Preble Soil & Water Conservation District

Conserving our Natural Resources

February 2023

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

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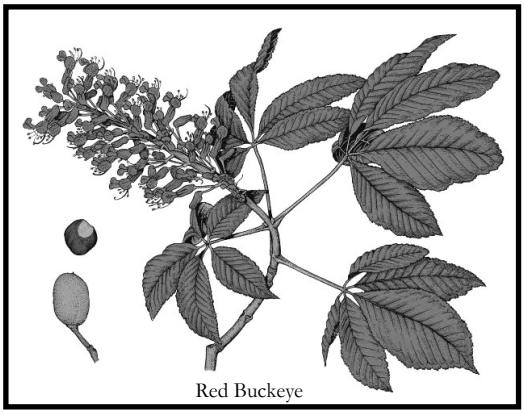
Get updates on our website:
www.prebleswcd.org

2023 Tree Sale- Naturally Native!

This year's tree sale has some familiar favorites as well as first-time offerings. Preble SWCD is proud to support native biodiversity with this year's selections, and in the years to come. Planting native species helps restore our vibrant, complex ecosystems. With these exciting species to choose from, you will see that enriching our environment can be aesthetically beautiful as well!

For those who enjoy year round foliage, our evergreens are the perfect choice. Eastern Red Cedar-Juniper is a hardy pioneer with showy blue berries, and is the favorite of PSWCD Educator Savannah. Eastern White Pine is a towering classic with luscious needles, and White Spruce's pyramidal structure and blue-green needles may attract those seeking a replacement for ailing Colorado Blue Spruces.



Red Buckeye

We have gathered quite the assortment of large deciduous trees, which are trees that will drop their leaves in the fall. All our readers are likely familiar with the stunning foliage of Sugar Maple, a quintessential Southwestern Ohio species. White Oaks provide stately beauty, and perhaps even more importantly, extensive ecosystem services. Preble Countians may take interest in Butternut, also known as White Walnut, which is the rare and elusive cousin of Black Walnut. And of course, who could forget the massive, showstopping Tulip Poplar which was showcased in our 2022 Big Tree Competition!

Our assortment of smaller deciduous trees also pack a punch! Downy Serviceberry may be the tastiest fruit tree that you've never heard of! Fans liken the flavor to a blueberry, and paired with early blooming flowers and bright fall foliage, this plant is a force to be reckoned with. Looking for a more familiar fruit? American Plum trees will be available as well! Buckeye fans and florists alike will be captivated with Red Buckeye, a smaller relative of our Ohio Buckeye that enchants with stunning clusters of large pink blossoms.

Be sure to save space for some of our small but mighty shrubs as well! Witch Hazel will welcome Spring with bursts of yellow flowers. New Jersey Tea is a pollinator delight that has also been popularly requested! The petite and eye catching Red Currant will surely pique the interest of jam makers as well.

And finally, for our fans of herbaceous plants, we have quite the varied assortment to chose from.. Who could resist the delicious Albion Strawberry or scrumptious Mary Washington Asparagus? How about edible plants catered to our pollinator friends? Rest assured that Butterfly Milkweed and Coral Bells will be sure to please important species like butterflies, bees, hummingbirds. Gardeners who love ornamental grasses but are seeking a native alternative, look no further than the vibrant Red Switch Grass!

For more information on the featured species, please see the included Plant Sale Form. To make the purchasing process more straightforward, we have built-in the sales tax to our list price so no extra addition is necessary!

$1,000 College Scholarship Available

Preble SWCD is 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.

Applicants must be registered to attend classes during the Fall of 2023. 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 31st. The application can be found at www.prebleswcd.org or by visiting the office. For more information, please call (937) 456-5159.

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2023 & 2024 CRP Grassed Waterway Re-Enrollment

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Preble Soil & Water Conservation District are preparing for site visits to grassed waterways that could be re-enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). If your CRP grassed waterway is nearing its 10 or 20 year anniversary, you may be eligible! Cooperators with CRP contracts expiring in 2023 should have received a letter about re-enrolling their grassed waterway in the program. If you wish to continue in the program, please call the Preble SWCD office at (937) 456-5159 or NRCS at (937) 456-4211 ext. 3 to confirm your interest. For contracts that will expire in 2024, please be prepared for our District or NRCS staff to visit and review your grassed waterway. Here are some proactive tips to ensure the eligibility for re-enrollment:

- Repair any tile holes that may be present in or near the waterway
- Remember to mow the grass to maintain the grass stand and control weeds
- Clear out any brush growing in the waterway and in rock inlets or outlets

A Thrilling Conclusion to the Big Tree Contest

Preble SWCD's first annual Big Tree Contest has come to a very exciting conclusion. We were delighted by the community's eager participation and the Tulip Poplar submissions received from across the county. The top three finalists were visited for verification by Savannah Ballweg and the Ohio Division of Forestry's Justin Law.

