THE STEWARD

Bartholomew County Soil & Water Conservation District

Volume 5, Issue 2 August 2011

Points of Interest:

- **Rain Barrels**
- **Composters**
- **Invasive Species**

Rain Barrels

Wouldn't it be nice to save money on water while helping the environment at the same time?

What is a Rain Barrel?

A rain barrel is a system that collects and stores rainwater from your roof that would otherwise be lost to runoff and diverted to storm drains and streams.

What are the Advantages of a Rain Barrel?

Helps Reduce Stormwater Pollution

Rainwater stored in rain barrels helps reduce the amount of stormwater runoff and the amount of pollutants that are picked up and carried to storm sewers, creeks and rivers.

Conserves Water Supply Resources

Lawn and garden watering make up nearly 40% of total household water use during the summer. Rainwater used from rain barrels helps reduce the amount of water used from underground aquifers. Saving water not only helps protect the environment, it also saves you money and energy.

Better for Plants and Gardens

Rainwater stored in rain barrels is a naturally soft water and devoid of minerals, chlorine, fluoride, and other chemicals. For this reason, plants respond very well to rainwater. After all, it's what plants in the wild thrive on!

Helps Inform Your Neighbors

One of the best reasons to start harvesting rainwater with rain barrels is to teach and encourage others to do the same, You will help to spread the culture of rainwater collection and in turn, help your larger community and the environment.

We now have 55 Gallon Rain Barrels for sale for $75.

Any Questions? Please Call 812-378-120 x. 3

Learn to Waterfowl Hunt

Sept. 17, 2011
Grouse Ridge Lake Public Fishing Area
10am-2pm

Tumbling Composter

Garden Benefits

Any Questions? Please Call 812-378-120 x3

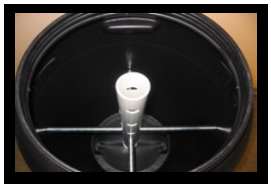
Compost is great for the garden because it improves the soil, which in turn supports healthier and more productive plants. Compost provides virtually all of the essential nutrients for healthy plant growth, and it releases those nutrients over time to give plants a slow, steady, consistent intake of the nutrients essential for growth. Compost also improves the soil's structure, making it easier for soil to hold and use the right amount of moisture and air. Compost will improve the texture of both clay and sandy soil, making them into rich, moisture holding, loamy soils. And, as an added benefit, compost improves plant vigor and provides for improved immunology from diseases.

Once the bacteria are established, it takes as little as 4 weeks to have fresh, nutrient-rich compost. Your garden will thank you!

Environmental Benefits

The most obvious environmental benefit is that composting can significantly reduce the amount of solid waste that would otherwise find its way into the trash collection and dumping cycle. Clearly, the more we compost, the less we contribute to the cost of trash removal and the volume of solid materials in landfills. Using compost to feed your lawn and garden will also reduce your dependency on chemical fertilizers. So, you'll save money and reduce — if not eliminate— the potential of chemical pollution to your little piece of the environment. Using compost instead of chemical fertilizers will ensure that your lawn and garden thrive in soil that is alive and healthy.

We now have 55 Gallon Tumbling Composters for Sale for $120



How it Works:

First, you fill it about 3/4 full of half garden/yard waste and half kitchen waste and then tumble it every 3-4 days. As it tumbles, the bars on the inside help to break up the compost and mix it well. As you can see to the left, these barrels are also designed to help keep fresh air flowing into the compost pile.

Invasive Species

Some invasive species that are well-established in Southern Indiana and that are causing obvious widespread habitat damage are shown below. Ways to rid your habitat of these species include: hand pulling the weeks, mowing them down, weedwacking, and using herbicide. Pay close attention to the manufacturers label when spraying in wetlands.

Japanese Stiltgrass

Description/Habitat: It is an annual grass that can grow up to 3 feet high. It spreads by rooting at nodes along the stem and by seed. It occurs on stream banks, river bluffs, floodplains, emergent and forested wetlands, moist woodlands, early succession fields, uplands, thickets, roadside ditches, gas and power line corridors and home lawns and gardens. It appears to be associated primarily with moist, acidic to neutral soils that are high in nitrogen.

Ecological Impacts: Japanese stiltgrass is especially well adapted to low light conditions. It threatens native plants and natural habitats in open to shady, and moist to dry locations. Stilt grass spreads to form extensive patches, displacing native species that are not able to compete with it. Where white-tail deer are over-abundant, they may facilitate its invasion by feeding on native plant species and avoiding stilt grass.

Amur Honeysuckle

Description/Habitat: It can grow up to 30 feet tall. Fragrant flowers are tubular with very thin petals and appear in late spring. They are white changing to yellow. Abundant red berries, 1/4 inch in diameter, appear in late summer and often persist throughout winter. It tolerates wet soils for brief periods of time, such as at the edge of streams and creek banks that occasionally overflow. It can grow in full sun or full shade and can be found in fencerows, thickets, woodlands, roadsides, pastures, old fields, neglected areas and lawns. It is tolerate of all types of pollution, and thrives on neglect, tolerating severe summer droughts and cold winter temperatures with minimal dieback.

Ecological Impacts: In forests the plant can adversely affect populations of native members of the community. It can spread rapidly due to the seeds being dispersed by birds and mammals. It can form a dense understory thicket which can restrict native plant growth and tree seedling establishment.

Garlic Mustard

Description/Habitat: Garlic mustard is a cool season biennial herb with stalked, triangular to heart-shaped, coarsely toothed leaves that give off an odor of garlic when crushed. Flowering plants of garlic mustard reach from 2 to 3-1/2 feet in height and produce buttonlike clusters of small white flowers, each with four petals in the shape of a cross. Garlic mustard frequently occurs in moist, shaded soil of river floodplains, forests, and roadsides, edges of woods and trails edges and forest openings. Disturbed areas are most susceptible to rapid invasion and dominance.

Ecological Impacts: Garlic mustard poses a severe threat to native plants and animals in forest communities. Once introduced to an area, garlic mustard out-competes native plants by aggressively monopolizing light, moisture, nutrients, soil and space.

For More Information About Native Species in the Area, or to Learn How to Become a Weed Watcher:

Log on to: www.sicwma.org

Bartholomew County Soil & Water Conservation District

Check us Out!

The district holds it's monthly meeting on the second Thursday of each month at 5pm at the district office located at 1040 2nd Street in Columbus, Indiana. The meeting is open to the public.

We are committed to providing our customers with quality service through effective communication, professional integrity, and mutual respect.

Think Before You Print

If you would like to receive our newsletter by email (**and in color!**) please send us an email at: heather.shireman@in.nacdnet.net and we will gladly add you to our email list. Also, if you have changed addresses, moved or wish to stop receiving the newsletter please let us know.

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- The district has 2009 plat books for sale at a cost of $20.00 each. These are available at the district office.
- Marking Flags are also available to purchase at the district office. The cost is 20¢ per flag. *Bundle of 100 flags = $20*

Please Recycle Me

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