

Celebrating  
50 Years  
of Conservation



MARION COUNTY  
SOIL AND WATER  
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

# Conservation in the Neighborhood

VOL. 42, NO. 1

WINTER, 2021



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## SWCD Invites You to their 51st Annual Meeting!

### *Virtual Annual Meeting*

**Tuesday, February 16, 2021 at 4:00 p.m.**

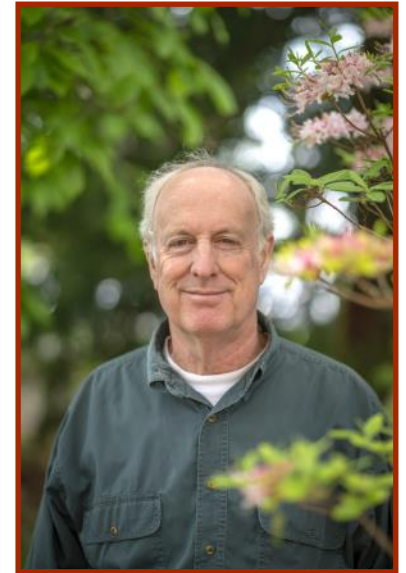
No need to worry about getting out on icy roads this year! The Marion County SWCD is bringing their annual meeting to you! And what a great program we have in store.

You will hear about the innovative ways that the District has brought conservation to the county this past year and our exciting plans for 2021.

Then we have a special guest, renowned author Doug Tallamy who will talk to us about native plants and insect interactions and will be available to answer your questions.

Thanks to the [Marion County Farm Bureau](#), we will have a drawing for two of Doug's popular books at the end of the meeting.

**[Mark your calendar and register now!](#)**



*Author Doug Tallamy will be the keynote speaker at the Marion County SWCD Annual Meeting.*

## Office Update

**Due to the Covid Virus health advisory the SWCD office is temporarily closed to the public and staff is primarily working in the field and from home. We are monitoring the office answering machine but you may experience a delay in getting back with you for this reason. For prompter service please contact us through our website:**

**<https://marionswcd.org/contact/>**

## The Forgotten Corners of Your Yard

**By Jerod Chew, District Conservationist**

The edges and corner of your property sometimes don't get the love and attention they need and the same can be said for our native wildlife. Whether we own a large farm or live in town, we need to be good stewards of the land that we control and consideration for wildlife should be part of that stewardship.

Perhaps behind the shed where the old wheelbarrow sits or out back where the lumber scraps have been piled from our last home DIY project... that wet part of the yard where we just mow around... the odd area between us and the neighbors.... These areas can be important sanctuaries for native wildlife. These areas do or can act as natural pathways for wildlife to travel to necessary food, water and shelter.

We find many of these areas have been overgrown with non-native/invasive species like wintercreeper and bush honeysuckle that rob our native wildlife from their needed diverse habitats of food, water, shelter, space. Depending on the soil types and slopes, the lack of native vegetation can also impact erosion and can contribute loads of

sediment into our natural waterways.

It may sound silly, but take a moment to do an inventory of these spaces and look at your property through the lens of an owl, songbird, bat, frog or butterfly. Ensure that invasive species are controlled and then add plants as needed and space, soil and light conditions allow. Trees, shrubs and native wildflower plantings can provide year-round aesthetics that have in addition to the wildlife attractions.

Our conservation staff can assist with identifying invasives and suggest plants that might work on your soils in your situation.



Photo courtesy of Kevin Tungsvick

*Plant natives in your yard and you may find lots of interesting visitors such as this Hummingbird moth (Hemaris spp.)*

**Support  
Urban  
Conservation  
Become a  
SWCD Affiliate  
Member!**

**[Click Here to  
see details on  
our website.](#)**

# WINTER WORKSHOP SERIES



- Hedgerows - Traditional Uses of Trees and Shrubs -  
- Native Plants - Insect Management -

