

CONSERVATION COMMENTS

Preble Soil and Water Conservation District

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SWCD
Web Address:
www.prebleswcd.org

Please visit our website!

Ohio Trees—Order yours from us today!

Ohio is part of the great central-hardwood-forest region. The greater portion of Ohio's land area was once covered with a dense, virgin forest. Of the almost 26.1 million acres of land, approximately 25 million acres were covered with forests. By 1940, this huge forest had been reduced to about 1.6 million acres, or about 10 percent of the total land area. Clearing for agricultural purposes was the principal reason for the clearings. Over the last 50 years, Ohio has added to its woodlands. By 1996, Ohio had 7.9 million forested acres and was 30 percent wooded.

Breaks in the original forest area existed in the western sections of the state where prairie openings or patches existed and in the wetlands along the Lake Erie shore. Prairie openings were dominated by tall prairie grasses. Associated with these openings or patches were scattered trees of open-forest growth, characterized by a bur oak-hickory type. There were, however, no extensive areas comparable to the vast prairie openings of the middle-western states.

The forests of Ohio contain a wealth of native tree species. At least 120 species of trees are native to the state, not including the small trees such as hawthorns that would add approximately 30 more species or varieties to the list. Of the 120 species of native trees, 14 species belong to the oaks, six to the hickories, six to the ash, and seven to the maple group. In addition, 15 species of willow have been identified in the state, although only three are of commercial importance.

What is the value of planting trees? All trees have their own purposes. Some are valued for the production of lumber, while others are used as beautiful shade trees because of their form and habit of growth. Other trees are used for urban purposes. These same trees afford shelter, food, and protection to both bird and animal life, whether planted around homes or growing in fields and forests. They protect soil from erosion, conserve moisture, protect water quality, and modify both soil and air temperature extremes during the summer and winter months. Trees reduce energy use by filtering winds, blocking summer sun, and allowing the passage of winter sunlight. Recently, there has been evidence showing the presence of vegetation, especially trees in urban areas, encourages positive interactions among people and is associated with lower crime rates.

Several of our native forest trees serve dual purposes. They are valued for both their timber and their aesthetic qualities. Red oak is one fine example of a tree suitable for timber as well as for shade and street planting.

Trees for Lumber Purposes

The trees most important for lumber usage are white oak, black walnut, tulip tree, red oak, white ash, sugar maple, basswood, American elm, slippery elm, wild black cherry, bur oak, and swamp white oak.

Trees for Shade and Ornamental Purposes

The native Ohio trees best adapted for shade and ornamental purposes include sugar maple, red oak, bur oak, pin oak, black tupelo, sweet gum, flowering dogwood, red maple, redbud, honeylocust, white pine, and Washington hawthorn.

Trees for Windbreaks and Reforestation

Norway spruce, Austrian pine, red pine, white pine, and Eastern arborvitae are used extensively for windbreak plantings. Conifers assist with reforestation. Both the white pine and the Austrian pine have been planted around farmsteads.

Now that you know what to do with the tree seedlings you order from us, why don't you put your order in today. There is an order form in this newsletter and a printable order form on our web site www.prebleswcd.org.

- Thanks to OSU Extension and Shelby SWCD for information contained in this article -



Preble SWCD Welcomes New Employee

My Path to Passion By Michelle Illing



I am Preble Soil and Water Conservation District's new Conservation Assistant through AmeriCorps Environmental Stewards program, working until December 2012. As I begin my time here I would like to take some time for you to get to know me and the journey that has brought me to Eaton, Ohio. On July 12, 1987 in Zanesville, Ohio, a star was born. At least that's what my mother always says. That day I was named Michelle Illing. Growing up with a brother being six years older and the polar opposite of me, usually gave me time to spend with my parents. He was always out with friends and I liked to stay close to home. I lived in the same house in the middle of the city until I was 16 and my parents divorced. I also have a "should-be sister" that I met when I was eight. Zanesville was the only place I really knew until after I graduated high school.

Right out of high school I decided to follow a dream to become an interior designer. For the first time, I left home to attend the University of Cincinnati. I returned home after a quarter when I realized that that wasn't what I wanted. I believe everything happens for a reason. It turned out to be the best thing for me. I was able to find my true self and become that star my mom always talked about.

Even as a little girl I was always fascinated with being outdoors. I loved spending a whole day walking around the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium and watching the animals. The penguins were, and still are, a favorite stop at the zoo. I didn't realize it ran so deep until I grew up and it resurfaced while watching the movie *Happy Feet*. I had an epiphany.

The movie opened my eyes to the world. The planet Earth, which we humans share with many *amazing* creatures, was finally in perspective for me. I realized we are threatening many species and it really affected how I viewed the world. I began to care, beyond my fascinations locally, at a global scale. That is the moment that I realized my passion about changing the way we treat our planet. I wanted to do everything in my power to make the world a better place for the future.

