



*Marion County Soil & Water Conservation District*

# *Conservation in the Neighborhood*

*Summer, 2014*

*Indianapolis, Indiana*

**SWCD  
Board of Supervisors**

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**The Marion  
County Soil  
and Water  
Conservation  
District works to  
provide technical,  
financial, and  
educational  
services to help  
Marion County  
land users  
conserve soil,  
water, and related  
natural resources.**

## **Come Join Us**

### **Septic & Well Workshop - June 9th**

**O**n Monday evening, June 9<sup>th</sup> from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. the Marion County SWCD and the Marion County Health Department will be hosting a free workshop for all Marion County homeowners with septic systems or private wells. The workshop will be held at the Southport Library Branch at 2630 E. Stop 11 Road in Indianapolis.

Our speakers for this workshop will be Mark Basch from the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Gretchen Quirk from the Marion County Public Health Department and Jason Ravenscroft also from the Health Department, and Bill Grout from Citizens Energy Group. Workshop topics include: Proper Well Construction, what to do during drought conditions, water rights and water use data, common well contaminants, how to sanitize your well and other well tips. In addition, the workshop will cover common septic problems and how to rectify them, how to do a septic inspection, and well & septic permitting processes. Bill Grout from Citizens Energy Group will explain the Septic Tank Elimination Program for Marion County.

While this workshop is free, please RSVP if you plan to attend by calling the SWCD office at 317-786-1776 or emailing Marilyn at [marilyn-hughes@iaswcd.org](mailto:marilyn-hughes@iaswcd.org) no later than Thursday June 5<sup>th</sup> so we can be sure to have materials on hand for you.



*Mark Your Calendar!  
Septic & Well Workshop  
June 9th, 6 to 8 p.m.  
Southport Library*

**Southport Library Meeting  
Room, 2630 E. Stop 11 Road**

**Guest Speakers:  
Mark Basch, IDNR  
Gretchen Quirk, Marion County  
Public Health Department  
Jason Ravenscroft, Marion  
County Public Health Depart-  
ment  
Bill Grout, Citizens Energy Group**

**Please RSVP by June 5th**

# Lend a Helping Hand

The Fall Creek Watershed Partnership (Hamilton, Hendricks, Madison and Marion Counties) formed to build relationships with our urban land users. One group they chose to assist was the urban farming community. As the Partnership became familiar with their work, the scope of this community's efforts became clear: whether the gardens were on several city lots or a small strip of land between a house and the sidewalk, each group worked hard to improve individual independence, build community, and get quality food to their under-served neighbors. They also had another thing in common - simple resources that rural growers take for granted can be major setbacks for the urban farmer. Watering is always done at least in part by manual labor, quality top soil for raised beds is a constant need, and getting a few trees for shade can just be too costly.



Surely there is a better way to get these basic necessities. Maybe the answer is as simple as asking for a hand - asking a farm family to dig up a few saplings from their woods or fence row, asking a farmer to drop off some mulch. The Marion County District has decided to develop a web-based wish list housed as a Google Document so that anyone can read it, and see if we can pilot such a program here. We want to get the word out to suburban and rural neighbors, construction sites, and land improvement businesses to see if we can get excess resources to places in need. Forming these connections could lead to some pretty interesting conversations between our urban and rural growers - leading to better understanding and personal experience that show agribusiness in a better light than we see in the media.

Every county has an opportunity to bring their rural neighbors in contact with growers in town. The logistics of connecting need and supply might be tricky at times, but so worth the effort. As Marion County figures out the logistics of this program, we will update our progress. If anyone is interested in helping or want to add some of their county's growers' needs to the website, please contact Leslie White, Backyard Conservation Coordinator at [leslie-white@iaswcd.org](mailto:leslie-white@iaswcd.org).

On the Marion County SWCD website under the Agriculture/Small Farm dropdown box you will find a list of Fall Creek Watershed Projects currently in need of materials. Click each project to see their "wish list". Please review each list and contact Leslie White ( [leslie-white@iaswcd.org](mailto:leslie-white@iaswcd.org) ) or other listed contact if you are able to donate.

Thank you for lending a helping hand!

