



St. Joseph
County
Soil & Water
Conservation
District



Today's Visions for Tomorrow's Future

September/October 2019
Volume 21, Issue 5

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What's Going On...

Events hosted by the St. Joseph County SWCD
& Our Partners in Conservation

September

2 - **Labor Day** - Office closed

5 - **Cover Crop Workshop**,
Location: Conservation Clubhouse, 720 Water St., Plymouth, IN 46563.
Time: 10:00 am - 4:00 pm, registration starts at 9:30am. PARP credit available (\$10). Lunch provided. No cost to register but you must contact the Marshall County SWCD at (574) 936-2024 Ext. 3 by August 30th to register. Key note speaker is Dan Perkins.

17 - **Monthly Board Meeting** - Open to the Public 7:00 PM LOCATION: Alligator Room Centre Township Library at Kern and Miami Roads in South Bend - 1150 Kern Road South Bend.

19 - **Women's Learning Circle**, 9:00 am - 3:00 pm. Location TBA. Contact our office for more details and to register.

October

14 - **Columbus Day** - NRCS & FSA Closed. SWCD staff will be in the office normal hours.

15 - **Monthly Board Meeting** - Open to the Public 7:00 PM LOCATION: Alligator Room Centre Township Library at Kern and Miami Roads in South Bend - 1150 Kern Road South Bend.

Follow us on Facebook to get information on all upcoming events and programs.

Environmental Education Stations

St. Joseph County SWCD has had a busy summer providing Environmental Education Stations at events around the county. Thanks to programs like South Bend's Boomin' Tour Events, we have been able to share information on topics like pollinators, soils, composting, and more. Whether kids were pretending to be bees pollinating a vegetable garden or adults were learning about soil health, the SWCD was excited to help people of all ages gain knowledge about their natural resources. These programs have allowed us to connect with community members that we have not interacted with as often and those in our community who never even heard of the SWCD. These outreach events allow us to share our knowledge and resources which then allows our county to get more conservation on the ground, especially in our urban areas.



Book your School Program Today!

Did you know the Soil and Water Conservation District can come to you? We offer a variety of programs for classrooms that align with Indiana State Standards and introduce STEM and natural resources to your students. Each program provided by our environmental education coordinator focuses on a topic of your choice and features an engaging activity for students. We book up to six months in advance and are currently taking requests for the 2019-2020 school year. Programs can be one-day or a series of lessons. Possible topics include

watersheds, soils, wildlife, composting, pollinators, invasive species, and more! Make sure you are subscribed to our education email list for the latest environmental education opportunities. To request a program, visit our education page on our website to fill out a program request form:

<https://www.stjosephswcd.org/education>

You can also contact us by the email or phone:

Jane.sablich@in.nacdnet.net

(574)936-2024 ext. 4

*Is your organization not a school but you are interested in scheduling a lesson or community program? We do that too! Call or email for more information.

Women's Learning Circle

Join the St Joseph, Marshall & Elkhart NRCS & SWCD's for our Women's Learning Circle on September 19, 2019 from 9:00 am - 3:00 pm. Location TBA. Forestry Topics to Include; Forestry Management, Invasive Species, and Tree ID. **Registration Deadline is September 13, 2019.** Contact the St Joseph County office for more details and to register.

"This program is an excellent way for us to connect with women to share information about how they can influence conservation decisions that affect their land and let them know about the services and financial assistance we provide." Jane Hardisty, Retired Indiana State Conservationist, USDA-NRCS.

Farm Conservation on the Rise in Indiana

Deborah Knepp, USDA NRCS District Conservationist

(June 11, 2019) — According to a recent survey, Indiana farmers planted more than 1 million acres of cover crops in 2018, up 32,000 acres from the previous year.

Cover crops are known for their environmental benefits and, with the exception of corn and soybeans, are planted on more acres than any other commodity crop in Indiana. They are typically planted in the fall after harvest and designed to keep roots in the ground throughout the winter, which improves soil health and helps filter water off of the farm.

As a result of the cover crops planted last year, it is estimated that 1.3 million tons of sediment was kept out of Indiana's waterways, along with 3.2 million pounds of nitrogen and 1.6 million pounds of phosphorus. That's enough sediment to fill more than 350 Olympic-size swimming pools.

