Preble Soil & Water Conservation District

Conserving our Natural Resources

February 2026

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

CONSERVATION COMMENTS

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Mike Broermann
Brian Deaton
Kip Denlinger
Donald Hays
Josh Ruebush

DISTRICT STAFF

BJ Price - District Administrator & Technician
Jason Chappel - Technician
Bobby Hansford - District Tech/Wildlife Specialist

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

Jeff Barnes - District Conservationist
Chris Lutz - Soil Conservationist
Erin Schritz - Soil Conservation Tech
Denae Washington - Natural Resource Specialist
Tyler White - Resource Conservationist

PHEASANTS FOREVER FARM BILL BIOLOGIST

Renee Buck

IN THIS ISSUE:

Tree Sale
Winter Forestry Hike
Beneath the Bark
Dam Safety Meeting
Scholarship
Dam Safety Meeting

Get updates on our website:
www.prebleswcd.org

Tree Sale Highlights

Even though we're only halfway through winter, it's not too early to start thinking about spring and what empty spaces you may have in your yard or woods. Tucked inside this newsletter you'll find our Tree Sale order form.

For those of you who have lost white ash trees in recent years, bitternut hickory prefers the same growing conditions as ash and may be a suitable replacement. As the name implies, the nuts are bitter-tasting and unpalatable to humans. It is a relative of walnut and pecan trees. For a hickory, it is fast-growing, but still slow-growing compared to other trees.

Several of the species available for sale this year will produce fruit suitable for both wildlife and human consumption, including persimmon, downy serviceberry, paw paw, black chokeberry, and black elderberry. Black chokeberry may not sound like an appetizing name, and truly so, the marble-sized purplish-black fruits do have a bit of pucker-power straight off the bush. However, once brought to the kitchen and turned into jelly, they are delicious. Black elderberry also makes great jelly and the berries have been used for all sorts of medicinal purposes.

Paw paw leaves and fruit

For paw paw, named Ohio's Native State Fruit, it can be a struggle to get to the fruit in the fall before the wildlife have it for dinner. If you're too late to the party, often a pile of seeds can be found where a wild critter stopped to eat the paw paw and left the seeds behind.

With many of its relatives growing in tropical or subtropical parts of the world, persimmon is something of an outlier in southwest Ohio. The fruit is described as being astringent before ripening but sweet and edible when ripe. However, in numerous nonscientific persimmon studies conducted over the course of several years in my yard at home, I've yet to encounter persimmons that are both "sweet and edible."

Downy serviceberry also produces an edible fruit, the flavor of which has been compared to that of the blueberry, while others say it is dry and tasteless.

Don't take my word for it. Check out all the species for sale and decide what might work in your situation.

Winter Forestry Hike

Join Savannah Ballweg on Saturday, February 14 at the Preble County Historical Society and Nature Reserve for the Annual Winter Forestry Hike. This family-friendly event is a great way to experience the beauty of Ohio's winter woodlands while learning about forest ecology and conservation. Did you know that winter is one of the best times to study trees? Without leaves, you can easily identify species by their bark, buds, and branching patterns. Plus, hiking in cooler weather reduces stress and boosts your mood. Warm up with hot beverages and cookies, and let the kids enjoy Valentine-themed crafts. It's the perfect mix of outdoor adventure and seasonal fun.

Saturday, February 14th at 10:00 a.m.
Preble County Historical Society
and Nature Reserve
7693 Swartsel Rd, Eaton, OH 45320

Your next ad here!

