Preble Soil & Water Conservation District

Conserving our Natural Resources

February 2025

2789 US Rt. 35 E.
West Alexandria, OH 45381
(937) 456-5159
www.prebleswcd.org

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Get updates on our website:
www.prebleswcd.org

Mark Your Calendars for Our First Scrap Tire Pickup

After months of planning, the Preble Soil and Water Conservation District is pleased to announce that we are hosting a scrap tire pickup this Spring. We all know that on the farm and even around the average home, it doesn't take very long for old tires to pile up. Our District is partnering with Ernst Tire to bring this free event to the residents of Preble County. We would much rather help collect them than to see them dumped in a side ditch. Here are all of the details:

Who: This event is open to all residents of Preble County. No out-of-county tires will be accepted.

What: Each resident of Preble County may bring no more than ten tires. Of those ten tires, you may bring up to two (2) large tractor tires no more than six feet in diameter plus eight automobile tires, OR you may bring up to four (4) semi truck/trailer tires plus six automobile tires.

When: March 18, 2025 in the afternoon

Where: Preble County Fairgrounds

Cost: Free! The Preble Soil and Water Conservation District is covering the tire disposal fees.

How do I register? Beginning on Friday, February 7 or any day after that, call the Preble Soil and Water Conservation District at (937) 456-5159 to make your reservation and to report how many tires you plan to bring. You will be assigned a time to arrive on March 18. Once all the time slots have booked up, you will be added to a waiting list. Keep in mind, we may not be able to accommodate everyone at this event. Reservations can only be made by phone and reservations cannot be made by email.

What not to bring: Tires from junkyards, garages, auto repair shops, dealerships, or other businesses will not be accepted.
Tires mounted on rims will not be accepted.
Tires containing excess dirt or trash may be rejected.

What to expect: When hauling, your tires must be secured, tarped, or enclosed. Upon arrival at the fairgrounds, you will be directed to a specific line depending on what size of tires you have. Ernst Tire staff will be present to help unload your tires. A skid loader or mini-hoe will be onsite to handle large tires. Please be on time.

Tree Sale Rolls Around Again

As of this writing, we have gone through one of the coldest spells in recent winters. The good news is, it won't be cold forever and spring will be here before we know it. Tucked inside this newsletter is our Tree Sale flyer, with several familiar favorites on the list and a few species we've never sold before.

Back after a several-year hiatus is Sassafras. What other tree can you find that has leaves shaped like spoons, forks, or mittens? The fall color is gorgeous, not to mention the tea that can be made from the roots.

Eastern Hophornbeam is not super-showy, but it does tolerate shade and poor soils. It also has interesting bark that resembles cat scratches. The male catkins are visible throughout winter and the mature fruit resembles the fruit of hops, hence the name Hophornbeam.

Also new on the list for 2025 is Sweet Shrub, or Carolina Allspice. The showy, dark-red flowers are said to have a banana-strawberry scent. This plant would do well in a shrub border or around a deck or patio where the fragrance from the flowers can permeate the area. It is a valuable plant for our native pollinators.

Take a look at the back side of the Tree Sale flyer with detailed descriptions of all the species we offer this year.

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Spring Ephemerals

By: Bobby Hansford, Preble SWCD Technician

As winter tucks its tail to make way for spring, something miraculous is happening inside of the rich warming soil in our forests. I'm sure we have all seen at least one spring ephemeral before. Whether it may have been the more common spring beauty, to the more conspicuous multi-colored Virginia bluebells, these flowers are essential to pollinators and animals to get out of the winter funk. Preble County has a great variety of wildflowers to wander upon.

A spring ephemeral is a fancy term for a spring flower that only lasts for a short period of time. The flowers only have a short growth period before the trees are able to produce their leaves for the growing season. A true spring ephemeral will generally die shortly after flowering. Mayapples will continue to grow underneath the canopy after flowering to produce a small apple like fruit, often eaten by box turtles. This represents only one of the many intricate relationships formed by flora and fauna.

