



# Preble Soil & Water Conservation District

*Conserving our Natural Resources*

**FEBRUARY 2017**

1651 North Barron Street  
Eaton, Ohio 45320-1021  
(937) 456-5159  
www.prebleswcd.org

## ***CONSERVATION COMMENTS***

### **BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

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Anna Smith - Admin. Assistant & Outreach Coordinator

### **NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE**

Jeff Barnes - District Conservationist  
Karen McCalister - Resource Conservationist

### **PHEASANTS FOREVER FARM BILL BIOLOGIST**

Renee Buck

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Get updates on our website:  
[www.prebleswcd.org](http://www.prebleswcd.org)

## **Get the Dirt on Your Dirt**

Having problems with the plants in your yard or garden? There's a good chance the root of the problem is, well, surrounding the roots. Soil health has a huge effect on the productivity of the plants growing in it. Come learn some of the basics of soil science, as well as practical information you can use to improve the soil in your yard and hopefully lead to a more productive garden.



Tuesday, March 7  
6:00 - 8:30 p.m.

Grace Lutheran Church, 111 Lutheran Dr., Eaton

Topics discussed will include basic soil health, how to take a soil sample, reading soil test results, fertilizer selection and application, using cover crops, and protecting local water resources.

Forty attendees will be accepted to participate. A free soil analysis will be provided to everyone who attends the program, compliments of funding received from the Ohio Federation of Soil and Water Conservation Districts

*Must be pre-registered to attend. RSVP to Preble SWCD at (937)456-5159.*

## **New Plant Sale Offerings**

The Annual SWCD Plant Sale is underway, and we have some new items available this year, including:

- Assorted tree packs including one each of several species. In the past, trees have only been available in quantities of 5 or 10.
- Perennial plants in one gallon pots. The species being offered are beneficial for bees, butterflies, and wildlife, as well as being low maintenance and easy to grow.
- A butterfly and hummingbird garden seed mix, which contains 26 assorted species which are beneficial for butterflies, bees, and hummingbirds.
- Strawberry plants
- As in past years, deciduous trees and shrubs, evergreens, and marking flags are available.
- Would you like to see pictures of the species we're offering? Visit [www.prebleswcd.org](http://www.prebleswcd.org) for more info.
- Orders will be collected through March 24. Get yours in today!



## **\$1,000 College Scholarship Available**

The Preble SWCD is once again offering a \$1,000 college scholarship to a resident of Preble County entering his or her sophomore year or above at an accredited college. Students pursuing an associate or bachelor's degree in the field of agriculture or natural resources are eligible.

Candidates must be registered to attend classes during the fall of 2017. 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 submitted to the SWCD office by 3:30 p.m. Friday, April 7. The full criteria and application can be found at [www.prebleswcd.org](http://www.prebleswcd.org) or by visiting the office. For more information, please call (937) 456-5159. Congratulations to last year's scholarship winner, Brian Ketring.

# Diversify Your Yard with the Preble SWCD Plant Sale

BJ Price, Preble SWCD

The Preble SWCD annual Plant Sale is underway, and for this year's installment of the 'why you should consider our tree sale article', we start with a math problem for you to consider. Take a walk in just about any woods around here and try to see how many different species of native trees and shrubs you can count. Now, compare that figure to the number of species present in your yard. How does your yard stack up? Granted, a small yard could not possibly contain as many species as a woodlot, but if your yard is like many in this area, it's likely there is much less diversity in your yard than in the natural environment.

Inquiring minds want to know, why do our yards lean more towards a monoculture, (a planting of one species), rather than a diverse mix like we find in nature? One reason for this might be the stately look of one tree species all in a row along your driveway or property line. Or, think how nice it looks to have several rows of blue spruce or Norway spruce trees in that



windbreak. Planting one species serves to keep things regular and uniform in these cases. The downside of planting a monoculture becomes evident when new diseases or invasive insects come on the scene which affect all trees in a particular species or family. Just think of the Chestnut Blight, to name one example. This disease virtually wiped out an entire species of trees. Several diseases of evergreens have the potential to suffer the same fate. The Emerald Ash Borer is currently munching its way through our forests with devastating effects.

So what is the answer to this mess of tree diseases? What we recommend is planting several different species. Typically our deciduous trees and shrubs are sold in bundles of five, but for those of you who would like to plant a mixture of species, and don't want five of each of them, we are offering an assorted small species packet and a mixed large tree packet. Consider the mature size and ideal growing conditions when choosing the right species for your site. And remember this old proverb: The best time to plant a tree was twenty years ago. The second-best time is now.

## New Fertilizer Certification Requirement

It has come to our attention that producers have questions regarding the new fertilizer application rules going into effect later this year. To clarify:

You are required to obtain Agricultural Fertilizer Certification if you:

- Apply fertilizer to more than 50 acres used for agricultural production grown primarily for sale.