LCNB National Bank
Member FDIC
Equal Housing Opportunity

Buck Minyo
VP, Agriculture Lender

Eaton Office
110 W. Main St.
Eaton, OH 45320

(513) 932.1414 x51118
(c) 937.901.0348
cmckinley@lcnb.com

lcnb.com

Bin Busters Soil Amendments, LLC

Minerals and Microbials for Soil Regeneration
Humates and Mycorr Plus
Increase Microbial Populations
Improve Drainage

Phil Price
937-456-6442

EARTHGREEN

Sand & Gravel Hauling
Leach Fields
Footers
Basements

Septic Tanks
Drainage Tile
Grading
Waterways

Marcus EXCAVATING

FREE ESTIMATES

Robert Marcus
Eaton, Ohio

(937) 456-6048
Cell Phone (937) 533-1773

agData SOLUTIONS

5096 US Rt. 127 South
Eaton, OH 45320
937-286-0407
agdatasolutions@gmail.com
www.agdatasolutions.com

Don Garrett

Certified Crop Advisor
Technical Service Provider for NRCS
CNMP and NMP Certified-Ohio

Trimble Ag Software
(Farm Works) Support

Bill Bowers — **Shawn Cox**

B-C FARMS

Conservation
Row Crop Production
Agricultural Land Management

bcfarms.oh@gmail.com

DAKOTA SHEPARD
AVP, Ag Loan Officer

P: 765.598.5756
dshepard@bankmerchants.com

MERCHANTS BANK
BankMerchants.com

1400 Industries Rd, Suite 200
Richmond, IN 47374

DOUG SCHWIETERMAN
CEO & FOUNDER

4240 St. Rt. 49
Arcanum, OH 45304
doug@hlandworks.com
937-548-3965 (office)
419-953-5727 (cell)

HERITAGE LANDWORKS, LLC

Brubaker

Eaton	Farmersville	Hamilton
412 S. Franklin St. Eaton, OH 45320 937.336.5735	307 W. Center St. Farmersville, OH 45325 937.696.2028	4850 Hamilton Eaton Rd. Hamilton, OH 45013 513.726.4931
Brookville	**West Alexandria**	
11597 Upper Lewisburg Salem Rd. Brookville, OH 45309 937.833.4128	2918 Quaker Trace Rd. West Alexandria, OH 45381 937.839.4636	

brubakergrain.com

DENLINGER FARM DRAINAGE INC.

SINCE 1949

"COMPLETE FARM DRAINAGE SERVICE"

Dan Denlinger
cell (937)603-0610

Simon Denlinger
cell (937)467-8235

8133 State Route 722 · Arcanum OH 45304

Schenck Land Improvement Contractors LLC

Pond Building my Specialty since 1976

Mike Schenck
513-424-0183
513-594-2562

PIONEER® BRAND · PRODUCTS

Kemp Agricultural Services, LLC

Independent Sales Representative for Pioneer brand products

959 Georgetown - Verona Rd.
West Manchester, OH 45382

Chad.Kemp@plantpioneer.com

(937) 533-0714 Chad
(937) 533-0716 Keith

Filbrun Farm & Drainage, LLC

Farm Drainage Design & Installation
Systematic Drainage
Waterway Construction
Demolition
Custom Harvesting
Farm Leasing

Rob Filbrun - 937.313.6668
rfilbrunfarms@aol.com

BALES' FUNERAL HOME
SERVICE WITH INTEGRITY
DEREK L. BALES
LICENSED FUNERAL DIRECTOR/OWNER
249 N. MAIN ST
CAMDEN, OH 45311
(937) 452-3111
DEREK@BALESFH.COM
WWW.BALESFH.COM

PREBLE MEMORY GARDENS FUNERAL CENTER AND CEMETERY
DEREK L. BALES
LICENSED FUNERAL DIRECTOR/OWNER
3377 US RT 35 E
WEST ALEX, OH 45381
(937) 839-4476
DEREK@PMGFC.COM
WWW.RLCFC.COM

Somerville Bank
Your Local, Loyal, Lifetime Bank

601 Hillcrest Drive
Eaton, OH 45320
Office: (937) 456-5588
Cell: (937) 623-0835
pferriell@somervillenb.com
somervillebank.net

Pete Ferriell
Vice President
Agricultural Specialist

QUALITY TILE AND DRAINAGE SYSTEMS
Our name says it all!