There are a couple of different trilliums that have localized inside of our region. Trilliums are characterized by having leaves and petals in threes. Perhaps the easiest to find is toadshade. Toadshade has a maroon colored flower sitting atop a short stem and blooms anytime from April to May. Another common characteristic is the mottled leaves produced by toadshade, giving them a yellow greenish color. The large flowered trillium was named Ohio's state wildflower in 1986. This trillium is much larger than toadshade, sometimes reaching up to 20 inches tall. The flower is white but may turn pink with age, if it is able to grow sufficiently, because large flowered trilliums are a fan favorite to be grazed by deer and rabbits.

Whenever you begin to see the small white with pink striped flowers of the spring beauty, you know that spring is truly upon us. While there are other wildflowers that bloom even earlier than spring beauty, this ephemeral is very common to see out and about and truly confirms the warm weather ahead. Although spring beauties are small, they make up for their lack of size with their abundance. One of my personal favorites to stumble upon is Virginia Bluebells. Bluebells enjoy spending their time with wet feet near streams or floodplains. You will never forget them once you lay your eyes on the magnificent cluster of pinkish magenta flowers that turn blue when mature. Common visitors include bees, hummingbirds, butterflies, and even moths for pollination. Dutchman's breeches is another wildflower that is quite distinctive with small white fragrant "Pant" shaped flowers along a short stem. The leaves are as eccentric as the flower, displaying soft fernlike leaves that make the plant even more easily identifiable. Bumblebees are the main pollinator of the species from March to May. Another common name is little blue staggers. The name was earned rightfully, due to cattle that graze upon it and become under the influence of its toxic narcotic effects.

I always say there was never a time I have had a bad hike. I hope this inspires more of us to go outside and discover all the amazing things we have in our forests that surround us. Although you may have the urge to collect some of the flowers listed, they will generally wither away rather quick. If you really need to give someone flowers you should purchase other varieties that are not so frail and preserve our wildflowers for others to see. Pictures are some of the greatest memories and can provide a great learning tool for all. For more information about wildflowers and their identification, there is a great guide on the ODNR's website.

BJ's Philosophy Box

If you aren't gonna say exactly how and what you feel,
you might as well not say anything at all.

-Johnny Cash

The Great Dayton Flood of 1913

By: Bobby Hansford, SWCD Technician

The Great Dayton Flood of March 1913 resulted from the flooding of the Great Miami River, causing the most extreme natural disaster in Ohio's history. At the peak of the flood, the water was about 20 feet deep in downtown Dayton. The flood damage took nearly a full year for the city to be cleaned up and restored. However, the economic side of cleanup took roughly a decade to fully recover from. The cost of the flood was roughly 100 Million dollars in 1913, or about 3 Billion dollars in today's economy. The volume of water that passed through the river channel during this storm equaled the monthly flow over Niagara Falls.

The main driver for the Great Flood was the 8-11 inches of rain that fell upon the ground in the Great Miami River watershed, which was already saturated. That amount of rain in a few days coupled with less than proficient levees and dams exacerbated the issue. Of course, no one knew this would be the storm of the century. This flood is still the flood of record for the Great Miami River watershed. Other cities in Ohio that were flooded severely included Hamilton, Troy, and Piqua. Prior to the 1913 flood, the Dayton area had suffered major floods nearly every other decade, with major water flows in 1805, 1828, 1847, 1866, and 1898. There were an estimated 360 fatalities attributed to the 1913 flood.

