

Conservation Today For Tomorrow

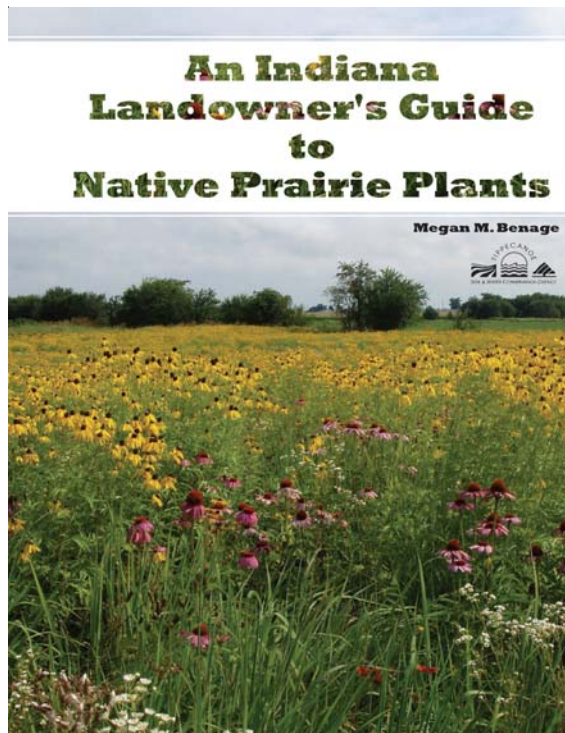
Education Edition

Fall, 2009
Lafayette, Indiana

Tippecanoe SWCD Publishes New Guide Book to Easily Identify Native Plants and Grasses

Why native?

Native plants do not need to be watered or weeded as much as some exotic horticultural plants. Native plants can add color and vibrancy to your landscape as well as providing micro-habitats for our native bees, birds, and butterflies! Going native means you have concern for our environment and are helping to preserve remnant species with 100 feet of garden or 10 acres of landscape. Thank you for helping put more conservation on the land!



You may purchase the new field guide by calling our office or stopping in to see us

The purpose of this guide is to allow landowners to identify Indiana prairie species in seedling and adult stages in their own plantings. Descriptions are meant to be very basic and easy to understand. If you have never studied plants before the SWCD hopes you can pick up this guide and become readily familiarized with some common terms and identification tips. There is a glossary at the end of the guide to use as a reference. The guide is organized by bloom time, which will allow users to easily identify species in the early, mid, and late growing season. This will also allow landowners to choose flower/grass mixes that will bloom throughout the entire growing season.

The new field guide was a year-long process that started with native grass seeds being planted in small planters and meticulously cared for. Lamps were erected to provide light to the young seeds as they germinated. Thank you to Gary Warring Photography, the Smithsonian Institute, and Spence Restoration Nursery for their many pictures of seedlings and mature native grasses, wildflowers, noxious weeds, and plants of concern. For more information or to purchase a guide, please call our office at (765) 474-9992, Ext 3.

WREC Hosts First Wabash Sampling Blitz

The Wabash River Enhancement Corporation (WREC), Purdue University, and hundreds of volunteers collected water quality samples from more than 200 stream sites which drain to the Wabash River on Friday, September 18th. The sites were located throughout the 478 square mile region of the Great Bend of the Wabash River watershed, which includes all tributaries draining to the River from Burnett's Creek to Little Pine Creek or roughly from Battle Ground to Attica. Funding for the program was provided by a grant from Indiana American Water.

More than 180 volunteers collected and analyzed samples for nutrients (nitrate, nitrite, orthophosphate), copper, pH, and temperature. A subset of samples will be analyzed by Purdue University for pathogens including e.Coli, carbon, and nutrient concentrations. Maps of the collected data were created on-site and are posted to the WREC website www.wabashriver.net and were presented at Purdue University's Green Week Sustainability Showcase.

WREC staff hopes that this will be the first of an annual event with the possibility of sampling being repeated in the spring of 2010. Missed out on sampling this time and want to be involved in this or other WREC events? Contact Sara Peel at speel@lafayette.in.gov or (765) 337-9100 or check them out online at www.wabashriver.net or Facebook.

Going Native (Just like the Bees)

Ever looked at a bumblebee? Ever imagined what it would be like to feel your tiny wings, barely a blur, beating the air to get from color splash to color splash of flowers. How do you know which flowers to visit? What's tasty and what's not?

