

CONSERVATION COMMENTS

Preble Soil and Water Conservation District

1651 North Barron Street, Eaton, Ohio 45320-1021

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FEBRUARY 2015

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Biologist, Renee Buck



SWCD
Web Address:
www.prebleswcd.org

Please visit our website!

2015 Tree Seedling Sale

The Annual Tree Seedling Sale is now underway at Preble SWCD, offering 19 different species of conifers, hardwoods, small trees and shrubs, as well as groundcover. These plants can be used for windbreaks, landscaping, reforestation, and wildlife habitat. There are no restrictions on where these seedlings may be planted, or how many may be ordered. This year we have several new species that have not been offered in the past. Take a look at the descriptions and see if there is something to add to your next landscaping or wildlife project. Please see the order form inside this newsletter.

The 1-2 year old seedlings are bare-rooted and sold in packages of 5 to 10 trees, depending on the species. Each package is dipped in a preservative gel to keep the roots moist, and then placed in a plastic bag. The seedlings should be planted as soon as they are received. Orders will be taken until Friday, March 27th. Payment must accompany the order in the form of cash or check. No orders will be taken by fax or e-mail. This year's pickup date will be Tuesday, April 14th, at the Preble SWCD Office. A reminder postcard will be sent out prior to the pickup date.

A description of each of the tree species is included on the back of the order form. If you would like more information about the plants for sale or their suitability for planting, please contact the office at (937) 456-5159.



Preble SWCD is Hiring

Preble SWCD is seeking qualified applicants for a full-time Office Assistant/Educator position.

Applicants must meet the following job qualifications:

- Be at least 18 years of age and in possession of a valid driver's license
- Possess an Associate's or Bachelor's Degree in Agriculture or Natural Resources or a related field of study, or in the absence of a degree, must possess equivalent knowledge or experience
- Strong oral and written communication skills
- Proficient in using Microsoft Word, Excel, and Publisher programs
- Able to work in a variety of outdoor conditions

Job duties include:

- Performing bookkeeping and clerical duties
- Promoting Preble SWCD through classroom demonstrations and outreach activities
- Assisting technical staff with field work as needed, and other duties as assigned

Please contact Preble SWCD for more details or to receive an application. Applications must be received at the Preble SWCD Office no later than 3:30 p.m. on Friday, February 6, 2015. Please direct all inquiries to BJ Price at (937) 456-5159 or bjprice@prebleswcd.org.

Groundhog Day BJ Price, Preble SWCD

Whistle Pig. Woodchuck. Gopher. Groundhog. Whatever you may call it, the largest member of the squirrel family is right at home across the landscape in southwest Ohio. The groundhog is well-known for its digging habits and supposed weather-predicting abilities.

Scientifically speaking, the groundhog is known as *Marmota monax*. Adults weigh from seven to 14 pounds, and the males are generally larger than the females. At maturity, adults measure up to 25 inches long, including the tail. The typical lifespan in the wild is only 2-3 years, with some living to a maximum of six years. The groundhog is territorial, except in breeding season, and has a home range of 40 to 160 acres.

Groundhogs typically feed in early morning and late evening, staying above ground for a few hours each day. Their diet typically consists of grasses, clover, alfalfa, corn, soybeans, peas, lettuce, and apples. In other words, they love to dine on vegetable gardens, hayfields, and crop fields. An adult will consume over one pound of vegetation each day. On occasion, they will eat insects, snails, and eggs. They have also been known to climb trees to eat apples and pawpaws. If they awake from hibernation prior to new plant growth, groundhogs will eat bark and small branches. They inhabit the fringes between wooded or brushy cover and open spaces.

The industrious groundhog often goes so far as to build separate winter and summer 'homes.' Groundhogs will head to wooded areas if they dig a separate winter burrow, which may be one long tunnel with only one opening. This winter burrow has a grass-lined nest at the far end, which is blocked off with soil during hibernation. Summer burrows are more complex and are located near grassy areas or agricultural fields. They may have branching tunnels ranging from one to 12 feet long. A main entrance will have a pile of fresh earth beside it, while side entrances are often smaller and better hidden. Their burrows are often destructive and can undermine building foundations.

Hibernation begins after the first frost, typically in late October. The groundhog rolls up into a ball, and body functions slow dramatically. Its temperature drops to below 60 degrees Fahrenheit, its pulse rate drops, and breathing slows to one breath in six minutes. While hibernating, the groundhog lives on stored body fat and may lose between one-third and one-half of its fall weight. Mating takes place just after awakening from hibernation, and birth takes place after 31-32 days of gestation. Most of the young leave the nest after 9-11 weeks, while some may stay behind to leave later on.

The lowly groundhog plays a pivotal role in weather-predicting happenings each year on Groundhog Day. Students who attended Eaton High School under Mr. Adsit's tenure as World History Teacher will certainly remember the Annual Groundhog Day Queen election. The neighboring states of Pennsylvania and West Virginia both have festivities for the day.

