



# CONSERVATION CONNECTION

The Montgomery County Soil & Water Conservation District Newsletter



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## Director's Statement

And just like that, the year 2024 has come to a close... Wow! I suppose time flies when you're having fun! As I reflect on my journey as director, stepping into the role halfway through the year, I'm reminded that it is one that required me to quickly immerse myself in the vision and trajectory already set while bringing my own perspective to the table. The first half of the year had already laid a foundation—plans had been made, momentum built, and relationships formed. I look forward to honoring this groundwork while infusing my own energy into projects in 2025! I'm excited for what's to come, and I am grateful to be a part of this journey. Bring on the new year!

Lea Hickle  
Conservation Director

## Upcoming Events & Important Dates

- December 24-26th: Office closed for Christmas
- January 1st: Office closed for New Year's Day
- January 2nd: Board Meeting, USDA Service Center, 8 AM
- January 20th: Office closed for MLK Jr. Day
- February 6th: Board Meeting, USDA Service Center, 8 AM
- February 17th: Office closed for President's Day
- February 18th: 2025 Annual Meeting, 5:30 PM
- March 6th: Board Meeting, USDA Service Center, 8 AM

## Fall Events Recap

Our CISMA once again partnered with Wabash College to remove invasive plants from the Sugar Creek Trail. We cleared about 300 yards on both sides of the trail over two days. Crawfordsville Parks and Recreation helped treat stumps from cut shrubs and the Street Department provided their woodchipper to mulch up the bigger honeysuckle. Thank you to all of our partners for all of your hard work! This is a big project and there would be no progress without all of your help.

Our 4th Women4theLand learning circle was in November at Cain's Homelike Farm in Darlington. Participants learned about soil health principles and made lasting connections with conservation staff and each other. These learning circles are meant to empower women who own or operate farmland and educate them on how to make good conservation choices for their farm and their family!



Left: Our Wabash crew after whacking some weeds.  
Right: Hanna demonstrating a soil infiltration test.



## Invasive Species Spotlight: Autumn Olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*)

Our next invasives species we're shedding some light on might appear similar to some of those glittery and shiny Christmas decorations you've pulled out of your attic this month. But make no mistake, this plant is definitely on the naughty list. Autumn olive is a medium to large sized shrub with silvery oval-shaped leaves and bright red fruits with shiny spotted dots.

Similar to bush honeysuckle, autumn olive originally came from Asia and was heavily promoted and planted to control erosion. Combine that with the large quantity of fruit it produces that is then spread by birds and you have a plant that has spread all across the state and Eastern U.S. It grows tremendously in nutrient depleted soils as it is able to fix its own nitrogen. It readily invades early successional habitat and outcompetes our native plants through shading or by allelopathy. You can see it commonly along field edges and roadsides, especially those along I-74 as you cross the county.

Autumn olive is tenacious and will resprout after cutting or burning. To truly be rid of it you will have to pull the plant out entirely when it is young, or cut and treat with an herbicide. Foliar sprays on resprouted plants are effective as well. Some native species that make excellent replacements are viburnums, chokeberries, or dogwoods. These species provide much better nutrition for our wildlife and don't negatively affect other species around them.

## Join us for our 2025 Annual Meeting!

RSVP by calling 765-362-0405 ext. 3

or using the QR code



Autumn olive and its distinctive silvery leaves and red fruit. Be on the lookout for it on your property!