Believe it or not bumblebees aren't that different from us. Bumblebees are used to certain plants being in their habitat and when new plants arrive they have to decide which they like best by watching their peers, learning from the adults in the hive, and experimenting. This is similar to how we behave. If you were at the dinner table and were used to having mashed potatoes, chicken and biscuits to eat and all of a sudden brussel sprouts were placed in front of you, what would your reaction be? Most likely you would respond with, "Yuck! I'm not eating that, it's gross!" But if you haven't actually tried it how would you know? And what would make you want to try it? Maybe your little brother stuffs big spoonfuls into his mouth and seems to enjoy it. Or maybe your mom and dad say that you can't leave the table until you try a bite. Regardless, you are learning from your little brother, mom and dad, and your own taste test about what you like.

Bees are the same way. They are a colony animal so they have lots of examples to learn from.

So using our same bumblebee example, what can you expect to happen when the native plants they recognize are removed and completely different plants are placed in their habitat? Bees and plants have adapted together over hundreds of years—with plants developing showy or colorful flowers so that bees will visit them and the bees receive nectar from the plant while the flowers receive pollinators. It's a true symbiotic relationship. Bees know from genetics, peer observation, and a history of taste testing what they like. What happens when native plants are removed and replaced with nonnatives - especially on a relatively quick time scale? Just like us with the brussel sprouts, bees would have to start all over again to figure out what they like and what is beneficial to them. But unlike us, it could take the bees and the new plants hundreds more years to adapt...or even worse, the new plants could be ones that do not require insect pollinators.

Native plants are just as important to us as they are to the bees and other wildlife.

Native plants help rejuvenate soil, typically use less water than ornamentals, and have many showy varieties. Because native plants belong in their habitat, they are better at utilizing the resources in that habitat, e.g., water, nutrients. They know what to expect and can compete readily with other plants that may be foreign to the area.

For more information on 'Going Native' contact the Tippecanoe County Soil and Water Conservation District 765-474-9992 ext. 3

**- Megan Benage
Rural Conservationist**



Meet Our New Employees

Joe Avram, Urban Conservation Technician, comes to us from Bradley University where he received his BS in Civil Engineering and furthered his education with a MBA from Northern Illinois University. Joe is currently a student pursuing a Masters degree in Civil Engineering in the field of Geomatics. To his credit, Joe is a LEED Accredited Professional.

Dan Dunten has a Master's Degree in Environmental Science and a BS in horticulture. His previous work experience relates directly to the District's Backyard Conservation Program, as well as his other part-time position as the Environmental Stewardship Coordinator for the West Lafayette Board of Parks and Recreation. Welcome aboard Dan!

SIGN-UP ANNOUNCED FOR NEW CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

Agriculture Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan announced that the U.S. Department of Agriculture will begin continuous sign-up for the new Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). CSP encourages agricultural and forestry producers to maintain existing conservation activities and adopt additional ones on their operations.

The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (2008 Farm Bill) authorizes CSP, which is administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Eligible lands include cropland, grassland, improved pastureland, non-industrial private forestland (a new land use for the program).

With CSP in continuous sign-up, USDA is able to offer producers greater opportunity to enroll their eligible acreage in the program. Producers are encouraged to use the self-screening checklist first to determine whether the new program is suitable for them and their operation. The checklist is available on the NRCS CSP Web site and at local NRCS field offices.

For more information about CSP, including the self-screening checklist and the CSP activity list, visit http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/new_csp/csp.html or contact NRCS at your local USDA Service Center. USDA Service Center locations can be found at: http://www.in.nrcs.usda.gov/contact/directory/field_offices.html.

The Solution to Pollution: Water Quality Education – Storm Drain Marking Program in Tippecanoe County

It is a common misnomer that storm drains, whether in the form of curb inlets or catch basins, connect to sewer systems. However, most storm drains in Tippecanoe County and other communities take storm water runoff directly to nearby waterways without passing the runoff through a treatment facility.

Within the storm water runoff from storm drains, many items pollute storm water including: lawn clippings, leaves, pet waste, pesticides, fertilizers, paint, used motor oil, household cleaners, and runoff from car washing on an impervious (hard, non-drainable) surface – all of which drain directly to the Wabash River and its tributaries in Tippecanoe County. Even small amounts of anti-freeze and household cleaners can harm fish and wildlife. Polluted storm water damages rivers, lakes, and streams; additionally threatening our groundwater drinking water supply.