Given the earthy habits of the groundhog, how did it come to have a place in the sun (or shadow) each year on February second, Groundhog Day? According to the Pennsylvania Tourism Office, early Candlemas holiday celebrators in the Roman Empire declared clear skies on this day meant a longer winter. (Candlemas is celebrated February second, halfway between the first day of winter and the first day of spring.) The Romans brought the Candlemas tradition north to the Germans, who came to the conclusion that "if the sun appeared on Candlemas Day, a hedgehog would cast a shadow, thus predicting six more weeks of bad weather." When early German settlers came to America, they didn't have hedgehogs, but they did find groundhogs. Close enough, and today we say if a groundhog sees its shadow, there will be six more weeks of winter. If he does not see his shadow, there will be an early spring.

Given the habitat and climate we have in Southwest Ohio, groundhogs are here to stay. They are not trained meteorologists, yet have managed to earn a place in the weather-forecasting lore of the Eastern United States. Whether you believe the predications of the humble groundhog or not, it goes without saying that winter will be around for a while yet and spring will be here on the heels of winter.

Information courtesy of: Illinois Extension Service, Indiana DNR,
Missouri Department of Conservation, Ohio Division of Wildlife, and the Pennsylvania Tourism Office

Preble SWCD \$1000 Scholarship

The Preble Soil and Water Conservation District is once again offering a \$1000 College Scholarship to a Preble County high school graduate who is entering their sophomore year or above at an accredited college. They must be a full-time student pursuing an associate or bachelor degree in the field of agriculture or natural resources.

Candidates must be registered for the Fall Term of 2015. The recipient will be chosen during the April Board of Supervisors Meeting. The scholarship will be paid directly to the Bursar's Office of the winner's college prior to Fall Term. A current, official transcript must accompany the application. The scholarship is based on grade point average, field of study, community involvement, and the applicant's future goals.

The scholarship application and supporting material MUST be turned in at the District Office at 1651 North Barron St, Eaton OH by 4:00 p.m. Friday, April 10, 2015. The full criteria and application for the scholarship can be found on the website at www.prebleswcd.org or by stopping in at the office. For more information, feel free to call BJ at (937) 456-5159. Congratulations to last year's scholarship winner, Steven Sullender.

Preble Soil & Water Conservation District
1651 N. Barron Street
Eaton, OH 45320-1021
Office Hours-Monday-Friday 7:30a-4p
Phone: 937-456-5159
www.prebleswcd.org

Non-Profit Organization
U.S. Postage Paid
Permit #342
Eaton, OH 45320

Return Service Requested

PREBLE SWCD TREE SALE

Look inside for the
2015 Tree Sale flyer!

Dates to Remember:

Feb. 18-Board Meeting @ 7am
March 21-Tree Sale Order Deadline
March 18-Board Meeting @ 7am
April 14-Tree Pick Up Day
April 15-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.

Welcome Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Biologist Renee Buck

Hello everyone. My name is Renee Buck. I am the new Farm Bill Wildlife Biologist hired by Pheasants Forever, in cooperation with the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Ohio Division of Wildlife. My duty as a Farm Bill Wildlife Biologist will be to provide biological and technical assistance (with a wildlife focus) to landowners, government agencies, non-government organizations and anyone else seeking assistance with conservation related matters. I will be responsible for the implementation and application of biological sciences within the various conservation programs implemented by the Farm Bill, working primarily with the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). If you are currently enrolled in a Farm Bill conservation program or plan to be in the future, there is a good chance we will be working together at some point. The counties that I serve include Preble, Montgomery, Butler, Miami and Greene. I will be working out of the NRCS offices within each of the respective counties.

I grew up in Tecumseh, Michigan, a small town near the Ohio and Michigan State Line. I was always active in the outdoors and loved exploring the woods, rivers, and fields surrounding Tecumseh. I have always had a passion for wildlife and an interest in conservation. After graduating high school I decided to pursue a career in conservation and natural resources. After two years at a local community college I transferred to Michigan State University. I majored in Fisheries and Wildlife and received my Bachelor of Science in 2007. I then moved to Iowa and worked several seasonal positions with various government agencies and served two years as an AmeriCorps at a wildlife management unit with the Iowa DNR. I enjoy volunteering and getting involved with communities, when the time permits. I love being active and outdoors through biking, hiking and camping. I enjoy water and use a kayak to explore and do a little fishing. The major hobbies I enjoy are during the winter though, I play ice hockey and I snowboard.

I am excited to get to know the people and the area, and start working in all of the counties in my territory. I hope that I can be a great resource to anyone within the area who may need my assistance. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any comments, questions, concerns, or would just like to say hello. My work cell number is (937)578-8264 and my email is rbuck@pheasantsforever.org. I look forward to hearing from you!

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 BJ.