

Conservation Kaleidoscope

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Making the Connections

The plants and animals native to our county play important roles in the ecosystem. From cleaning the air and water, to building top soil, to pollinating our crops, all of them are valuable to the well-being of people too. But when we walk outside of our homes, we see the impact humans have made on the environment. Buildings, roads, and other man-made structures have impacted the ecosystems our plants and animals have evolved to use. In some instances, the native species have been able to adapt to the changes. Many have not, however, and we continue to expand.



For wildlife, one of the biggest problems human activities causes is habitat fragmentation. Fragmentation occurs when some habitat is destroyed, leaving small patches. While this can happen naturally through events like fires, fragments occur most commonly due to human impact. Shrinking habitats cause decline in wildlife species. From butterflies to beavers, fragmentation impacts food, shelter, and nesting habitat for many species.

We can, however, have a positive impact. Intentionally planting native plants is key to the survival of our native wildlife. On a larger scale, windbreaks, field borders and riparian buffers create critical wildlife corridors which connect larger habitats, and also serve to protect our waterways.



In urban areas, where there is more development, the fragments are smaller. But we can all help by creating and encouraging the use of native plants to create stepping stones for our wildlife. More small habitats of native plantings throughout an urban area help create the connectivity our native wildlife needs to maintain healthier populations. Think about those migrating birds who can only fly so far before they need to rest. Native wildflowers and grasses not only benefit our wildlife and pollinators, but also add interest to our landscapes. Encourage your neighborhoods to incorporate more native species into their plantings. Support efforts to increase the tree canopy, using native plants of course! And support the nature preserves in St. Joseph County, like Lydick Bog and Chamberlain Lake.



If you're unsure about what to plant, contact us! We offer free technical assistance to help you get started.



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

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Meet Your Farmer 2025



The St. Joseph County Soil & Water Conservation District is pleased to bring the community to the farmer for our second annual Meet Your Farmer gathering!

Last year we gathered at Associate Supervisor Scott Laidig's farm to learn more about cover crops and Scott's soil health journey at his large, traditional farm.

This year we will be gathering at Supervisor Ryan Lee's farm, Lee's Edible Acres. Ryan has a small farm and market stand. Come see his operation and how he has used cover crops and other conservation practices to build his soil health.

Meet Your Farmer 2025 will be held on Wednesday, July 10th., from 5:30 to 7:30, and dinner is provided. Space is limited, so registration is required.
<https://www.stjosephswcd.org/calendar>



You're invited!

*Retirement
Open House*

Let's celebrate the truly irreplaceable

Deb Knepp

Wednesday, May 7, 2025
 2 pm to 6 pm
 Lakeville Community Center
 214 W. Patterson Street
 Lakeville, IN 46536
 Light refreshments provided.

Natural Resources Day! at the St. Joseph County 4-H Fair

**Join us as we celebrate the
natural resources of St. Joseph
County!**

July 1, 2025
1 pm to 5 pm

by the Nature Center



**Activities and demonstrations
for the whole family!**

Don't Farm Naked!



In the past we have focused on the benefits of cover crops and other regenerative agricultural practices in terms of large farms. With our second annual Meet Your Farmer community gathering being at a small farm, we wanted to talk about the benefits of these practices on a smaller scale. While small and urban farms come with different challenges than large farms, one thing remains the same - we want to know What's Going On Under The Covers.

There are a few key differences in small/urban farms as compared to large-scale farms. For instance, most small farms grow a few to many different crops in a relatively small space.

Also, while water is concern for all farms, it could be trickier on a small farm, especially if they have to deal with municipal water sources. And on many urban farms, depleted or contaminated soils and soil compaction are an issue.

Because of these and other unique features of urban and small farms, the use of regenerative agriculture practices is important to build and maintain soil health. The use of cover crops is a key practice. They help with soil structure to help compaction and add nutrients to depleted soil. And we know that keeping the soil covered all year is important as well. Small farms often use organic mulches such as straw and cardboard through the growing season, which also perform multiple functions like feeding the soil microbes and conserving water.



Many of the regenerative ag practices are beneficial and adaptable to small farm scenarios. No and reduced tillage, crop rotation, and soil testing/nutrient management all help improve soil health. And did you know these practices are also adaptable to backyard gardens? Every one of us benefit from healthy soil. Every one of us can be good stewards of the land.

We have more information and links to resources on our website.

And, of course, you can contact us with any questions!

Urban Agriculture - <https://www.stjosephswcd.org/urban-ag-and-conservation>

Backyard Conservation - <https://www.stjosephswcd.org/backyard-conservation>

SCRAP Small Farm Tour

The St. Joseph County Regenerative Ag Partnership will be hosting its first Small Farm Tour of 2025 on Tuesday, May 13th. We will be touring two local farms, with a break for lunch in between.

This tour is geared toward other small farmers, both current and aspiring. Lunch is provided, so registration is required. Visit our website for more information. <https://www.stjosephswcd.org/calendar>



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

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Marty Lappin, Vice Chairman
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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

May

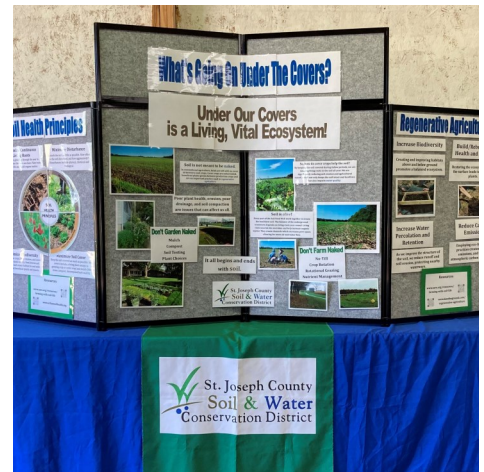
3rd - Wild Ones Plant Sale
13th - SCRAP Small Farm Tour
20th - Board Meeting
26th - Memorial Day - Office Closed

June

17th - Board Meeting
19th - Juneteenth - Office Closed

July

1st - Natural Resources Day at the Fair
10th - Meet Your Farmer



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.

