

Celebrating
50 Years
of Conservation



MARION COUNTY
SOIL AND WATER
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Conservation in the Neighborhood

VOL. 43, NO. 1



WINTER, 2022

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Join Us—February 15th for our 52nd Annual Meeting—Virtually

We hope you will join us virtually Tuesday evening, February 15th for our annual meeting. This year, we've asked local growers to share their experiences in urban agriculture and soil health. Hear from the people that steward the soil and grow good food! More information will be coming soon. Watch your email for registration links.

In addition, you will hear how the SWCD has served the county this past year in promoting wise land use and conservation practices. We will hold our election of Supervisors. This year Maggie Goeglein will be running for re-election and Brian Neilson will be up for re-appointment. Read more about them and our other current Supervisors [HERE](#). Directions for who can vote and how will also be sent out closer to the meeting date.

Though we miss seeing all of you in person, we were thankful that so many of you could join us virtually last year and are hopeful that many of you will be able to join us live on February 15th or watch later when you are free. As always feel free to contact our office staff with any questions or needs for assistance.



Soil Health Focus

By Kevin Allison, Soil Health Specialist

I recently dug up some cover crop roots at the SWCD's demonstration garden. Four years of growing vegetables and cover crops in a no-till system is showing its benefits. Darker soil, more organic matter, active soil life, efficient water infiltration, and the list goes on. A compaction measuring penetrometer now slides easily through the soil with little resistance. These same beds used to measure 300+ psi, a level that hindered root growth & blocked underground air flow, leading to poor plant health and disease.

Year round plant roots, organic mulches on the soil surface, and minimal disturbance has soil health on the move. Nature can build an inch of topsoil in 500 years, but regenerative gardening practices can accelerate that tremendously.

Check this out!

For a more information on our Soil Health Program visit:

<https://marionswcd.org/soil-health-initiative/>

4 years ago – before soil health practices



Freshly planted cover crops & compost mulch



After: Alive, Healthy Soil!



Fall Cover Crops at the farm at Butler



After the second cutting of fall spinach, this bed was weeded and then underseeded with cereal rye and crimson clover. @ SWCD Demo Garden



After harvesting corn, this bed was tarped for 2 weeks, followed by a light topdressing of compost and a diverse cover crop mix.

Upcoming Programs Urban Agriculture-- Save the Date!

WINTER 2022

Urban Farming

Tuesdays 6-8:30 PM

Jan 11--Feb 15

Six In-person sessions at the
Marion County Extension
Office

The goal of the Urban Farming signature program is to support gardeners and farmers with varying levels of experience and help them gain agricultural knowledge and skills to assess the challenges and opportunities of farming in urban soils while maximizing the productivity of the produce they grow.

Grass to Garden: Starting a Community-based Garden

Tuesdays, 5:30-8 PM

March 8-29

Four In-person sessions
\$75

Every garden project is unique, and the Grass to Garden Signature Program will help you learn more than just how to grow plants — helping your program thrive by: Strengthening agricultural and community development efforts, improving access to local, nutritious foods, creating healthier communities, and more!

Beginning Farmers:

How to Plant, Support and Grow your Farm

Thursdays, Jan 13- March 10

7-8:30 PM

Eight Virtual sessions
\$75

Are you a farmer, but eager to enhance and improve your management practices? Are you interested in starting a farm, but unsure of how to get started or where you can find help? Purdue Extension's online Beginning Farmer Workshop can help put you on a path to success!

Annie's Project

Mondays, Feb 7- March 14

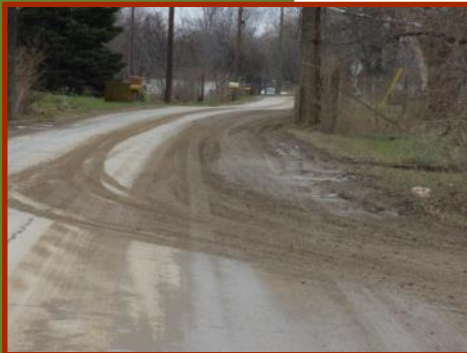
6-9 PM

Six In-person sessions at the
Marion County Extension
Office
\$65

This six-week course is a discussion-based, interactive workshop bringing women growers together to learn from experts in urban agriculture production, financial management, human resources, marketing and the legal field. It focuses on building a sustainable urban agricultural business.

Stop That Dirt! Campaign

By Alena Jones, SWCD Urban Conservationist



There are hundreds of construction sites active each year across Marion County. Although SWCD and City inspectors are always working to identify sites that are contributing to sediment pollution and

help contractors attain compliance, citizen identification of sites with issues is key to keeping Indiana waters clean. Public complaints about erosion and sediment pollution can be submitted to the Soil and Water Conservation District or directly to the Indiana Department of Environmental Management via their websites, and an inspector will go out to the site to assist.