When this competition was conceived, our goal was simply to facilitate a good-spirited competition and increase appreciation of Preble County's beautiful trees. Imagine our surprise to discover that the largest Tulip Poplar in our county is also one of the largest in the State! Our tree measured in at 162 feet tall and 182 inches in circumference. The awe-spiring specimen is located in The Nature Preserve at Hueston Woods State Park. This breathtaking tree is surrounded by other outstanding mature specimens of Tulip Poplar, American Beech, Sugar Maple, and White Ash, exhibiting a stunning representation of a Southwestern Ohio climax forest.

Preble SWCD's Savannah Ballweg and Austin Kosier joined Justin Law and Hueston Wood State Park Manager Kathryn Conner and Park Naturalist Shawn Conner to take final measurements for this tree, and calculate a score using an equation that combines circumference, height, and crown canopy coverage. Suspense was high as the final numbers were tallied! Ohio's Big Tree Program has officially recognized our tree as one of the top five largest in the entire state of Ohio.

Preble SWCD is incredibly thankful for all of the agencies that have worked together to recognize the winning tree including our friends at the Division of Forestry, Hueston Woods State Park, and Hueston Woods Nature Preserve Manager Eric Sagasser. We are proud that the natural beauty of Preble County is receiving some much deserved recognition, and look forward to what we will discover in the Big Tree competitions of the years to come!

February Forestry Hike

Even though our trees are bare for the season, they still have an amazing story to tell about our forests! Savannah Ballweg 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 ancient natural history. Binoculars are optional, but if you have a pair consider bringing them along! Join us for this free, fun event suitable for all ages!

Saturday, February 18th at 10:30 a.m.
Preble County Historical Society and Nature Reserve
7693 Swartsel Rd, Eaton 45320

BJ's Philosophy Box

"We cannot solve our problems with the same level of thinking that created them." - Albert Einstein

Help Us Name Our Furry Friend!

If you've stopped by our office recently, you most likely noticed a significant addition to our lobby. Last Fall, Preble SWCD acquired a beautiful taxidermy Black Bear from Paulding SWCD's Nature Center, in addition to another handsome Buck mount and regal Tundra Swan specimen. Our new resident Black Bear has done a diligent job of greeting cooperators and providing rustic ambiance to our office space. The only problem is, we're having trouble giving him a name! If you have any great name ideas, head to our website at www.prebleswcd.org where you can submit your suggestions!

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Dates to Remember:

February 8 - Board Meeting 7:00 a.m.
February 20 - President's Day (Office Closed)
March 15 - Board Meeting 7:00 a.m.
April 4 - Board Meeting 7:00 a.m.
April 5 - Tree Sale Pickup

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

Private Pesticide and Fertilizer Applicator Recertification Course Held

Our Seventh Annual Private Pesticide and Fertilizer Applicator Recertification course was held on January 24th at the Eaton First Church of God. Over 70 producers joined us in attendance this year.

A special thank you to all of our guest speakers, including Bill Bowers, Martin Joyce, Julie Lamberson, Rex Brubaker, and Tesha Smith. We appreciate their time and informative presentations for this event. Thank you to Charlotte Akers of Charlotte's Catering for once again serving a delicious meal to our cooperators.

For those who attended the course, any follow-up questions or concerns can be directed to our office or to the Ohio Department of Agriculture - Pesticide and Fertilizer Division at: (614) 282-1955.

Conservation Day Camp

Mark your calendars for the exciting return of Conservation Day Camp, to be held on June 20th-22nd, 2023. Registrations for campers will be made available this April. We are looking forward to seeing our campers for another year of outdoor fun and learning!

2023 Conservation Reserve Program and Grassland Reserve Program

Agricultural producers and landowners can now sign up for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), a cornerstone conservation program offered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

CRP is a land conservation program administered by the Farm Service Agency (FSA). In exchange for a yearly rental payment, cooperators enrolled in the program agree to take environmentally sensitive land out of agricultural production and plant species that will improve environmental health. Contracts for land enrolled in CRP last from 10 to 15 years in length. The ultimate goal of the program is to re-establish valuable land cover to help improve water quality, prevent soil erosion, and reduce loss of wildlife habitat. General CRP helps producers and landowners establish long-term, resource-conserving plant species, such as approved species of grasses, wildflowers, or trees, to better control soil erosion, improve water quality, and expand wildlife habitat on cropland.

Landowners and producers interested in CRP should contact the Preble County Farm Service Agency to learn more or to apply for the program. Deadlines to apply are typically in Spring, with specific dates expected to be announced soon. For more information, Preble County FSA can be reached at (937) 456-4211.