



CONSERVATION CONNECTION

The Montgomery County Soil & Water
Conservation District Newsletter

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4th Grade Field Days

In late August county schools journeyed to Cain's Homelike Farms for the 28th year of Field Days. Nearly 500 students did activities and games centered around the natural world all taught by our crew of conservation professional volunteers.

Students learn about the natural cycles that make the world go round. They spend time fishing around the pond for organisms that we can use to tell water quality, explore the forests edge for creatures and what habitats they prefer, the soil beneath their feet and the power of the water that shapes it. All of these lessons and more give our county kids an experience like no other and for some sparks a lifelong love for our environment.

This year offered some unique challenges mainly owing to the rain, which made for some muddy tractor rides. That didn't slow down our crew for very long though and with a little improvising we made Field Days run smooth as usual. We are thankful for all the hard work of the Cains and all the volunteers who have made this such a special event for all these years!

Community Garden

The Soil and Water District has kept a garden plot at the Sustainable Initiatives Community Garden this summer. We used this opportunity to put our soil health knowledge into practice to better support future site visits with gardeners. We built a cattle panel trellis for our beans, cucumbers and squash. We grew a great pumpkin vine and a great row of carrots as well. Our plans now that the growing season is winding down are to clear off the plants once they die back and to plant a cover crop so the plot will be ready to go again next year.



2026 CGMC Garden Walk



This year's Garden Walk took us through a neighborhood just West of Wabash's campus to 3 wonderful gardens. We began at the Wabash Prairie Garden, which was buzzing with insects enjoying the native blooms. We then visited the garden of Kathy Walker, who shared with us her raised beds. We finished the tour at Alex Thompson's house where we toured her native beds and garden plots, sharing her learning experiences and methods. Afterwards, Alex graciously shared some of her native plugs with those who attended.

Invasive Species Spotlight:

Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*)

This summer has brought record amounts of rainfall across our state and while Montgomery county hasn't seen the most extreme of these events, we've still had a great deal more rain than we've had in many years. With that comes lots of plant growth and one that has greatly appreciated the extra rain is phragmites, or common reed. Phragmites is a large perennial grass that can grow to 20 feet tall. It really likes wet feet, and can be found growing in wetlands, drainage ditches, pond edges, anywhere there is a little extra water. Common reed dominates the areas it grows and forms dense colonies that spread via rhizomes. This greatly alters wetland habitats making them less usable for wildlife. You can treat common reed with glyphosate and anytime between now and our first hard frost is a good time to do so. Using glyphosate is effective but you should always use an aquatic safe variety with an aquatic safe surfactant. Always follow the instructions on the label of any herbicide you use. For species that grow on the waters edge like this you don't want to use non-aquatic rated chemicals or you would put sensitive wildlife like frogs and fish at risk. Burning is an additional option for reducing accumulated grass and can open up the ground for native plants to grow and take back some of their real estate. If you have common reed, now is a great time to make it just a little more uncommon.



Get in contact with us!



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Upcoming Events & Important Dates

- September 29: Creek Stomp, 3 PM, Bachner Nature Preserve
- October 13: Q4 CGMC Meeting, 11:30 AM, The Table Spoon
- October 14: Brickyard Invasive Hike, 6 PM, Brickyard Nature Park
- October 17: FOSC Weed Wrangle, 10 AM, The Old Coke Plant
- November 3: Office Closed
- November 4: Q4 CISMA Meeting, 4 PM, USDA Service Center
- November 5: SWCD Board Meeting, 8 AM, USDA Service Center
- November 11: Office Closed
- November 26-27: Office Closed
- December 3: SWCD Board Meeting, 8 AM, USDA Service Center
- December 24-25: Office Closed