See: Bill, Chuck or Jonathon
Featuring Hancor Tile and Infiltrator Leaching Systems

723 Yost Rd.
West Alexandria, OH 45381

456-4672 • 456-4673
Fax 456-1523

MILLER LAND APPLICATION INC

AG DRAINAGE DIVISION
1987 QUAKER TRACE RD

JASON MILLER
MANAGER
JASONMMILLER78@YAHOO.COM

Advertising doesn't cost, it pays!
Your ad could be here!

LEGACY EXCAVATION LLC
937-603-2951

-Bulldozer Work
-Tile Work
-Demolition
-Waterway Work
-Utilities
-Land Clearing

Barry Koffer
barrykoffer85@gmail.com
2715 St Rt 122 W. Eaton OH

COOMBS EXCAVATING & DRAINAGE INC.
Collinsville, OH. 513-726-6124

FOR YOUR DRAINAGE, WATERWAY & EXCAVATING NEEDS

Richard L. Coombs
5037 Hamilton Eaton Road
Collinsville, OH 45004
Phone: 513-726-6124
Fax: 513-726-4816
Cell: 513-623-7072
Email: RC3156@aol.com

No job too small! *Fully Insured*

TAYLOR CONSTRUCTION
RESIDENTIAL & COMMERCIAL EXCAVATION
Foundations • Rough & Finish Grade • Utilities

Terry Taylor
Owner-Operator
Eaton, Ohio 45320

5700 Dixon Road
937-456-4759
Cell 937-533-0945

AARON WRIGHT
937-246-6900
AARON@WMDRONESOLUTIONS.COM

Benefits of Drone Aerial Application:

- Increased Yields
- Zero Soil Compaction
- No Ground Too Soft
- Precise Treatments
- High Efficiency
- Reduced Costs

Nationwide® is on your side

Jordan Agency
937-548-1606
matt@jordanagencygreenville.com

Beneath The Bark: How Plants Get Through the Winter Blues

By: Bobby Hansford

It is that time of year again. Here in Ohio, we should be used to the winter months by now. Unfortunately for some, winter hits us harder season by season. There is a multitude of ways we are able to alleviate the so called "winter blues". The number of days you are allowed to wear sweatpants is quadrupled and rightfully so. Some of us flock together and leave Ohio in waves starting in the Fall. Those of us that are left, remain to freeze in the Midwest ice box. Sure, you can pull your biggest Carhartt coat off the hanger, crank up that thermostat, and roast your buns on a seat warmer. But how can the plants around us cope? They have been evolving outside with us for millions of years. While we have focused on being smart, plants have focused on being tough.

Take a few moments to find a large tree outside. I enjoy the practice of anthropomorphism from time to time. No, that isn't a sacred religion. But rather, attributing human qualities into something not human. In this case, putting your feeling and emotions into a tree. Watching as it sways with no leaves in the negative windchill. It will not complain or sulk. The tree just survives. Some would even say thrive. While the tree may not grow much or any at all during the winter, it is gearing up for the big reveal in Spring.

One of the most crucial qualities that plants possess to survive the winter months, is the ability to synthesize antifreeze like compounds inside of their cells called Antifreeze Proteins (AFPs). Humans first commercialized antifreeze in the 1920's for automobile use. This antifreeze works differently by lowering the freezing point and raising the boiling point of water. The AFPs found in plants act by attaching to ice crystals and not allowing them to grow. This lets the plant remain alive in subzero temperatures without rupturing the cells within. There are even a multitude of animals that utilize a very similar technique to live in brutally cold areas of the world.

What about the leaves you ask? The evergreen trees that reside here have adapted to keep their needles and leaves by increasing the amount of cutin on the exterior of the leaf and by reducing the surface area typically. Cutin is a wax-like substance naturally made to reduce water loss, protect from U.V. rays, and defend from pathogens. Instead of wasting their energy to remove and produce new leaves, evergreens have adapted to continue growth through the winter months. The most critical role that cutin plays is by reducing the amount of water that transpires from the plant. With all the water locked up as snow and ice, conserving the little water you have is key to survival. There is so much going on behind the scenes in the winter for plants to continue their life here on Earth.

