

Spring 2022



SUMMIT
SOIL & WATER
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

SUMMIT SWCD'S QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER



Photo Credit: Sophia Sorboro

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NATIVE PLANT MONTH

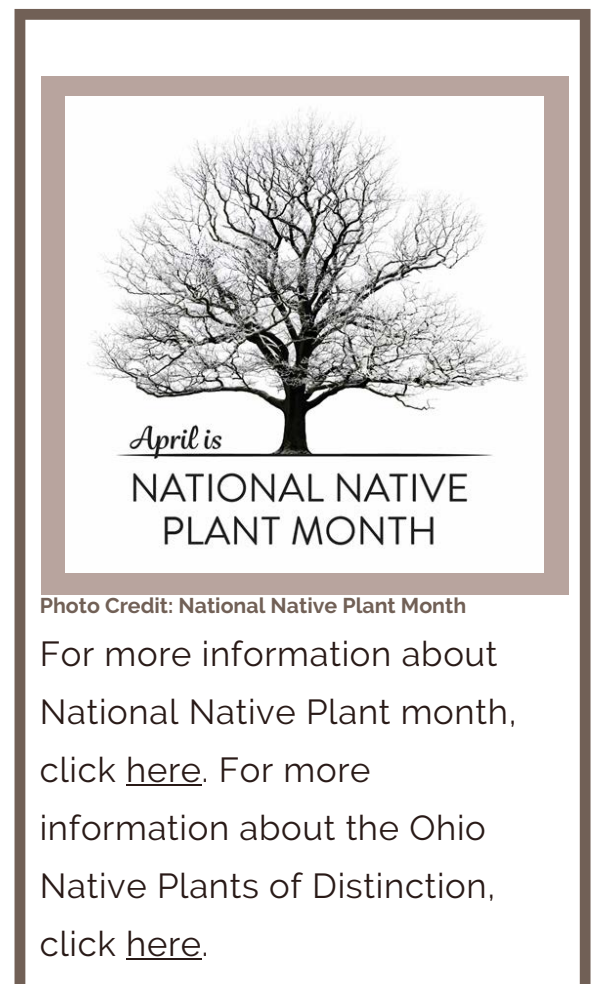
SSWCD STAFF

April is Native Plant Month! U.S. Senators Rob Portman and Mazie Hirono introduced a resolution designating April 2022 as "National Native Plant Month." This resolution recognizes the importance of native plants to environmental conservation, wildlife diversity, and restoration projects.

After this resolution, April 2022 is recognized as both Ohio Native Plant Month and National Native Plant month! In addition, the Ohio Native Plants of Distinction initiative has been launched to highlight Ohio native plant species that represent distinct benefits for Ohio's ecosystems and native wildlife while being readily available throughout the nursery industry. This year's featured plants are the Bur Oak, Eastern Redbud, Northern Spicebush, and Purple Coneflower.

April is also a great time to search for native spring wildflowers. The diversity and resilience of Ohio's ephemeral wildflowers are a wonder to behold year after year.

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) publishes a weekly bloom report, which can be viewed [here](#). They also publish a spring wildflower checklist, which is very helpful when hiking and wildflower hunting! It can be viewed [here](#).



NEW STAFF

SSWCD STAFF



The district recently welcomed a new staff member to its ranks. Nichole started as a NOWCorps Member serving at the district in 2020. Soon after the completion of her service year, she was hired as a Watershed Coordinator in March 2022. She will be working to provide technical and educational assistance with water quality protection efforts to local communities and organizations within the Furnace Run Watershed.

Nichole graduated from the University of Miami in Florida with a bachelor's degree in Marine and Geological Sciences.

Her favorite Best Management Practice (BMP) is the use of rain barrels to reduce stormwater runoff, prevent erosion, and reuse rainwater.

In her spare time, Nichole loves to travel all over the world and explore nature, plus indulge in the foods of different cultures. She also enjoys reading and spending time with her friends and family.

DON'T GUESS - SOIL TEST

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Make an investment in the environment, starting with your own backyard!

All lawn and garden fertilization programs should begin with a soil test. The test will tell you which nutrients may be deficient in your soil. Soil tests provide specific fertilizer recommendations for your lawn and/or garden and can help you avoid over-application of fertilizer.

Fertilizers are a source of non-point source pollution, and account for 60% of the water quality problems in Ohio. When it rains, excess fertilizer runs off your lawn into storm sewers or ditches, ultimately ending up in our lakes and rivers. Problems resulting from excess fertilizers in our waterways include poor stormwater quality, dead fish and aquatic animals, weed-choked lakes, loss of habitat and species diversity, and flooding. For more information on soil testing contact the Summit Soil and Water Conservation District at 330-926-2452 or view our online resources, which can be viewed [here](#).



Photo Credit: istockphoto.com

Soil testing is also a great way to assess an urban soil for the presence of heavy metals, hazardous chemicals, or other wastes. Note: some facilities have a separate test for heavy metals and other toxins.



Photo Credit: USDA NRCS

CLEAN WATER STARTS AT HOME



Photo Credit: SSWCD

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Spring has arrived in Northeast Ohio, and the time has come to start planning your lawn and garden activities for the 2022 growing season, and perhaps even long-term goals beyond this year. When you prioritize your goals, please keep in mind that maintaining your yard and garden with healthy landscaping practices is the most important action that you can take toward improving water quality in our streams, rivers, and lakes.