How do you know if a site should be visited by an inspector to check for issues? A good rule of thumb is that sites without problems typically look tidy and well-maintained - there isn't mud and dirt tracked all over the roads, debris from construction activities is properly contained on the site itself, and trash is properly contained in dumpsters.

If a site is causing sediment pollution or erosion issues, often the first sign is that mud is being tracked off the site and into the surrounding streets, or there is no barrier (which might look like a fabric fence, or like rolls stuffed with filter materials and staked into the ground) between the work area and surrounding properties. Any time you observe a chemical leak onsite, it's an issue. There should never be muddy water running into storm drains, rivers, or

streams.

If you are curious about what good construction practices look like, you can reach out to the District to request a Shirt Pocket guide, which has photos of what construction sites should and shouldn't look like. If you're concerned and unsure whether a site is a problem, it never hurts to reach out to IDEM or the SWCD with photos. Citizens and neighborhoods keeping an eye out can help make sure that best practices are followed and construction is completed in a way that respects the needs of neighbors and the environment! Visit <https://marionswcd.org/construction/> for more information and to learn more about our Stop That Dirt! Erosion Watch Campaign.

If you see excessive erosion from a construction site contact us!

Support Urban Conservation - Become a SWCD Affiliate Member!

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

What is a SWCD Affiliate Member?

SWCD Affiliate Members are special people, organizations and companies who support the work of the Marion County SWCD financially.

These funds are vitally needed to sustain and enhance the work we do for our county. Here are a few conservation work areas where funds are used:

Erosion Control

Land Use Consultations

Drainage Assistance

Soil Health Initiatives

Invasive Plant Eradication

Water Quality Improvements

Stream Stewardship

Wildlife Enhancements

Ecological Education

Exciting News & Events from our Local Partners

Our district works with various partners to deliver technical assistance on natural resource management through workshops and public outreach. Three key local partners include Friends of White River, Reconnecting to Our Waterways (ROW) and the City of Indianapolis-Office of Sustainability. Check out these exciting announcements from these great organizations:

Friends of White River

Long time White River advocate Kevin Hardie has retired after 21 years of service as Executive Director and a founding member of Friends of White River. Our District Manager John Hazlett was able to attend [Kevin's retirement party on November 18th](#) and Kevin was honored with a [Special Resolution](#) by the City County Council on December 2nd. We thank Kevin for his many years of service and welcome new Executive Director Scott Salmon with whom we recently conducted a Stream Steward Workshop at Spirit Lake in Broad Ripple.



The ROW Collective is in the process of creating a new strategic plan to guide its efforts over the next three years. ROW's intention is to center equity, diversity, inclusion and justice in a new strategic plan. To ensure this, ROW is examining those currently at the collective table, given voice during discussions, and making decisions. ROW also seeks input from partners and broader community to inform the development of this plan. ROW wants to hear from YOU!

To start ROW would like to know which of these words that make up our name, *Reconnecting-to-Our-Waterways*, is most important to you? Give a quick 30-second explanation through [this webpage](#).

In addition to the video, ROW would like you to [take this survey](#), which asks what activities you think are the most important for ROW to focus and what brings you to the ROW collective and what you want to take away from the collective.

City of Indianapolis-Office of Sustainability

Help keep our waterways clean by participating in an electronics recycling and drug take back event organized by the Office of Sustainability on January 22nd, 2022. This is the first of four events being held in 2022. [More information can be found here](#)



Reconnecting to Our Waterways (ROW)

Reconnecting to Our Waterways (ROW) is a collective impact initiative that has worked purposefully since 2012 to improve the quality of life and ecology along Indianapolis waterways and surrounding neighborhoods. ROW's mission is to convene community partners to enhance quality of life through innovation, analysis, cultural advancement and investment along Indy waterways and neighborhoods.

Small Farm Conference 2022





Non-suckering woody invasives can be treated during the dormant season.

For a more information on invasive plant species visit our website:

<https://marionswcd.org/invasive-species/>

Winter Invasive Plant Control

Getting a little cabin fever this winter? Work on getting control of invasive plants in your yard and neighborhood. A number of plant forms are able to be treated during the dormant season including winter annuals, biennials, non-suckering woody species and woody vines.

Any green non-dormant plant can be treated with a foliar herbicide combined with a surfactant appropriate for the area. Studies have shown glyphosate works well when air and soil temperatures are above freezing.

Non-suckering woody species can be treated by either cutting the plant off and treating the stump or using the hack and squirt method where you cut deeply into the trunk in several places and squirt herbicide into the slices. Basal bark treatments tend to work better later in the dormant season.

For a large stand of exotic shrubs, consider leveling with a forestry mower (*mastication*) to facilitate selective management of the resprouts. Resprouting following mastication is often reduced compared to saw-cutting, possibly due to the physical damage and shattering of the root collar area. Resprouts of non-suckering species can be foliar-treated late the next growing season.

