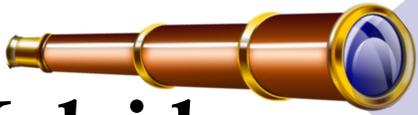


Conservation

Kaleidoscope



Let's Talk Native Plants!



For years, we have had our regulars in our landscapes, which were often showy, ornamental plants that had the look we wanted, like English ivy, butterfly bush, Norway maple. But these, and many of the plants we would see at the garden centers, were non-native.

Today, there is a growing trend to choose native plants for our landscapes. Native plants are ones that have been a part of a particular ecosystem for hundreds of years and play an essential role in the web of life. There is growing evidence that adding natives back to our landscapes is beneficial. Here are some of those reasons!

Wildlife

Just as native plants have been a part of the ecosystem, so has our wildlife. These insects and birds and other creatures have evolved together over that time and have become dependent on the plants for things like food and shelter.

Pest Control

Native plants have also evolved alongside native pests. As a result, they tend to have built up mechanisms to make them less vulnerable. Native plants also can attract beneficial insects and provide food and shelter for natural enemies of the pests.

Low Maintenance

When a plant is suitable for an area, it tends to require less maintenance once established. Native plants have evolved over the years to be adaptable to the changes in their particular ecosystem and they usually need less water and fertilizer.

Ultimately, encouraging the growth of native species in our surroundings creates a more stable ecosystem, which leads to cleaner water and healthier soil. And this is a benefit to us all.



With the growing interest in native plants, they are becoming more readily available. Resources for learning more and finding plants include the Indiana Native Plant Society (indiananativeplants.org) and Wild Ones (South Bend Chapter - southbend.wildones.org).

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Celebrate With Us!

Join us we celebrate 64 years of servicing St. Joseph County! We will have a family-style Polish Dinner, Supervisor Election, and Keynote Speaker Eric Shideler!

The St. Joseph County Soil & Water Conservation District 64th Annual Meeting

February 16, 2024
St. Hedwig Memorial Center
331 S. Scott St.
South Bend, IN 46601



Meeting starts at 6:30 PM ~ Doors open at 5:45 PM ~ Cost: \$15 per person (includes dinner-contact us for tickets)

Hello, 2024!

We're super excited for the New Year! We've got lots of outreach and educational programs planned through the whole year, and there's something for everyone! Watch our website and Facebook page for dates!



Native Plant Sale

We will be offering a chance to preorder Native Plant Kits for early June planting! Keep your eyes open for ordering information sometime in January.



Community Outreach

You saw us at a lot of outreach events the past year - Ag Days, Home & Outdoor Expo, West Side BBQ, EnviroFest. 2024 will bring those and more! We are super excited to host our first Meet Your Farmer picnic this spring, and we're helping put together a Natural Resources Day at the St. Joseph County Fair.



Conservation Education

We love talking about soil and water! This year we plan to be at even more schools (Hey, Teachers! Give us a call!) and youth programs. We also have many adult programs on the calendar - rain barrel workshops, producer's meeting, the Urban Soil Summit, and a soil health field day, to name a few.



Focus on Invasives

We've been working with our partners at SMIPP to educate about invasive plants through hikes and Weed Wrangles® and we're taking it further in 2024! Watch for more information about the CWI Grant we're partnering with Marshall County on and the invasive species strike teams we are forming.

Michiana Area Wildlife Certification



Prairie Winds Nature Farm (Lakeville, IN) is working on a new project in Habitat Conservation!

Working with the National Wildlife Federation's Community Wildlife Conservation Program, prairie Winds is helping to document and certify our community's natural spaces. The goal of the program is to promote the conservation of wildlife habitats nationally, and the catalog, educate and support our community's wildlife habitat conservation efforts. Prairie Winds Nature Farm is participating by practicing conservation techniques, educating youth, and tracking the certified properties across

St. Joseph, Marshall, Kosciusko, and Elkhart Counties.

Wildlife habitat gardens are a haven for local birds, butterflies, and other wildlife. To become certified, the space must meet certain criteria as set by the National Wildlife Federation:

- ◆ Food (native plants, supplemented natural food source)
- ◆ Water (bird baths, pond, rain garden)
- ◆ Cover (evergreens, brush pile, ground cover)
- ◆ Places to Raise Young (mature trees, nesting box, fallen leaf debris)
- ◆ Sustainable Practices (natural maintenance to ensure clean and healthy soil, air and water)

You may not believe your yard or natural space is diverse enough for certification, but you may still be able to participate! You can find the checklist of requirements here: nwf.org/garden-for-wildlife/certify. You can also consider making changes in your yard!

These images show how one can change their lawn from a monoculture grass yard into a polyculture habitat! You can do this by adding native shrubs, trees, and flowering plants, as well as a water source.



Two years of progress converting a water dependent lawn to native plants in southern California.

Photo Credit: Salvia_Fontuckii



The NWF Certified Wildlife Habitat®:

- ◆ Helps us count our area's natural spaces while giving the community a map of wildlife habitats.
- ◆ Does NOT take away any legal rights from public or privately owned lands.
- ◆ Has a certification fee of \$20 for homeowners; Schools, public parks, and learning spaces are exempt from the fee.

The program is any natural spaces and habitats, including public and private property - parks, schools, yards, and gardens. If you have questions, or are wondering about other ideas for participation, contact *Charlotte* at *Prairie Winds Nature Farm* at pwindsfarm@gmail.com. You can also find more information on the National Wildlife Federation's website, www.nwf.org.



St. Joseph County
Soil & Water
Conservation District

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Upcoming Events!

January

15th - MLK, Jr. Day - Office Closed
16th - Board Meeting
27th - Urban Soil Health Soil Summit

February

16th - Annual Meeting
19th - President's Day - Office Closed
20th - Board Meeting



Go Green!

Contact us to choose to get your newsletter by email!



Visit our website & watch Facebook for more information!

St. Joseph County Soil & Water Conservation Partnership

St. Joseph County SWCD Partnership Staff

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Ally Pudlo, SWCD
Misty Sorchevich, SWCD
Debbie Knepp, NRCS
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Marty Lappin, Vice Chairman
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