The first item on your list of healthy practices should be to have your soil tested. The results of this soil test will show if you need to add fertilizer to your soil. Excess fertilizer that runs off the soil in a rainstorm enters our waterways and causes algae blooms, fish kills, and degraded water quality.

Tests have shown that we have excess phosphorous in our streams in Summit County, so you would never want to add phosphorous fertilizer if you don't need it. The soil test will also save you money because you won't be buying something that you don't need.

After you have your soil test results, here are some tips for starting off the year right with healthy landscaping practices:

- If your soil test results advise you to amend your soil, use organic, slow-release products which will feed your plants and soil, but will not run off with every rain event.
- Tolerate some weeds in your yard. Plant diversity provides food for pollinators and beneficial soil organisms.

- If you feel that you must remove your weeds, apply corn gluten meal to prevent annual weed seed germination, spot treat with an organic product that contains molasses or liquid iron, or pull the weeds by hand or with a "Speedy Weedy" tool.
- Don't leave fertilizer pellets and grass clippings on your driveway, patio, or other hard surfaces. The pellets will run off into the stormdrain with the first rainstorm, and flow directly to a stream, river, or lake.
- Never apply fertilizers if rain is in the forecast.
- Don't let your hose overspray if you sprinkle your lawn - this will cause fertilizers and other chemicals to end up in the street and stormdrain.
- Sharpen your mower blades. Dull lawnmower blades tear the tender grass blades.
- Aim your mower so that grass clippings stay on the lawn and provide nutrients for the lawn.
- Mow high at 3-4 inches, since this encourages root growth and stability, and let the clippings lie on the lawn for nutritional value.
- Start your compost pile in the spring using grass clippings, winter woody debris, and leaves.
- Don't mulch or compost clippings with annual weed seed heads. Instead, bag them up and dispose of in the trash to prevent more weeds from being introduced to your lawn.
- Apply Milky Spore to control the population of Japanese Beetle grubs. One application lasts for 10 years.
- Beneficial nematodes also can be used to control grubs and they are also effective on flea and tick larvae, helping to keep your pets free of these disease-carrying organisms.
- Plant a vegetated buffer zone along the edges of the stream or pond in your yard by using native plants. This riparian vegetation will provide beauty and wildlife habitat, filter stormwater, and prevent non-point source pollution.
- Shrink your lawn by adding native plant gardens and/or fruit and nut-producing shrubs and trees which provide food for you, your family, and the wildlife community.

SSWCD WATERSHED PROGRAM

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The district's watershed program was established in 2021 to initiate and manage watershed planning in targeted Summit County communities. This includes restoring and protecting the water resources of the county via communication with stakeholders to identify goals and implement projects. These projects include habitat restoration and preservation, watershed tours and field days, homeowner workshops, and the development of Nonpoint Source Implementation Strategic Plans. The district's watershed program is supplemented with the volunteer water quality program – and this data is used to guide future restoration and land protection decisions.

Call for Volunteers

The 2022-23 volunteer water quality monitoring year starts in May 2022. Volunteers are provided with training and all equipment required to complete monitoring for the year. After training, volunteers visit their assigned monitoring sites in the watershed to monitor chloride, BOD, dissolved oxygen, phosphate, nitrate, temperature, pH, and turbidity. Volunteers also engage in biological monitoring via macroinvertebrate sampling. If you're interested in joining the volunteer monitoring program, click [here](#).

Yellow Creek Watershed Tour

Summit SWCD will be hosting its first ever watershed tour on Saturday, June 25 from 10AM-2PM. The purpose of a watershed tour is to teach residents about their local watershed, and to highlight sites of good quality or restoration, sites in need of remediation, and sites important to watershed function. Our tour will highlight such sites in the Yellow Creek watershed. Keep an eye on our social media accounts and website for more information!



MASTER RAIN GARDENER PROGRAM

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Train to be a Master Rain Gardener! Learn to design and install your own rain garden and be the rain garden expert in your neighborhood.

Master Rain Gardeners help friends and neighbors to learn about, design, and plant rain gardens.

The Master Rain Gardener Program will teach you how to manage rainwater in your own yard. Rain gardens naturally manage stormwater by infiltrating precipitation and allowing it to soak into the ground rather than sending it directly to storm sewers and nearby streams untreated.

Summit SWCD will host a virtual orientation meeting for the class on June 8, 2022. The course includes online class modules, weekly Zoom meetings, homework, quizzes, and a final project. The first lesson will be discussed on June 16, 2022 and the last class will be discussed on July 14, 2022, with a week break for the July 4 holiday. You may watch the classes at your convenience within the course timeline.

Upon completion of the course you will receive your Master Raingardener certificate after you install your own rain garden or help to install or maintain a community rain garden as a volunteer. Cost for the class is \$25. Click [here](#) to register. Call 330-926-2452 with questions.



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Mission Statement:

Summit SWCD provides leadership and advocates for the stewardship of our natural resources and responsible land use through the provision of education, technical assistance, and partnerships in Summit County.

The Summit SWCD is an independent division of the Ohio Department of Agriculture and is funded by the State of Ohio, the Summit County Council, and the Summit County Communities for Clean Stormwater.

In order to provide equal employment opportunities to all individuals, employment decisions in the District will be based on merit, qualifications, and abilities. The Summit Soil and Water Conservation District does not discriminate in employment opportunities or practices on the basis of race, color, sex, age, religion, national origin, ancestry, veteran status, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or any other characteristic to the extent protected by law.

Summit SWCD does not discriminate in services with regards to race, color, sex, age, religion, national origin, ancestry, veteran status, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, or any other characteristic to the extent protected by law.