Winter is also a great time to cut woody vines. Cut vines to the ground now and



when they resprout in the summer you can foliar spray the regrowth. Leave the cut-off vines in the trees so you don't do any damage to the tree or yourself.

A combination of glyphosate and triclopyr can be a good herbicide for areas with a variety of undesirable species. Roundup Poison Ivy Plus Tough Brush Killer is an example of a product using this combination. Be extra careful using these chemicals near young desirable trees or trees with damaged bark.

For more information visit our website and the articles linked below from Penn State Extension.

<https://extension.psu.edu/tis-the-season-winter-invasive-plant-control>

<https://extension.psu.edu/one-herbicide-mix-to-do-it-all-almost>

SOIL HEALTH IN HIGH TUNNELS



WORKSHOP SERIES

- 1/14: Intro & foundations - *Cara Bergschneider*
- 2/18: Microbial ecology - *Dr. Lori Hoagland*
- 3/18: Pepper production - *Dr. Petrus Langenhoven*
- 4/1: Farmer roundtable
- April 18-22: Regional, in-person

Register:

bit.ly/soil-health-high-tunnels

New Years Conservation Resolutions

Don't let the cold weather keep you down! Winter is a great time to plan and tackle new projects that will help the environment and improve your own health. Here are 10 conservation project ideas to get you started:

- 1) **Litter Clean-up.** Walk your neighborhood or park and pick up litter. Bring along gloves and a trash bag.
- 2) **Recycle.** Clean out your home, garage, and basement to reduce, re-use and [recycle](#).
- 3) **Drop off toxic materials.** While you're cleaning out, box up old paint and other toxic substances so you're all ready to take it in to be disposed of properly. Visit the [city's website](#) for days and locations where you can drop them off.
- 4) **Plan a garden.** Grab a few library books and plan a vegetable garden. Draw up your plan to include conservation techniques including cover crops, companion plantings and a composting area. Visit our website to learn about our [Soil Health program](#).
- 5) **Shop seed catalogues and start seedlings indoors.** There are many great companies that provide seed and information on how to start your garden. Most of the companies bring out their new catalogues in December & January.
- 6) **Take a winter hike** – visit a nearby county or state park. Call ahead and you may find an organized nature hike or bird watch group you can join.
- 7) **Make a birdhouse.** There are many free plans online including those from the magazine [Birds & Blooms](#) and the [North American Bluebird Society](#).
- 8) **Participate in [Cornell University's bird count](#).** Set up a feeder, provide water and enjoy the show!
- 9) **Create wildlife habitat.** Find ideas or certify your yard on the [National Wildlife Federation's](#) website. Frost seed wildlife food plots, native plants and forbs – learn how on [Purdue Extension's website](#) or on their [YouTube channel](#).
- 10) **Get involved in tackling invasive plant species & restore beneficial native vegetation.** See our article on page 6 and visit our web-

site for more information: <https://marionswcd.org/invasive-species/>
Get a full up-to-date listing of invasive plants in Indiana HERE
<https://www.entm.purdue.edu/iisc/invasiveplants.php>



Participate in [Cornell University's bird count](#). Set up a feeder, provide water and enjoy the show!

COMING SOON!

Be sure to check our [Blogs](#) for announcements on the release of our three new publications! Coming soon are booklets on Rain Gardens, Native Plants and a comprehensive Stream Steward Guide. These will be available both online and in printed form.





MARION COUNTY
SOIL AND WATER
—CONSERVATION DISTRICT—

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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 hours are limited 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.

Winterizing Construction Sites



Under ideal circumstances all construction sites would have good vegetative cover throughout the site 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 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.

- 1) Expect the cost for inspections and maintenance of erosion control to increase substantially during the winter.
- 2) Minimize the amount of soil disturbed and left unprotected.
- 3) Create wide buffer strips of vegetation downhill from slopes.
- 4) Divert surface runoff away from critical slopes to a safe out let.
- 5) Use thick mulch (twice as thick as during the growing season) with netting on bare areas.
- 6) Consider frost seeding for early spring growth. While stabilizing the ground before the cold winter weather hits is

preferred, seeding with a winter mix and applying mulch can help reduce erosion after most seeding dates have passed. The optimum time to conduct frost seeding is in late winter to early spring after the snow is gone but while the ground is still frozen. In Indiana, frost seeding should occur from **February 1st to March 15th**. Hydroseed where erosion control blankets are not appropriate.

- 7) Protect bare swales and channels with rip rap or high quality erosion control blankets.
- 8) Inspect all erosion control practices regularly. Be proactive by identifying areas that will be subject to concentrated flow during snow melt or winter rains. Performing the required self-inspections can help to identify those problem areas and can guide you to make positive changes to your erosion control plan. By identifying areas that may fail, you can take steps to prevent noncompliance issues.

If you have questions or a problem area on your site feel free to contact our office.

Follow us on
Facebook!



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