaniel Ness & Meridith Mansfield



Johnny Klemme



Jacob Hogan & Andy Rutten



St. Joe County SWCD Board Of Supervisors
Chris, Marty, Nathaniel, Ryan & Jacob



St. Joe County SWCD Staff
Sarah, Misty & Shelley



Save the Date!
67th Annual Meeting
February 5, 2027



LAND VALUES
www.whitecountyswcd.com/big-pine-watershed



Growing Summit

The Unity Garden's annual Growing Summit is just around the corner! Every year, they put together a full day of *free* educational classes, including one track fully devoted to kids. This year's tracks: Indoor and Outdoor Gardening, Cooking and Food Prep, Naturalists, and Native Plants.

We are excited to announce that this year St. Joseph County SWCD is joining forces with the Unity Gardens to bring a SCRAP (St. Joseph County Regenerative Ag Partnership) track to the Growing Summit! These four classes will take you beyond the basics for small farms and backyard gardens.

- Tools of the Trade for Better Veggies - Terri Theisen, Theisen Consulting Horticulturist, Farmer, Gardener
- Helping Backyard Growers and Small Farms Every Step of the Way - Sarah Longenecker, St. Joseph County SWCD County Conservationist
- Promoting Beneficial Insects & Their Role in Pest Management and the Farm & Garden - Laura Ingwell, Purdue University Associate Professor of Entomology
- Talking Crap with Tanvi - Tanvi Lad, Small Farm Conservationist

The Growing Summit has something for everyone, no matter what your interest is! Join us on March 14th for a great day of learning and networking!

Native Plant Sale

We're thrilled to announce that our Native Plant Sale is live! We've got five kits available this season - Basic Prairie Garden, Monarch Garden, Prairie Grass, Rain Garden, and Shade Garden. This spring they are available for \$180.00 (plus tax) per kit. Each kit has 50 plugs and will cover about 100 square feet. Orders must be placed by March 31st, and will be ready for pick up during the first week of June. You can find the order form on our website. Contact us with any questions!

www.StJosephSWCD.org/native-plant-kits



Help us fill our van
again!



Change Service Requested

**St. Joseph County Soil
& Water Conservation
Partnership**

**St. Joseph County SWCD
Partnership Staff**

Sarah Longenecker, SWCD
Misty Sorchevich, SWCD
Shelley Chaffee, SWCD
Andrea Baker NRCS

SWCD Supervisors:

Chris Matthys, Chairman
Nathaniel Ness, Vice Chairman
Marty Lappin
Ryan Lee
Jacob Hogan

SWCD Associate Supervisors:

John Dooms
Dave Vandewalle
Chuck Lehman
Randy Matthys
Richard Schmidt
Dave Straughn
Dru Wrasse
Mike Burkholder
Scott Laidig

SWCD Honorary Members:

Keith Lineback

Farm Service Agency Staff

Gideon Nobbe, CED
Devan Harrell
Diane Stichter
Michael Cuff

Calendar

March

14th - Unity Gardens Growing Summit
17th - Board Meeting

April

3rd - Good Friday, No SWCD Staff
10th-12th - Ag Days
21st - Board Meeting



Growing Summit 2025

Visit our website & watch Facebook for info on events and more!



Contact us to choose to get your
newsletter by email!
Use the QR code to email us at
info@stjosephswcd.org.