I searched colleges for a conservation related program. It led me to Zane State College where in fall of 2007, I began my Parks, Recreation, and Wildlife program. Two years later, I earned my Associate of Applied Science, and became the first one in my entire family to earn a college degree.

During my time in college, I was a Student Admissions Representative (STAR), a lab assistant through a work-study program, the Secretary/Treasurer of both the Natural Resources club and Student Senate. In addition, I interned at Muskingum Soil and Water Conservation District with the Education Specialist, volunteering as a counselor during their summer Conservation Camp and assisting with school programs and local events. I volunteered all through college doing community service projects for ODOT, Habitat for Humanity, and the Salvation Army. In March of 2010, it was time to test my education and passion.

I accepted a Conservation Educator seasonal position at *the Wilds*, North America's largest conservation facility and a non-profit, AZA accredited organization. It was a breath taking, surreal, and exciting place to call work. Work is hardly called work when you are passionate about it. There was something special about living around endangered animals, educating people about the importance of conservation, interpretative hiking, and living in a Mongolian-style yurt for the year that will always be a highlight of my career.

For most of 2011, I was a preschool teacher and I enjoyed educating children about nature and conservation. That led me to apply at the Preble SWCD. During this one year internship, I am excited to learn more about the agricultural practices of conservation. Growing up in southeastern Ohio, I am more familiar with woodlands and grassland prairies, so this is a drastic change for me. Change is always hard to accept, but sometimes it is needed to succeed at life.

Steve Irwin said it best, "If there's one thing I would want to be remembered for, its passion and enthusiasm. Conservation is my job, my life, my whole being."

The Great Backyard Bird Count

-Thanks to Preble County Historical Society

Take a mid-winter nature break with the Great Backyard Bird Count February 17th-20th, 2012, at the Preble County Historical Center, located at 7693 Swartsel Road, Eaton, Ohio (about six miles Southeast of Eaton).

Each checklist submitted by these "citizen scientists" helps researchers at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society learn more about how the birds are doing—and how to protect them. Last year, participants turned in more than 92,000 checklists online, creating the continent's largest instantaneous snapshot of bird populations ever recorded.

This event is FREE and open to the public. Join in the fun, hike the trails; it's a great winter family-oriented activity. Guided hikes will be offered, or hike at your leisure on the six miles of trails throughout the Center's grounds. Children's activities will be offered: make a bird-house, suet, bird feeders, bird puzzles, bird word search, coloring pages, and plenty more! All children must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. Please remember to dress appropriate for the weather.

For updates about the Great Backyard Bird Count sponsored by the Preble County Historical Society on February 17th-20th, call (937)787-4256, or email: preblecohistoc@brecnet.com, or visit their web site: <http://www.pchs.preblecounty.com>.

Preble Soil & Water Conservation District
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Return Service Requested

PREBLE SWCD TREE SALE

Look inside for the 2012 Tree
Sale flyer!

Dates to Remember:

Feb. 15-Board Meeting @ 7am
Feb. 17-20-Great Backyard Bird Count
March 16-Tree Sale Order Deadline
March 21-Board Meeting @ 7am
April 3-Tree Pick Up Day (office hours)
April 18-Board Meeting @ 7am

All programs and services of the Preble SWCD are offered on a nondiscrimination basis, without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, or handicap.

Crop Insurance and Cover Crops

From USDA Risk Management Agency

Heavy spring rains last year delayed planting in parts of the Midwest, raising concerns about the impact a cover crop may have on the insurability of a subsequent spring crop. Restrictions limited insurance coverage on crops that followed a cover crop that was harvested or reached the budded stage in the same crop year.

An announcement made by the Risk Management Agency (RMA) outlines changes that will provide producers more flexibility when insuring a crop that follows a cover crop in the states of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio.

For 2012, crops planted following a cover crop are insurable as long as the cover crop is killed on or before June 5th. Whether the cover crop has headed, budded or has been harvested no longer affects insurability. These changes affect corn, popcorn, sweet corn, hybrid seed corn, pumpkins, soybeans, grain sorghum, and processing beans. The cover crop practice is defined: as a crop planted within 12 months of planting the insurable crop and is recognized as a sound agronomic conservation practice for the area.

Brian D. Frieden, Director of the Springfield Regional Office, RMA, said that this change recognizes the importance of crop insurance by protecting a producer's livelihood and conservation by protecting the soil.

For more details on how cover crops may impact your crop insurance policy, contact a crop insurance agent. Winter is the perfect time to review your crop insurance needs for 2012. Information on cover crops can be found by going to the Information Browser link at the Risk Management Agency website at <http://www.rma.usda.gov/>. Producers can get the specifics by entering the crop and county where the farm is located and looking at the Special Provisions.

Please Note:

Are you receiving this newsletter in error, or are there corrections that need to be made to your name and/or address? Do you know of someone else who would like to receive this newsletter? If so, please call the office at (937) 456-5159 and speak to Michelle.