"I'm excited to see this increase in spite of cold wet fall weather that delayed harvest and limited the planting and growth of cover crops in many parts of state," said Jerry Raynor, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service State Conservationist. "We are seeing more farmers using cover crops because they build healthy and productive soils that help with weed suppression, improve water infiltration, cycle nutrients and increase soil organic matter."

This visual survey comes on the heels of the recently released 2017 USDA Census of Agriculture, which indicated that farm conservation is on the rise in the U.S.

The census revealed that, in addition to more cover crops planted, Indiana farmers also shifted nearly 1 million acres from conventional tillage to conservation tillage, up

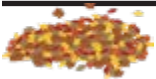


33% from the last time the census was conducted in 2012.

"If you look at where we were a decade ago, major progress has been made," said Indiana State Department of Agriculture Director Bruce Kettler. "Farmers are investing more in conservation, which is particularly significant considering where the farm economy has been for the past five years."

Even with the less than ideal weather, St Joseph County showed an increase (19%) in acres of cover crops planted from 2017 to 2018. 2017 had an estimated 24,500 acres whereas in 2018 there was an estimated 53,500 acres of cover crops planted.

The cover crop transect is a visual survey of cropland in the state. It's conducted every year in the fall by members of the Indiana Conservation Partnership, including the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Indiana State Department of Agriculture, Indiana's Soil and Water Conservation Districts and Purdue Extension, as well as Earth Team volunteers, to show a more complete story of the state's conservation efforts. Visit www.isda.in.gov to see the results from the survey.



What should you do with all your leaves this fall?



Rake, rake, repeat! That activity seems to sum up many homeowners' autumn weekends, and just when you think you're off leaf duty for the day, a passing breeze can scatter your piles and shake your trees enough to unleash a whole new carpet to deal with. No wonder the thought of burning leaves is so tempting! Before you set fall foliage on fire, it's important to understand the risks, and rules of the practice.

♦ **It might be banned where you live.** Check the fire code for your municipality for any restrictions relevant to starting outdoor fires. Many cities permit closed burning (confined to a structure such as a stove or a chimney) but ban open burning (such as leaf burning in an exposed heap on the ground), which adds to air pollution and can potentially turn into an uncontrollable fire.

♦ **It can be a hazard to the environment and to your health.** Burning leaves unleashes hydrocarbons, nitrogen oxide, and carbon monoxide into the air. The smoke released by leaves during burning can also irritate your eyes, nose, and throat, and the carbon monoxide kicked up by burning leaves and remaining embers can, if you receive enough exposure, reduce the amount of oxygen in your blood and lungs, leading to coughing, wheezing, and other respiratory conditions.

Use what nature gives you for free.

One of the very best sources of organic matter is autumn leaves. Leaves are packed with trace minerals that trees draw up from deep in the soil. When added to your garden, leaves feed earthworms and beneficial microbes. They lighten heavy soils and help sandy soils

Continued from page 2...

retain moisture. They make an attractive mulch in the flower garden. They're a fabulous source of carbon to balance the nitrogen in your compost pile. And they insulate tender plants from cold.

Using Shredded Leaves

If you have an abundant source of leaves in the fall, shred them. Your garden will benefit in a big way. Here how to use them:

- ◆ Insulate Tender Plants: A 6-inch blanket of leaves protects tender plants from winter wind and cold. Cover cold-hardy vegetables—such as carrots, kale, leeks and beets—and you'll be able to harvest them all winter.
- ◆ Boost Your Compost Pile: Carbon-rich leaves balance high-nitrogen compost ingredients such as fresh grass clippings.
- ◆ Improve Your Soil: Mix shredded leaves right into your garden. Next spring, your soil will be teeming with earthworms and other beneficial organisms.
- ◆ Make "Leaf Mold": Simply rake the leaves into a big pile. If you shred them, they will decompose faster, but you can still make leaf mold without shredding. After one to three years, fungus will have broken the leaves down to a special compost that smells like a

walk through the woods. Leaf mold is high in calcium and magnesium and retains three to five times its weight in water—rivaling peat moss.

Think Before You Shred

- ◆ Be careful with some kinds of leaves. Walnut, eucalyptus and camphor laurel leaves contain substances that inhibit plant growth. It's best to compost these leaves before using them in your garden
- ◆ Be sure to chop or shred leaves before using them as mulch. Whole leaves can form a mat that water can't penetrate.
- ◆ If you add shredded leaves right to the soil, add some slow-release nitrogen fertilizers to help the leaves decompose and to ensure that soil microbes don't use all of the available nitrogen.

