

Conservation Kaleidoscope

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March/April 2025



65th Annual Meeting

On Friday, February 7th, about 140 people came together at Hedwig Memorial Center to celebrate the St. Joseph County Soil & Water Conservation District's 65th year of conservation. Board chairman Chris Matthys opened the meeting at 6:30 pm. Following introductions and the treasurer's report was the supervisor election. This year, Marty Lappin was on the ballot. Mr. Lappin has been on the board since 2021 and serves as vice-chairman. The District is pleased to announce he will continue to serve on the Board. The District also appointed a new supervisor, Nathaniel Ness, this year. Both Mr. Lappin and Mr. Ness were sworn in at the Annual Meeting. We were honored to have Councilman Dan Schaetzle and Councilman Randall Figg join us for the meeting and we thank them for swearing in our new supervisors. The supervisor election was followed by a delicious traditional Polish dinner.



Following dinner Mr. Matthys spoke about conservation in St. Joseph County and the District's past year. He then presented the 2025 Friend of Forestry Award. This year the award went to Ronda Spaulding, who has gone above and beyond to help keep our forest and natural areas healthy and free of invasive plants. We ended the evening the year's keynote speaker, Matt Meersman. Mr. Meersman is the director of the St. Joseph River Basin Commission and is a competitive paddler. His entertaining talk intertwined educational aspects of watersheds and the St. Joseph River with entertaining and inspiring stories about his canoe racing.

Thank you to everyone who joined us for a delightful evening!



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

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Spring is in the Air!

Spring is a fun time of year! There are so many events going on around our communities. Here are some of them we are planning to attend. Hope to see you at them, too!

Growing Summit

March 15, 2025 ~ 9:30 am to 4 pm
SJCPL Community Learning Center

Invasive Plant Symposium

March 29, 2025 ~ 8 am to 12 pm
Potato Creek State Park Nature Center

Ag Days

April 4, 2025 ~ 9 am to 5 pm
St. Joseph County Fairgrounds

Environmental Research Coalition

South Bend Community Symposium
April 12, 2025 ~ 10 am to 4 pm
SJCPL Community Learning Center

SMIPP Weed Wrangle® Weekend

April 25, 2025 ~ 2 pm to 4 pm
Rum Village Park

Earth Day Celebration

April 26, 2025 ~ 9 am to 2 pm
The Unity Gardens

SMIPP Weed Wrangle® Weekend

April 26, 2025 ~ 10 am to 12 pm
Centennial Park, Plymouth

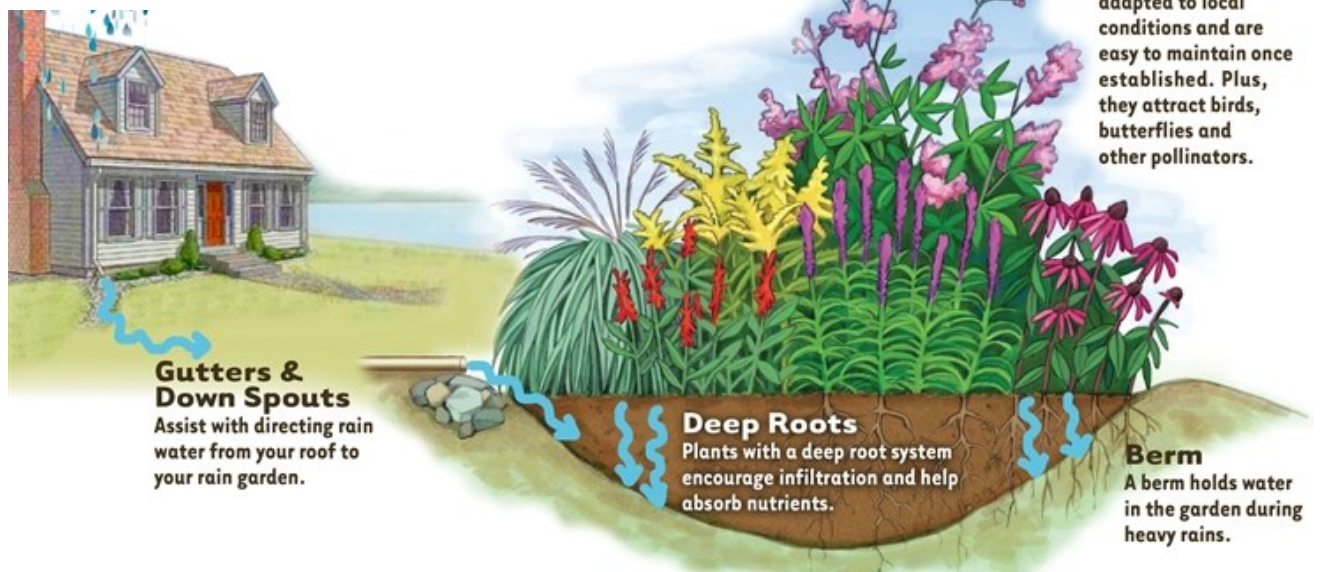
Rain Gardens

Rain gardens are attractive, landscaped areas placed in specific areas to capture rainwater runoff from impervious surfaces such as roofs and driveways. The areas are usually slightly lower than ground level and commonly use native wildflowers and grasses that do not mind being wet or flooded for a short time.

In natural areas, water is slowed by plants, leaf litter and soil and is easily absorbed into the ground. In developed areas, impervious surfaces do not allow the water to seep into the soil. Instead the water runs over the surfaces and into storm drains, picking up pollutants along the way. In some areas, the runoff can cause flooding.

Rain gardens are designed to mimic nature and slow down rainwater with the shallow depression catching the water.

Interested but not sure where to start? We offer free technical assistance to get your rain garden started. Plus, there are two rain garden kits available through our Native Plant Sale with appropriate plants already chosen. Follow the link to the right to read more about those kits!



Students Learn About Native Plants

The SWCD started a pilot project in Spring 2024, giving classrooms in St. Joseph County the supplies necessary to start Black-eyed Susan plants from seed. We worked with 14 classrooms at several schools around the county. Our educator visited the classes and gave a presentation on the importance of native plants, and the students spent the months of April and May growing their plants. Some classes sent the plants home with the students, and one teacher planted the flowers near the front doors of their school!

We still have a few kits available for this spring. Teachers can email or call for details. Education@StJosephSWCD.org or 574-936-2024x4



Native Plant Sale

Our 2025 Native Plant Sale is live! We have eight different kits available this year. Each kit comes with 50 plus and are a mix of native grasses, flowers, and sedges and are designed for an extended period of bloom time.

Visit our website for the list of kits and the order form. Orders are due by March 28th.

www.StJosephSWCD.org/native-plant-kits



Stormwater Community Days

Did you know storm drains carry water directly to our waterways? This means everything that everything that the water picks up as it flows toward the storm drains will end up in our rivers and ponds. Pet poo, fertilizer, trash, leaves - all of it!

Each of us plays a part in protecting our waterways. This year, we're offering to visit your neighborhood and talk to you about what's going down the storm drain and what you can do. We will bring activities for the whole family, and a storm drain clean out kit!

Interested? Contact us! info@stjosephswcd.org or 574-936-2024 x4.





St. Joseph County
Soil & Water
Conservation District

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www.StJosephSWCD.org

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& 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
Aldona Martin
Diane Stichter
Michael Cuff

Calendar

March

18th - Board Meeting
28th - 4th Friday Weed Warriors @
Rum Village

April

15th - Board Meeting
18th - County Holiday - no
SWCD Staff
25th - SMIPP Weed Wrangle®
26th - SMIPP Weed Wrangle®



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.