It is a humbling reminder that while we rely on external comforts; our coats, our furnaces, and our flights to warmer coasts; nature relies on chemistry. We humans pride ourselves on our ingenuity, inventing glycols for our car radiators a mere century ago, yet the maple and the oak have been evolving their own chemical preservation for eons. The next time you find yourself shivering on the walk to your car, take a second look at the dormant flora around you. They are not merely dead sticks in the snow; they are masterpieces of evolutionary chemistry. Proof that with the right preparation, life can withstand even the harshest of Ohio winters.

BJ's Philosophy Box

I'd rather light a candle than curse the darkness.

-Matt Wetzel

Preble County Dam Safety Meeting

As a collaborative effort between the Preble Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD), Preble County Emergency Management Agency (EMA), and OSU Extension Preble County, we'll be hosting a Dam Safety Meeting on Thursday, March 19th at 6:00pm. The meeting will be held in the County Meeting Room at Junction Village, 532 N. Barron Street, Eaton. The presentation will be provided by The Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Water Resources, and will cover Dam Safety 101, Ohio Dam Safety Law, Dam Failures, The Dam Owner's Role, Emergency Action Plans, and Roles in an Emergency Situation. This meeting is intended for dam owners, public officials, public safety officials and first responders, and anyone who would have a role in responding to a dam emergency.

$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 2026. 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 27th. The application can be found at www.prebleswcd.org or by visiting the office. For more information, please call (937) 456-5159.

Preble County Barn Tour

To help celebrate America's 250th birthday, we are coordinating with the Preble County Historical Society to host a barn tour across Preble County on Saturday, July 11. Space will be limited, so keep an eye out in the next newsletter for more details and how to register.

Preble Soil & Water Conservation District
2789 US Rt. 35 E.
West Alexandria, OH 45381

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

Return Service Requested

We don't wish to be a nuisance. To be removed from our mailing list, call (937) 456-5159 or email bjprice@prebleswcd.org

Dates to Remember:

February 16 - President's Day (office closed)
February 18 - Board Meeting
March 6 - Tree Sale Deadline
March 18 - Board Meeting

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

Agriculture Drone Workshop

In the span of just a few years, drones have been a game-changer for agriculture. Whether it's crop scouting, cover crop seeding, or aerial spraying, drones have revolutionized the way some jobs are done. At 5:00 p.m. on the evening of March 5, join us as we hold our first ever Drone Workshop at the home of Len Vonderhaar, 5690 ST RT 725 W, Camden. Several local drone pilots will be in attendance with their equipment on display. Dr. John Fulton will be on hand to speak about drone technology Following his presentation, four local drone pilots will sit in on a panel discussion where they will speak about their own drone experiences, followed by questions from the audience. If you have hired others to do custom drone work for your operation, are considering using drones in the future, or are just plain curious, please plan to attend. A meal will be served and the event is free and open to all. If these are not enough reasons to attend, there will be a drawing held for a chance to win a $500 gift certificate to be used towards drone services, redeemable from one of our local drone pilots at the workshop.

This Drone Workshop is made possible thanks to our host, Vonderhaar Farms, the Preble County Chamber of Commerce, Somerville Bank, OSU Extension Preble County, and the Preble Soil and Water Conservation District. While the event is free, you must RSVP by February 27 by calling (937) 456-5159.

Conservation Day Camp

Mark your calendars! Our 11th annual Conservation Day Camp will take place June 23-25, 2026 at the Preble County Historical Society Farm. In honor of our nation's 250th birthday, camp will be celebrating with a red, white, and blue theme, right down to the tie-dye t-shirts.

Counselor and helper applications are available now on our website at: www.prebleswcd.org and camper registration will open very soon.