

Conservation Kaleidoscope



Volume 27, Issue 5

September/October 2025

2025 Meet Your Farmer

The bright blue sky and wispy clouds over Ryan Lee's farm made for a beautiful setting for our 2025 *Meet Your Farmer* gathering.

Legislators, partners in conservation, farmers, and engaged community members joined the board and staff around the table to eat and converse. As guests finished their meals, Sarah Longenecker, County Conservationist, began a discussion about soil health. She talked about how cover crops and other conservation practices benefit soil health and impact water quality. She followed this with demonstrations on soil health, with help from our guests.



Next Sarah interviewed our host farmer, Ryan Lee. He talked about his journey at Lee's Edible Acres, and the practices he employs to build and maintain soil health. Guests had the opportunity to ask questions. The discussions were educational and inspiring.



After the interview, Ryan led guests on a tour of his farm. We visited his high tunnels, saw where his chickens roam, and walked along rows and rows of vegetables. Ryan generously gave information about planting and harvesting, how he handles markets and sales, and about his composting venture.



We are excited that once again we were able to bring a diverse group of engaged citizens together to commune and discuss. Everyone walked away understanding more about soil health and its importance, and with a stronger sense of farming and the community.



Thank you to the legislators, partners, community members, and most of all, Ryan Lee, for an inspirational gathering at the farm!

Meet Your Farmer began in 2024 in an effort to raise awareness about the importance of soil health and water quality. The SWCD hosts the evening in conjunction with a local farmer who utilizes conservation on their land. The gathering is open to all farmers, legislators, partners in conservation, and every other community member. We gather around the table to talk about how we all benefit from regenerative agriculture and how each of us can contribute to protecting our natural resources. We hope you will join us in 2026!



**Today's Visions for
Tomorrow's Future**

**2903 Gary Drive
Plymouth, IN 46563**

www.stjosephswcd.org

info@stjosephswcd.org

(574) 936-2024 ext. 4

Conserve Your Land: Pollinator Plantings

Wildflowers are not only a beautiful addition to your land, but they can be extremely beneficial to ecologically and economically important pollinator species. Colorful flowers that bloom in the spring, summer and fall offer both attractive landscapes and vital food resources for a variety of pollinators.

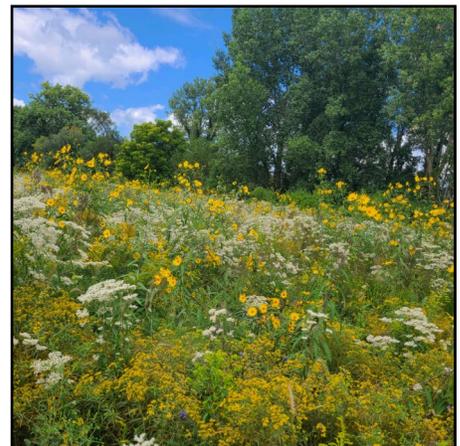
Pollinators are essential for plant reproduction, transferring pollen from one plant to another and allowing fruits and vegetables to continue to thrive for us to eat. When you think of pollinators, you might think of just honeybees – and while they're crucial to pollination, there are more species of pollinators to take into account. Bees, butterflies, moths, bats, birds, beetles and more are to be considered when adding a pollinator planting to your land.

Pollinator plantings, also called pollinator gardens or plots, are a mix of native wildflowers and native grasses, including wildflowers that bloom throughout the year, from early spring thaw to the first frosts of fall, which provide more available pollen and nectar year-round. Incorporating flowers of different shapes, colors and heights will attract a variety of pollinators to the plot. And don't forget to incorporate some short, native grasses. Native grasses provide places for species to overwinter, solitary bees to nest, and can help to structurally support the wildflowers in the plantings. Pollinator plantings can be placed nearly anywhere – suitable locations may include old fields, marginal areas, field borders, pivot corners, urban lots and more.

Pollinator plantings are low maintenance plantings, but they are not no maintenance plantings. It's important to ensure that pollinator plantings maintain cover throughout the year– meaning no mowing for cosmetic purpose (i.e. lawn). It's important to keep the plants vital and untouched, even in the winter. During cooler months, pollinator plantings provide cover, food sources and hibernation for wildlife and insects. Depending on how the plants grow, the density of the planting, and the number of invasive species present, it may be necessary to manage the vegetation periodically. The timing and intensity of that disturbance is critical, and a technical expert can assist with planning that management.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has technical experts who can help you plan your pollinator planting. From choosing the location to selecting the wildflower mix, NRCS conservationists are there through every step of the way. NRCS also offers financial assistance through programs like the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, which can help offset the cost of implementing a pollinator planting. Implementing a pollinator planting can have a lasting positive effect on your land, and we can help get you there. For more information, contact the office. We'd be happy to help you get started.

Properties in St. Joseph County with Pollinator Plantings





Calling All **Urban & Small Farmers!** Join us for **Soil Health Saturday!** **November 8, 2025**

3rd Annual **Soil Health Summit**

9 am to 11:30 am

The morning session will offer two educational tracts—one beginner and one advanced. Topics include soil health basics, composting and pest management.

Growing Connections

Networking Event

12 pm to 2 pm

During the afternoon we will host our second farmer networking to give local producers the opportunity to build relationships and explore market avenues.

Throughout the day there will also be opportunity to visit with organizations and businesses to see what they have to offer.

This free event is geared toward **urban and small farmers**. It will be at the St. Joseph Public Library Community Learning Center (305 S. Main Street) from 9 am to 2 pm. Register on our website.



<https://www.stjosephswcd.org/events/2025-soil-health-summit>.



Growing Connections lunch provided by FARMWISE.



How much of our stormwater can trees handle?

50%

of stormwater was infiltrated into the ground before the landscape was developed.

15%

of stormwater now soaks into the ground due to neighborhoods, shops, etc.

Indiana.ClearChoicesCleanWater.org



Trees are an important element in keeping our water clean. Have you checked out the Indiana Clear Choices Clean Water website? There are lots of ideas on things each of us can do to protect our water!

Statewide Weed Wrangle®!

On Saturday, October 11th, Soil & Water Conservation Districts, CISMAs and other organizations will be participating in Weed Wrangles® all over Indiana.

SMIPP (St. Joseph/Marshall Counties Invasive Plant Partnership) will be hosting a Weed Wrangle too! The location has not been decided so follow our Facebook page or sign up for our newsletter for updates!
<https://www.stjosephswcd.org/invasive-species>



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
Marty Lappin, Vice Chairman
Joe Gregory
Ryan Lee
Nathaniel Ness

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

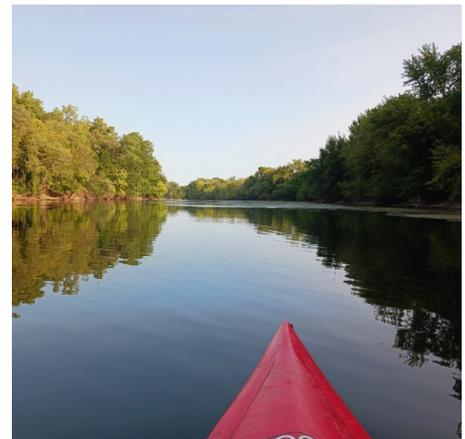
Calendar

September

- 1st - Labor Day - Office Closed
- 9th - SCRAP Farm Tour
- 16th - Board Meeting
- 27th - Wild Ones Plant Sale

October

- 11th - Statewide Weed Wrangle®
- 13th - Columbus Day - Office Closed
- 21st - Board Meeting



High School Canoe Trip
September 2024

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.