Final Thoughts

No matter what you decide to do with your leaves, make sure to follow all city or county ordinances, leaf pick up schedules and rules. If you are simply raking them to the curb for pick up, make sure not to cover storm drains or fire hydrants. See the St. Joseph County website for more details on curbside pickup and leaf burning at <http://sjclp.com/index.php>

Sources: <https://www.bobvila.com/articles/burning-leaves/>
& <https://www.gardeners.com/how-to/put-fall-leaves-to-work/5402.html>



NRCS, UC Davis Announce Release of SoilWeb 2.0 App Update

By Deborah Knepp – USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the University of California at Davis Soil Resource Laboratory today announced the release of the iOS and Android SoilWeb app, version 2.0. The app now has a cleaner and more modern interface with GPS-location-based links to access detailed digital soil survey data (SSURGO) published by the NRCS for most of the United States. The newly updated SoilWeb smartphone application is available as a free download on Google Play and Apple App Store.

"SoilWeb reached a new milestone this year when it was integrated with Google Maps and designed to scale across any device, desktop, tablet or smart phone," said NRCS Chief Matthew Lohr. "SoilWeb app is a portable interface to authoritative digital soil survey data from NRCS, giving users access to practical detailed scientific soil information on the go."

The SoilWeb app provides users with information relating to soil types that are associated with their location. The images are then linked to information about the different types of soil profiles, soil taxonomy, land classification, hydraulic and erosion ratings and soil suitability ratings. Identifying soil types is important to understanding land for agricultural production purposes and determining flooding frequencies and suitable locations for roads or septic tanks. SoilWeb provides gardeners, landscapers and realtors with information relating to soil types and how to optimally use the soil. Although soil survey information can be used for general

farm, local, and wider area planning, a professional onsite evaluation may be needed to supplement this information in some cases.

"SoilWeb is a great way to understand the landscape you live in," said Anthony O'Geen, UC Davis Professor and Cooperative Extension Specialist in the Department of Land, Air and Water Resources. "Producing food, constructing structures and maintaining landscapes all depend on this little understood, but critical outermost layer of the earth's crust, the soil."

The app gives access to valuable scientific data through modern technology. All the soil information in SoilWeb was collected from the National Cooperative Soil Survey, organized by the NRCS, and accesses soil survey information the agency has been collecting since the 1890s. The resulting database, the largest such in the world, makes it possible for soil scientists to generate specialized maps using computer-aided techniques.

O'Geen developed SoilWeb with NRCS Soil Scientist Dylan Beaudette, in 2010 when Beaudette was a Ph.D. student at UC Davis. The app was a popular download, but by 2017 was no longer in compliance with requirements set by Apple and Google. Frequent users of SoilWeb had to rely on the web-based version from 2017 to June 2019. Any users with the older version on their phone can do a simple update to access the newest version. The app is a product of a 14-year partnership between NRCS and UC Davis College of Land, Air and Water Resources.



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St. Joseph County Soil And Water Conservation Partnership

Justin Daube Named 2019 River Friendly Farmer

Justin Daube farms in the Kankakee River Watershed producing corn and soybeans. Daube has filter strips installed and practices no-till on his farmland, as well as wetland preservation. He states his biggest reason for doing conservation practices is he doesn't want his farm (soil and nutrients) to go down the river. He loves the outdoors and wants to protect it not only for himself to enjoy but for his kids and their future. He also wants to save money by keeping his nutrients on his farmland and not letting it wash away down river. Daube likes to promote conservation practices and soil health to his neighbors. Congratulations to Justin Daube for being named the 2019 River Friendly Farmer for St. Joseph County.



Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) Supervisors:

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Dave Vandewalle
Dave Craft

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Devan Herrell
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SWCD Honorary Members:

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Jerry Knepp
Keith Lineback
William Millar



Scan me to go Green!

Are you ready to "GO GREEN" and help us save money and natural resources? We can deliver your "Conservation Kaleidoscope" newsletter by email ... Give us a call or send us an email and tell us you'd like to "GO GREEN" THANK YOU!!!!