## Thank You Affiliate Members!

### **Silver Member**

Marion County Farm Bureau

### **Nickel Members**

Professor Frederick Bein

### **Copper Members**

Bob Eddleman

George Haerle in honor of Eli Bloom

Beth Mason

***Become a 2014 SWCD  
Affiliate Member***

**Contact the SWCD  
office at  
317-786-1776  
or check out more  
information at our  
website:**

**[www.marionswcd.org](http://www.marionswcd.org)**

# Get Educated About Soils

## *IUPUI offers several course options*

The Soils Geography Course is being offered at IUPUI this coming Fall Semester. It meets Tuesdays at 4:30 – 7:15 PM starting Aug 26, 2014 in Cavanaugh Hall 203. Three options available: 1) G123 Soil Survey (1 credit), meets for the first five weeks and ends on 23 September. 2) G404 Soils Geography (3 credits) will continue the entire semester until the evening of 9 December. 3) G704 3 graduate credits) Geography of Soils will continue the entire semester with the last class on the evening of 9 December. There will be about 5 field trips.

Texts: 1) Soil Survey Of Marion County, Indiana. [http://soils.usda.gov/survey/printed\\_surveys/state.asp?state=Indiana&abbr=IN](http://soils.usda.gov/survey/printed_surveys/state.asp?state=Indiana&abbr=IN) (Paper copies may be borrowed from instructor) Individual map sheets are free from Marion County Soil and Water Conservation District. Phone: 317 786 1776.

2) Understanding & Judging Indiana Soils (latest edition), Cooperative Extension Service, Purdue University, by Yahner and Others. 3) If student's area of interest is other than Marion County that student should download that county's soil survey from the USDA web site.

The **G123 Soil Survey** class will give basic information for determining how to make good land use decisions given the limitations

and characteristics of your soil type. This is a great class for anyone making any land use decisions from developers and builders to home buyers and gardeners. You'll be amazed to find how much the soil beneath your feet affects your life and livelihood.

**G404 Course Objective:** This course examines the spatial aspects of soils from a global and local perspective. The student will gain an understanding of soil development processes, physical properties of soils, soil classification, soil survey and local soil management problems. Each student will be required to complete an individualized soils final project. Text: Soil Science Simplified 5th ed. ISBN 0-13:978-0-38-1823-8/203

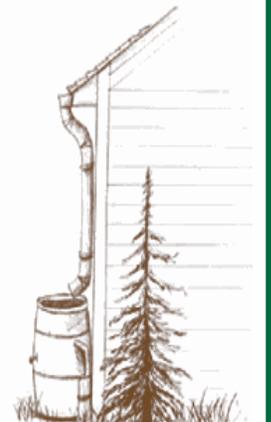
**G707 Course Objective:** This course is graduate credit and examines the spatial aspects of soils from a global and local perspective. For graduate credit the student should be competent in Geographic Information systems. The student

will gain an understanding of soil development processes, physical properties of soils, soil classification, soil survey and local soil management problems. Each student will be required to complete an individualized soils final project using Geographic Information Systems. Text: Elements of the Nature and Property of Soils, any edition ISBN 0-13-048038X To view options and be admitted to the register at IUPUI, contact the Admissions Center at <<http://enroll.iupui.edu/admissions>> or phone (317) 274 4591. For walk-in admissions information and assistance with registration go to Admissions Center, 255 Campus Center, 420 University Blvd. For further course information contact: Dr. Rick Bein - Phone: (317) 274-1100; Department (317) 274 8877; Fax: (317) 278-5220 [[rbein@iupui.edu](mailto:rbein@iupui.edu)] IUPUI, Cavanaugh Hall, Room 213D, 425 University Blvd, Indianapolis, IN 46202.

### Rain Barrels for Sale

The Marion County SWCD is selling two styles of rain barrels this summer. All proceeds are used for conservation efforts in Marion County. Our closed system model comes with a water saver downspout connector and is on sale for \$75. Our open system rain barrel is \$60.

For more information on rain barrels and to download an order blank go to our website at <http://marionswcd.org/rain-barrels/>



# Check out Office of Sustainability's Rain Garden & Native Plant Programs

Mayor Greg Ballard and the Office of Sustainability want to encourage the use of storm water as a valuable natural resource instead of managing it as a pollution source. One way they are encouraging the community is through the Office of Sustainability's Rain Garden and Native Planting Area Program. Rain gardens and native planting areas are a beautiful way for you to help use storm water as a valuable natural resource.