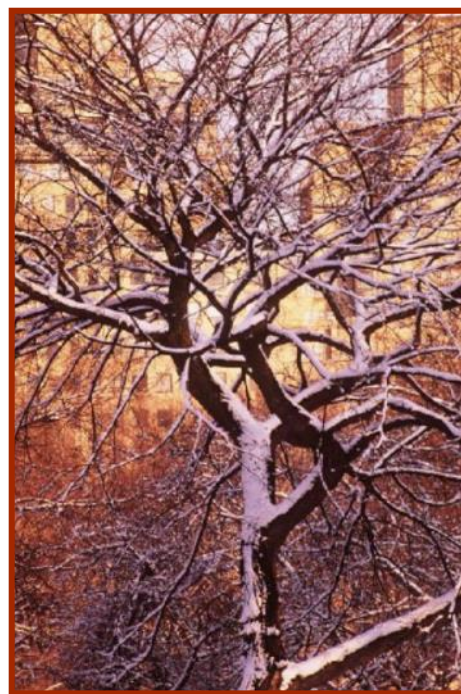
We have an exciting workshop schedule for January and February!

Our winter series is focused on how and why to establish hedgerows, traditional uses of trees and shrubs, native plants, and insect management strategies in vegetable production.

Register and find out more information about our free virtual winter workshop series in 2021.

<https://marionswcd.org/winter-workshop-series-2021/>

*Funding support for these workshops is provided in part by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, the National Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and Clean Water Indiana. The USDA-NRCS is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.*





## Invasive Highlight: Common Buckthorn



Photo courtesy of Purdue University

The Common Buckthorn grows 20-25 feet tall and has thorns at the twig ends.

Common Buckthorn was imported from Eurasia in the 1800's for landscaping and hedge purposes and soon became invasive. It invades forests, riparian areas as well as savannas, prairies, old fields and road-sides. It leafs out very early in the spring and keeps its leaves late into the fall. Creates dense shade, eliminating regeneration of tree seedlings and understory species. This is another of the invasive plants that



has an allelopathy effect releasing chemicals that inhibit the growth of other vegetation, especially desirable native plants.

Twig end in thorns. Cut stump treatment with a 50% glyphosate is an effective control measure.



Ohioplants.org

More information on invasive species is available on our website:  
<https://marionswcd.org/invasive-species/>

### Invasives Update: Bush Honeysuckle harmful to water quality

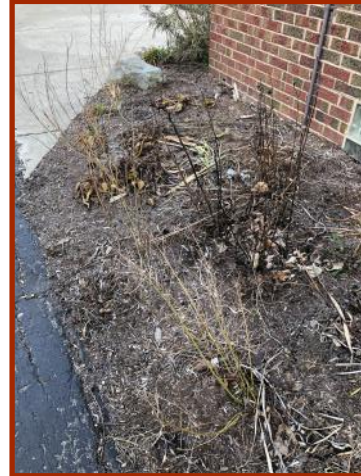
A new study done by Northern Kentucky University seems to indicate another environmental problem with Bush Honeysuckle. Preliminary studies indicate that Bush Honeysuckle leaves decompose 3-5 times faster than native sycamore tree leaves. The leaf litter uses up oxygen in the water as it decomposes causing damage to water quality & wildlife.