Ohio governor James M. Cox sent the Ohio National Guard to protect property and life and to support the city's recovery efforts. The Guard was not able to reach the city for several days because of the high water conditions throughout the state. They built refugee camps, sheltering people in tents who had been permanently or temporarily displaced from their homes. National Cash Register (NCR) president at the time, John Patterson, aided the refugees of Dayton by turning the NCR factory on Stewart Street into an emergency shelter, providing food and lodging. Mr. Patterson and his employees were instrumental to the initial assistance to the people of Dayton as the National Guard was on standby. The employees of NCR assembled nearly 300 flat-bottomed boats to help the recovery process. Patterson also provided news reporters and photographers with food and lodging and access to equipment and communications to file their stories. When the presses of the *Dayton Daily News* became inoperable due to the floodwaters, the newspaper used NCR's in-house printing press.

Led by Patterson's vision for a managed watershed district, on March 27, 1913, Governor Cox appointed people to the Dayton Citizens Relief Commission. The commission hired hydrological engineer Arthur E. Morgan and his Morgan Engineering Company from Tennessee to design an extensive plan utilizing levees and dams to protect Dayton from future floods. Based on his analyses, Morgan presented eight different flood control plans to the City of Dayton officials in October 1913. The city selected a plan based on the flood control system in the Loire Valley in France. It consisted of five earthen dams and modifications to the river channel through Dayton. Morgan's goal was to create a system that could handle upwards of 140 percent of the water that flowed during the Great Flood.

The Vonderheide Act was worked on and drafted as Ohio's conservancy law in 1914. The Act allowed local governments to define conservancy districts for flood control. On March 17, 1914, the governor signed the Ohio Conservancy Act, which allowed for the establishment of conservancy districts with the authority to implement flood control projects. The Act became the model for other states, such as Indiana, New Mexico, and Colorado. Ohio's Upper Scioto Conservancy District was the first to form in February 1915. The Miami Conservancy District, which includes Dayton and surrounding communities, was the second, formed in June 1915.

The Great Dayton Flood really opened the public's eye into just how much conservation can change our landscape and even protect our communities. Today, we try to plan for the future and not just to put a small Band-Aid on a large problem. The tragedy that happened in Dayton was one of the events that were a precursor for the SWCD's to exist and be proactive in our approach. All water flows downhill and the best we can do is to attempt to guide it along the way to its destination.

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Dates to Remember:

February 5 - Board Meeting at 7:00 a.m.
February 17 - President's Day - Office Closed
March 7 - Tree Orders Due
March 19 - Board Meeting at 7:00 a.m.
April 9 - Tree Sale

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$1,000 College Scholarship Up For Grabs

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 fields of agriculture or natural resources are eligible to apply.

Applicants must be registered to attend classes during the Fall of 2025. A current, official transcript must accompany the application. The scholarship is based on grade point average, field of study, community involvement, and future goals.

The scholarship application and supporting material are due by 3:30 p.m. on Friday, March 28th. The application can be found at www.prebleswcd.org or by visiting the office. For more information, please call (937) 456-5159.

Winter Forestry Hike

Even though our trees are bare for the season, they still have an amazing story to tell about our forests! Savannah Ballweg of the Conservatory at Miami University and former Educator at Preble SWCD will share how to identify local woodland species and what techniques these plants use to survive winter year after year. Along the hike, attendees will also explore the dynamics of Southwest Ohio's forests over recent generations, as well as the region's natural history. Binoculars are optional, but if you have a pair, consider bringing them along! Come prepared for the weather and join us for this free, fun event suitable for all ages!

Saturday, February 8th at 10:00 a.m.
Preble County Historical Society and Nature Reserve
7693 Swartsel Rd, Eaton, OH 45320

Conservation Day Camp Turns 10!

2025 marks the tenth year of Conservation Day Camp! Mark your calendars for the exciting return of Conservation Day Camp from June 24-26. This year, Day Camp will include all the usual fun in addition to some special events to celebrate a decade of Day Camp! Registrations for campers will be made available later on in April. We are looking forward to seeing our campers for another year of outdoor fun and learning! If you have junior high or high school age students interested in serving as camp helpers or counselors, the volunteer applications are available now at www.prebleswcd.org.