The Rain Garden Resource Center connects residents, businesses and institutions with the resources and tools to design and build their own rain garden or native planting area. Everything you need is outlined: supplies, customized planting plans, maintenance guidelines and more are all in one place. You can find information and applications online at <http://www.indy.gov/eGov/City/DPW/SustainIndy/GreenInfra/Pages/RainGardenResources.aspx>

Check back often to watch the Rain Garden and Native Planting Area Program grow.

## **Planting in the Right-Of-Way** **What is a right-of-way?**

A right-of-way is city owned property along streets extending beyond the edge of the road. Commonly, this is the lawn strip between street and sidewalk. A permit is required for any tree

planting, landscaping, spraying, bracing, removal or pruning work in the city's right-of-way. You can apply for a permit at their website above.

## **Build Your Own Rain Garden or Native Planting Area**

A rain garden is an attractive garden with a special purpose - to improve local water quality and reduce the impacts of storm water on area streams. Communities around the country have experienced dramatic reductions in storm water pollution due to citizens installing rain gardens on their properties. The Office of Sustainability has information to help you build your own rain garden [www.indy.gov/eGov/City/DPW/SustainIndy/GreenInfra/Pages/BuildYourOwnRainGarden.aspx](http://www.indy.gov/eGov/City/DPW/SustainIndy/GreenInfra/Pages/BuildYourOwnRainGarden.aspx)

## **Permitting Guidance**

The term "rain garden" encompasses a large variety of applications and scales of practice. In general, a small voluntary rain garden on private property will likely not need a permit. However, rain gardens are construction and construction often requires permits and considerations. Permits are based on land disturbance, construction in special areas (historic districts, regional centers, etc.) and disturbance to waterways or city infrastructure (storm sewer pipes, ditches, swales, water bodies, etc.). The Office of Sustainability's



website can also help you determine if you will need a permit for the rain garden design you have planned.

## **Register Your Rain Garden and Native Planting Area Program**

If you are within the city limits of Indianapolis, you are encouraged to register your rain garden or native planting area with the City of Indianapolis and elect to receive a sign for your yard. Registering your rain garden will also allow you to put your project on the interactive map and encourage others to do the same. Check back often to watch the Rain Garden Program grow.

## **Technical Assistance**

If you have questions about rain gardens you would like answered, technical assistance is available upon request. Please send an email to [raingardens@indy.gov](mailto:raingardens@indy.gov).

More information on rain gardens and native plantings can be found on the Marion SWCD website [www.marionswcd.org](http://www.marionswcd.org) under the "Go Green" tab.

# Is Wildlife Becoming a Nuisance?

## Indiana Department of Natural Resources Can Help

**N**uisance wild animals are a common problem in the spring and Hoosiers have several options for dealing with them. Calling a licensed wild animal control company is one. For the name of a licensed company, visit [wildlife.IN.gov/2351.htm](http://wildlife.IN.gov/2351.htm).

Hoosier landowners or tenants also can trap and release or kill raccoons, skunks, opossums, squirrels, beavers, muskrats, minks, long-tailed weasels, and foxes on their own property without a permit if these animals are damaging that property. Live traps for capturing animals can be purchased from garden-supply or home-improvement stores. Be careful

when live-trapping wild animals in the spring because they may have young.

If the animal is to be released after capture, it must be released in the county of capture and cannot be kept as a pet, sold, traded or given to another person. Releasing wild animals on a city, county or state property may be illegal or require written permission. Contact proper officials before releasing wild animals on public property.

To keep wild animals from becoming a nuisance, DNR wildlife officials recommend the following:

- Pick up dog and cat food at night and keep birdfeeders out of the reach of wild animals or bring in

birdfeeders at night.

- Install a commercial chimney cap made of sheet metal and heavy screen. Repair soffits to prevent access to attics, and install strong, metal vent covers.

- Prune tree limbs at least 10 feet away from the roof.

- Buy heavy metal garbage cans with lockable lids; otherwise, keep garbage cans indoors as much as possible.