Read more at <https://landairwater.me/2020/12/10/honeysuckle-water-quality/amp/>

# Overwintering for Wildlife

By John Hazlett, District Manager

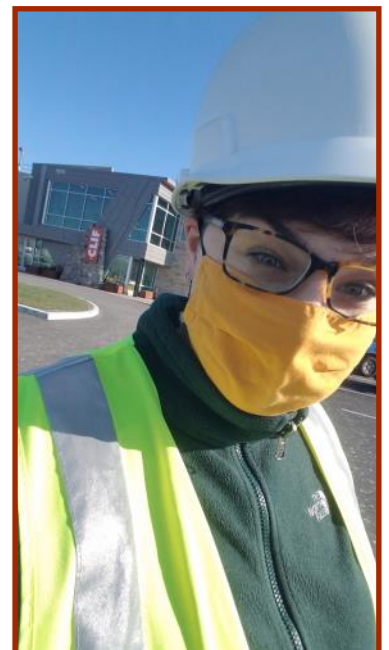
While the cold weather has us already yearning for warm Spring days, I'm taking a different perspective on management of the urban prairie at our east side home this year. At the end of previous growing seasons, I have always cut my native grasses and wildflowers down to the ground to feed the compost bin over winter. Through several workshops our district has done with Heather Holm, I've learned the importance of leaving native woody stems for overwintering by cavity nesting-bees and insects. Following the maintenance procedures in our native plantings guide (<https://marionswcd.org/wp-content/uploads/marionswcd-native-plantings-for-beneficial-insects-and-pollinators.pdf>), I'll then cut the native forbs back to 15 inches in the Spring and either stick the stems in the ground for additional habitat or compost them. The pictures shown here are of Bee Balm, Bluestar Amsonia, Purple Coneflower, Purple Prairie Clover and Joe Pye Weed that will provide habitat during the winter—a win-win for the plants and the beneficial insects (<https://marionswcd.org/wp-content/uploads/MarionCountySWCD-Beneficial-Insects-for-Fruit-and-Vegetable-Growers.pdf>) our food systems depend upon.



# Urban Conservation Update

By Alena Jones, Urban Conservationist

Since joining the SWCD in early September, I've spent most of my time in the field, learning from generous colleagues at IDEM and conducting inspections all over the county. Whether we are inspecting subdivisions, walking trails, or businesses (just to name a few!), every inspection is an opportunity to learn new things and make new connections in our community. Despite the strangeness of 2020 and the pauses many industries have experienced in the face of COVID, the pace of construction doesn't seem to have slowed down much at all. We've visited more than 150 sites since October! I have been excited to meet all the people developing and stewarding land in Marion County. Though there's still work to be done, I'm encouraged to be able to share that the percentage of sites in compliance with best management practices has been steadily rising over the past year, continuing a wonderful trend in our city.





MARION COUNTY  
**SOIL AND WATER**  
—CONSERVATION DISTRICT—

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**Find us on the web: [www.marionswcd.org](http://www.marionswcd.org)**

The Mission of the Marion County Soil & Water Conservation District is to assist Marion County land users in conserving soil, water, and related natural resources by providing technical, financial and educational services.

**\*\* PLEASE NOTE\*\***

**Due to the current COVID 19 crisis our office is temporarily closed and staff is working remotely. Use the “Contact Us” tab on our website to leave a message & we will get back with you as soon as possible.**

## Winterization for Construction Sites

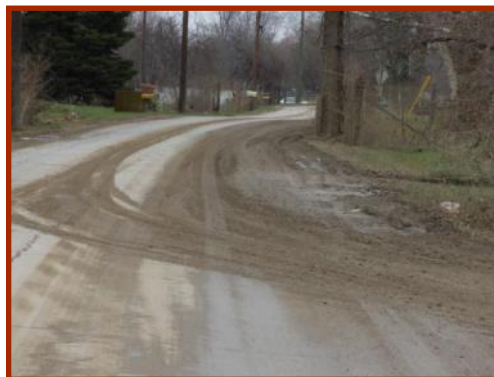
Under ideal circumstances for water quality all construction sites would have good vegetative cover throughout and construction would shut down for the winter. But this is not the case for most construction sites in Indianapolis which remain active all winter. Our wet cold winters in central Indiana necessitate pre-planning and preparation for those in charge of erosion control installation and maintenance.

Below are a few suggestions for keeping the soil on the site.

- Expect the cost for inspections and maintenance of erosion control to increase substantially during the winter.
- Minimize the amount of soil disturbed and left unprotected.
- Create wide buffer strips of vegetation downhill from slopes
- Divert surface runoff away from critical slopes to a safe out let.
- Use thick mulch (twice as thick as during the growing season) with netting on bare areas.
- Consider frost seeding for early spring growth. Hydroseed where erosion control blankets are not appropriate.

- Protect bare swales and channels with rip rap or high quality erosion control blankets.
- Inspect all erosion control practices regularly.

If you have questions or a problem area on your site feel free to contact our office. Our erosion control specialist Alena Jones will be happy to meet you to discuss options.



*If you see signs of excessive erosion off of a construction site please contact our office.*

Follow us on  
Facebook!



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