What fertilizer is included in the certification?

- Fertilizer is considered to be any substance containing nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, or other plant nutrient in a dry or liquid formulation. All application types (broadcast, side dress, sub-surface, knifing, etc.) are included in the certification requirement.

Exemptions:

- Start-up fertilizers that are applied through a planter are exempt from this rule, as well as manure, lime, and limestone.
- Crops used on your farm and not sold are exempt. The rule applies to those crops from which you will sell any part of the plant.
- If you have the co-op or other custom applicator make your fertilizer applications, you do not need certification.

Fertilizer applicator certification must be obtained no later than September 30, 2017. Following that date, an exam will be required. For training opportunities, visit [www.nutrienteducation.osu.edu/trainingopportunities](http://www.nutrienteducation.osu.edu/trainingopportunities).

## Milkweed Pod Update

Thanks to everyone who collected milkweed pods last fall. Through the collective effort of SWCDs and residents throughout Ohio, approximately 2,500 gallons of milkweed pods were collected. Pods were delivered to Department of Corrections institutions, where inmates have been harvesting the seeds from the pods. Once harvested, seeds are stratified (placed in cold storage) for approximately 40 days to improve germination rates. Once the process is complete, some seeds will be distributed to the SWCDs who assisted with the collection last fall and remaining seed will be used on habitat projects throughout the state.

We hope to have seeds available to distribute, free of charge, in early April. If you are interested in receiving seeds when they arrive, please contact our office.

## BJ's Philosophy Box

"Winter comes in many forms." - Jeff Busscher, owner of Alpha Nurseries, supplier of tree seedlings for the plant sale

## Mark Your Calendars

Our second annual Conservation Camp will be held June 27-29. Applications for campers and counselors will be available in April on our website and in schools. Help spread the word!



## Upcoming Educational Opportunities

*Visit [prebleswcd.org/events](http://prebleswcd.org/events) for details and more listings.*

February 15, 22 - Planning for the Future of Your Farm

February 21 - Soil Health and Cover Crops

February 23 - Agronomy Workshop & Expo

March 1 - Woodland, Water, and Wildlife Conference

March 7 - Get the Dirt on your Dirt Workshop

March 7-8 - Conservation Tillage & Technology Conference

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

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To be removed from our mailing list or add someone new, call (937)456-5159 or email [annasmith@prebleswcd.org](mailto:annasmith@prebleswcd.org).

### Dates to Remember:

February 20 - Presidents' Day - Office Closed  
February 22 - Board Meeting 7:00 a.m.  
March 7 - Soils Program  
March 15 - Board Meeting 7:00 a.m.  
March 24 - Plant Sale Orders Due  
April 7 - Scholarship Applications Due  
April 11 - Plant Sale Pickup  
April 19 - Board Meeting 7:00 a.m.

*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. USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender*

## Pollinator Clinic

On December 3, the SWCD sponsored a Pollinator Clinic held at Grace Lutheran Church in Eaton.

If you missed the meeting, here's a quick summary:

- Pollinators such as bees and butterflies are a very important part of ecosystems and our food system - 1 in 3 bites of food requires pollinators
- Pollinator species have declined drastically in recent years
- Regulations could be put in place in the future affecting all landowners if the declining trend isn't reversed.
- Both small and large property owners can make changes to benefit pollinators. Find information at [www.prebleswcd.org/resources](http://www.prebleswcd.org/resources).

Thanks to those who attended the meeting and are using what you learned to benefit pollinators!

## Pesticide Applicator Training

In Ohio, anyone applying restricted-use pesticides or applying any type of pesticide for hire is required to hold a Pesticide Applicator's License. Maintaining this license requires holders to attend an update course every three years. On January 24, approximately 100 local farmers gathered at the Eaton First Church of God to attend a pesticide recertification course, in addition to the new fertilizer training being required of producers. These programs are designed to ensure protection of the environment and the general public when pesticides and fertilizer are applied.



## Whitewater River Sampling

Each year, Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (Ohio EPA) collects data from streams and rivers throughout the state. In 2017, Ohio EPA will be sampling the Whitewater River watershed in Preble, Darke, Butler, and Hamilton counties. During this survey, they will collect chemical samples, examine and count fish and aquatic insects, and take measurements of the stream. The physical, biological and chemical data will help determine water quality in the streams and identify areas in need of improvement. When completed, findings will be published in a subsequent report.

While some sampling work has been completed in the watershed, this will be the first comprehensive water quality and biological study of the entire watershed conducted by Ohio EPA.

If you're a stream-side landowner within the Whitewater River watershed, your help may be needed. Your permission may be requested to access a stream through your property. All Ohio EPA staff carry photo identification. If you think your property has good access to the Whitewater River or other tributaries within the watershed, you can contact Michelle Waller at (937) 285-6028 or Drew Phillips at (614) 836-8773 to volunteer. Thank you for your assistance.