- Install metal skirting around the bottoms of decks.

- Provide shelter structures for fish in ornamental ponds and water gardens; cover the pond during the night with metal screening.

Nuisance Canada geese also can create problems in the spring when nesting. You can oil the eggs of Canada geese or remove their nests after registering with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. A link to the USFWS goose egg and nest destruction registration page is at [wildlife.IN.gov](http://wildlife.IN.gov).

A list of licensed nuisance waterfowl control operators who are trained to remove adult geese is at [wildlife.IN.gov/files/fw-NuisanceWaterfowlControlOperators.pdf](http://wildlife.IN.gov/files/fw-NuisanceWaterfowlControlOperators.pdf).

Pond owners experiencing problems with otters should contact their district wildlife biologist for more information or to request a special control permit. Information is at [wildlife.IN.gov/2716.htm](http://wildlife.IN.gov/2716.htm).

## Hoosier RiverWatch Training Offered June 21st

Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring “Basic” Training introduces citizens and educators to water quality monitoring utilizing hands-on habitat, chemical, and biological assessment methods. The sessions are held both inside and outdoors. Any interested adult is welcome to attend, and once certified, may teach students how to monitor. Although Volunteer Stream Monitoring training workshops are free, you must contact the local host in advance to register.

### Next Workshop offered Saturday, June 21

Zionsville, IN - Zionsville Town Hall  
(9:00 am-4:30 pm)

To register, contact John Ulmer at [watersheds@tds.net](mailto:watersheds@tds.net) or (317) 769-3500.



# Organic Matter Improves Soil Health

The golden rule of gardening says, “If you treat your soil well, it will treat your plants well.” Healthy, fertile soil is a mixture of water, air, minerals, and organic matter. In soil, organic matter consists of plant and animal material that is in the process of decomposing. When it has fully decomposed it is called humus. This humus is important for soil structure because it holds individual mineral particles together in clusters. Ideal soil has a granular, crumbly structure that allows water to drain through it, and allows oxygen and carbon dioxide to move freely between spaces within the soil and the air above.

Successful gardening depends on good soil. One of the best ways to improve soil fertility is to add organic matter. It helps soil hold important plant nutrients. By adding organic matter to sandy soil, you improve the ability of the soil to retain water. In a clay soil, humus will loosen the soil to make it more crumbly. You can increase the organic matter in your garden by adding compost or applying mulch.

Application of organic matter to the soil adds carbon, which promotes the growth of beneficial bacteria, which increases the likelihood of hearty plants. Another benefit is when crops grow and demand more nutrients, added organic matter can be used as plant food. Remember that every time you disturb soil by turning or tilling, oxygen also is added to the soil. This increases microbial activity, which feeds on organic matter. Therefore, soil disturbance can decrease the soil’s organic matter reserves and should be kept to a minimum.

Scientists have been researching the benefits of organic material for decades. They have found that plant deficiency diseases usually are less severe in soils that are well supplied with organic matter. This not only increases the vigor of the plants, but various soil microorganisms become more active in the presence of

an abundance of organic matter. For example, certain kinds of fungi that live in decaying organic matter have been found to kill harmful nematodes.

Healthy, productive soil has a good proportion of organic matter in it. You can successfully increase the quality of your soil by regularly adding organic matter. Caring for the soil is an ongoing process and is essential for successful backyard conservation. For more information see the Composting 101 article on page 7 or visit the SWCD website: [www.marionswcd.org](http://www.marionswcd.org)

**Farm Services Agency News  
Marion/Johnson Counties  
3059 N. Morton  
Franklin, IN 46131  
317-736-6822**



**Crop Reporting due for all spring  
crops by July 15th**

**Go Green!!**

**Save natural resources by having this  
newsletter emailed to you! Contact  
Marilyn at our office to make the switch:  
[marilyn-hughes@iaswcd.org](mailto:marilyn-hughes@iaswcd.org)**

## Composting 101

Adding organic matter to your soil is easy by composting! Composting is the process of providing the ideal environment for organic matter decomposition, thus speeding up the decomposition process. The product of composting, called compost or humus, can provide vital nutrients to your soil, encouraging your plants to thrive. It improves soil structure, aeration, and water-holding capacity. It can even help prevent some plant diseases.