Storm drain marking is an activity that draws attention to many types of non-point source pollution and what we can do to reduce and prevent this type of pollution. Not only does storm drain marking warn people not to dump their waste down the storm drain, but it also informs them of options for disposal of their used oil, anti-freeze, lawn and garden chemicals, pet waste, and any other litter that might otherwise be carried into a drain.

Storm drain marking is an educational, interactive tool to engage people of all ages in a community watershed pollution prevention program. Marking alerts others to the fate of runoff water and the pollution carried with it from lawns and streets. The markings are highly visible with either a white spray paint message of “No Dumping, Drains to River” or a curb marker button. The curb marker depicts a fish and water drop forming a heart to remind people of the union between storm water and the rivers to which it drains. Both markings raise environmental awareness in addition to leading towards pollution prevention.

Anyone can participate in the county’s effort to mark storm drains. The Tippecanoe County Partnership for Water Quality (TCPWQ) in cooperation with the Tippecanoe Soil and Water Conservation District can provide the necessary supplies to anyone willing to volunteer and mark storm drains within Tippecanoe County. Groups (including 4-H clubs, girl scouts, boy scouts, youth groups, families, homeowner associations, etc.) or individuals who want to volunteer are encouraged to participate.

While we do not provide transportation or chaperones for supervision of younger participants, we do provide the marking supplies, a map of the area to be marked and give a brief demonstration of how to use both marking tools. Please contact the SWCD to set up your spring 2010 marking event today.

Let Us Come To You

Did you know the Tippecanoe Soil and Water Conservation District will visit your school, church, home, homeowners association, and other meetings to discuss soil and water environmental concerns? Our knowledgeable staff makes hundreds of on-site visits every year in Tippecanoe County and our services include:

Education in the Classrooms. Invite Don Emmert, Water Quality Educator, into your classroom or work together on a field trip to a creek and study its hydrology, habitat, chemical, and biological characteristics. He can also bring hands-on activities into the classroom during all times of the year for ages K-12. With tight budgets for field trips, this is a free alternative with no cost to the school.

Backyard Conservation. Dan Dunten, Urban Conservation Technician, will work with you to plan a beautiful rain garden in a wet area of your property or manage your stormwater with the help of a rain barrel. Call Dan for more information.

On-Site Landowner Visits. Do you have a question about erosion and want to know how to slow or stop this natural process? You can make an appointment with Joe Avram, Urban Conservation Technician, to visit with you on your property to discuss alternatives to your land issues.

Agricultural Land Needs. Did you know the SWCD has two no-till drills available for rent? Our buffer initiative to protect streams and beautify less than productive fields into native grass prairies continues to increase in popularity every year.

Contact Megan Benage for more information about drill rental and seed orders.

Specific Questions about the SWCD. What else can the Soil and Water Conservation District do for you? Our District Administrator, Chris Remley, is the person to call or e-mail. She will put you in contact with the right person and assist you with aerial photos, soils maps, and highlight many of the activities and programs happening within the SWCD that might assist you. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions or concerns you may have. You are the eyes and ears of Tippecanoe County’s natural resources and we rely on your input to continue the protection of our land. Please contact us at <http://www.tippecanoecountyswcd.org> or (765) 474-9992, Ext 3 for more information.



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Learn to be a Leader in Watershed Management

Sign up now to improve your watershed management skills – a great opportunity for teachers providing watershed education or those interested in integrating a program into your current curriculum.

If you're interested in water quality and watersheds, consider applying for the 2010 Indiana Watershed Leadership Academy. The Academy, organized by Purdue University with support from the Indiana Department of Environmental Management and other Indiana conservation agencies and organizations, gives participants the chance to:

- Engage in basic and advanced level watershed topics covering leadership principles, watershed science, organization and communication, technology and GIS, stakeholder involvement techniques and policy skills
- Meet, learn from, and build a network of peers
- Interact with topic experts
- Gain strategies, skills, and resources for successful watershed management
- Earn a Professional Certificate in Watershed Management

Enrollment deadline: November 2, 2009

Web site: for the online application and information about the Academy, visit <http://www.purdue.edu/watersheds>.

Academy Fee: \$500, due on December 10, 2009 (includes lodging, food, and course materials)

Format: Training includes three face-to-face group sessions and distance learning, online (approximately 3-4 hrs./week). The Academy runs from January to May, 2010.

Recognition: Participants who complete all requirements earn a Purdue University Continuing Education Professional Certificate in Watershed Management.

For more information and to fill out the application, please contact Laura Esman, lesman@purdue.edu, or see the **Academy Web Page** www.purdue.edu/watersheds