Many materials can be used to build your compost pile including grass clipping and garden trimmings, leaves, livestock manure (not pet manure), fruit & vegetable scraps, coffee grounds & tea bags, egg shells, wood chips and sawdust, straw, hay, stale bread and shredded paper (not glossy). Mix high-carbon materials (like paper and dead leaves) in a 1:1 ratio with high nitrogen materials such as manure and grass clippings.

Composting works quickly when adequate moisture and aeration are provided so the pile heats up. You can help the process by turning the compost regularly (several times a week) and providing extra water when rain is not adequate to keep the pile moist. If the pile is not heating up you can add more nitrogen by throwing on a handful or two of 12-12-12 fertilizer.

Be sure to cover any kitchen scraps with grass and leaves to deter rodents from your pile. Piles can be inexpensively contained by using chicken wire or wood pallets to create “walls” that will allow plenty of air to get to the pile. Commercial composters also work well and make turning the pile much easier. Start composting now for improved garden soil this summer!

Conservation in the Neighborhood is a semi-annual publication to give information to landusers by the Marion County Soil & Water Conservation District, Discovery Hall, 1202 E. 38th St, Suite 200, Indianapolis, IN 46205  
Phone: 317-786-1776 FAX: 317-786-1757  
website: marionswcd.org

## Vist Our New “Local Foods” Page

The Marion County SWCD website was created several years ago to help Marion County residents find reliable information on a variety of natural resource topics in order to help them make informed decisions regarding land use and environmental issues that involve their lives and health. The website has become quite extensive over the years and we continue to do our best to bring you current information about our county and its resources.

We are currently in the process of working on the Agriculture side of our site. New pages and updates will be added this year. One of the new pages is our “Local Foods” page. This page was added to help the growing number of residents who are looking to improve their health and the health of the local economy by purchasing more local produce, meat and eggs while helping our local small farm families.

Here you will find information on farmers markets and community supported agriculture farms where you can receive fresh produce every week of the growing season – and some even have cold crops and other foods available all winter. Many of our local farmers and gardeners grow their crops organically, non-GMO or using heirloom varieties which are not always easily found in your local grocery.

Health experts agree that we Americans generally do not eat enough fresh fruits and vegetables in our diets. Locally grown produce can help encourage us to do better in this regard and enjoy our food more. Visit our new Local Foods page at: <http://marionswcd.org/agriculture/local-foods/>



**Marion County Soil & Water Conservation District**  
Discovery Hall, Suite 200  
1202 East 38th Street  
Indianapolis, IN 46205  
(317)786-1776  
marionswcd.org

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Marion County Soil & Water Conservation District

## Dennis Slaughter Retires from SWCD Board

The Marion County SWCD has been blessed to have Dennis Slaughter serve on the SWCD Board for the past several years. Dennis has been a very active and dedicated supervisor whose knowledge of natural resource issues and the workings of local agencies has helped guide the SWCD in their conservation work on soil and water issues. His leadership and understanding has helped us tremendously during these past few years when the District has gone through a number of losses and changes.

Dennis plans to continue to serve in a more limited role as an associate SWCD supervisor.

Thank you Dennis for your many years of service to the SWCD and Marion County residents!



## Indian Lake Receives Grant

Two Indian Lake residents applied for grants that support water quality related projects through the Fall Creek Watershed Partnership (FCWP) and the Upper White River Watershed Alliance (UWRWA).

The Indian Creek Streambank Stabilization, has been approved for funding and involves removal of Asian bush honeysuckle, the addition of live fascines & coir logs, and seeding of native species along the creek shoreline. The main benefit of the project will be sediment reduction. The UWRWA grant will reimburse 75 percent of the costs of this project, the remainder to be paid by the homeowner.

Another potential project, the Mohawk Drive Rain Garden, was submitted for review this month and involves creating a shallow, 8 inch depressed garden of native flowers and grasses to intercept storm water runoff from impervious surfaces (road, driveway, and roof) before it washes pollutants to the ravine and the lake. This FCWP grant, if awarded, will reimburse 50 percent of the costs of this project, the remainder to be covered by the landowner.