



## HortusScope | What's Up in the Central Indiana Gardening Community | Graphic courtesy Brushwood Nursery

**Tuesday, December 3 Giving Tuesday** Join this global movement seeking to unleash the power of radical generosity. It's a simple idea: whether it's making someone smile, helping a neighbor or stranger out, showing up for an issue or people we care about, or giving some of what we have to those who need our help, every act of generosity counts, and everyone has something to contribute toward building the better world we all want to live in. <https://www.givingtuesday.org/>

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**Thursday, December 5 Carmel Green Initiative Green Gift Shop** 1:30 to 7:00 p.m., Carmel Clay Public Library, 425 E Main Street, Carmel. <https://www.carmelgreen.org/live-and-learn/green-gift-shop/>  
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**Thursday, December 5 Indiana Wildlife Federation Conservation Tillage & Water Quality Symposium (Marshall County)** With nearly 15 million acres of Hoosier land classified as agricultural, we must know how agriculture interfaces with our wildlife. The harmful production techniques we use are evident in our state, and the impacts are felt as far away as the Gulf of Mexico. Indiana has some of the most polluted waterways in the country and habitat dead zones, but we can transition to better techniques—conservation tillage, cover cropping, and riparian buffers—that improve water quality and wildlife habitat while enhancing profitability and the long-term viability of agricultural communities. Free for farmers and agronomists; \$25 for non-farmers or landowners. 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Swan Lake Resort, 5203 Plymouth LaPorte Trail, Plymouth. [Schedule and registration](#)

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**Saturday, December 7 Central Indiana Land Trust Winter Tree ID Outing** “Pining” for some nature time? We’ve got you covered. We'll gather at Oliver's Woods for an easy nature walk led by our volunteer White River Docents and White River Steward, Grace. If you've ever wanted to delve into tree identification, now's your chance. 10:00 a.m. to noon, [Oliver's Woods](#), 8825 River Road, Indianapolis. RSVP/more info [here](#).

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**Saturday, December 7 Indiana Wildlife Federation Women Supporting Wildlife Hike** Join us for an all-women hike where women come together to support wildlife conservation efforts. During the hike, we will learn different outdoor skills including map and compass reading, purifying your water from a stream, identifying flora and fauna, and engaging in nature meditation with other wildlife lovers. Hikes are 2-4 miles long. A list of suggested items to bring/wear will be provided. Hikes are led by Patty Haltom, Professional Outdoor Educator and Wilderness Guide, founder and owner of Project Reteach Outdoor Adventures, an all-women's outdoor adventure company based in Indianapolis. Limited to 12 people per hike and the cost is \$25 per person. 3:00 to 5:00 p.m., Teter Retreat Organic Farm, 10980 East 221st Street, Noblesville. [Register](#)

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**Thursday, December 12 Hoosier Environmental Council Unpacking PFAS: Risks, Regulations, and Resilience** PFAS, better known as “forever chemicals,” represent a significant threat to human health and our natural environment with current uses, management and regulation. PFAS play an important role in critical health care devices like catheters and pacemakers but are also ever present in nonstick pans, food packaging, clothing, and more. Hoosier Environmental Council expects to see legislation

concerning these chemical compounds during the upcoming legislative session, so we're partnering with Purdue University's Institute for a Sustainable Future to offer this free webinar. 11:00 a.m. [Register](#)

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**No Leaves? No Problem!** **Hamilton County Soil & Water Conservation District** Winter plant identification offers a fresh way to explore familiar landscapes, focusing on subtle details like structure and texture rather than leafy foliage. Start with the bark—its texture can be smooth, deeply furrowed, or even peeling, offering valuable clues that remain visible all winter. Look closely at branch patterns; some trees, like maples and ashes, have opposite branching, while others, like oaks and elms, are alternate. Buds provide additional hints, so bring a hand lens to inspect their size, shape, and arrangement. Study the silhouette of trees and shrubs from a distance, as their shape can help identify species. Bright winter colors, like the red of dogwoods or the yellow of willows, are also helpful. Finally, pay attention to any remaining fruits or seed heads, like those of American beech with its golden-brown leaves, or the bright berries of winterberry. With a field guide and patience, you can uncover Indiana's subtle winter beauty through the quiet art of plant identification. Find many resources at <https://www.hamiltonswcd.org/news-articles/winter-tree-identification?eType=EmailBlastContent&eId=16ce21dd-8bc8-49ae-84e7-344d10df1f58>

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**Mulch Madness** Hamilton County SWCD says don't leave your garden soil bare over the winter. They back this up with a good resource on all kinds of mulch [here](#).

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**For the Kids WonderGrove for Birds**, in collaboration with Homegrown National Park, has launched free educational videos for K-2 students. These fun episodes teach kids the importance of creating bird habitats in their yards. Take a look at <https://homegrownnationalpark.org/hnp-kids/>.

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**Photo Notes** Well, the holiday season is upon us with the usual Black Friday, Cyber Monday, jingle bells advertising frenzy geared to you snatching up the perfect gifts to surprise and delight. I'm hardly feeling festive this season, and especially not inclined to buy stuff. I want to hug my loved ones closer, spend more time with friends, retell the old stories, regroup for what we'll face in the new year. But I like the idea of Giving Tuesday. It's not just about donating to worthy causes (such as the Good People listed at [www.hortusscope.info](http://www.hortusscope.info)). It's about "making someone smile, helping a neighbor or stranger out, showing up for an issue or people we care about, or giving some of what we have to those who need our help." I especially admire the founders' aim to "unleash the power of radical generosity." What a concept! We're going to need to be both radical and generous going forward to find the power to protect the lands and wildlife we love and to mend our torn communities. More power to us, and Happy Holidays to all!

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**HortusScope**, an e-bulletin for the Central Indiana gardening community, is published the first of every month as a public service by Wendy Ford. To submit news items, add or update your e-mail address, or remove your name from the HortusScope e-mail list, please drop me a note at [hortusscope@comcast.net](mailto:hortusscope@comcast.net). Your supporting donation cheerfully accepted at 6911 Cabernet Way, Indianapolis, IN 46278, check made out to Wendy Ford.

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## Volunteer Opportunities

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**Pollinator Partnership Collect Native Seed for Project Wingspan** Project Wingspan is an initiative supported by a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Federation. It is administered by the non-profit

Pollinator Partnership, which is leading a coalition of partners to enhance land across the Midwest to support our imperiled pollinators – especially monarch butterflies and the rusty patch bumblebee. You can help us make a difference! Native seed that is collected will be shipped to the main nursery with Pollinator Partnership where it will be processed (cleaned and sorted) and distributed to predetermined conservation areas to help these pollinators survive. Volunteers under 16 years old must be accompanied by a parent/guardian. Interested volunteers can sign up here: <https://www.carmelclayparks.com/park-conversation/protecting-imperiled-pollinators/>

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**Cull Invasives HIP Weed Wrangles and Strike Team** There's no shortage of opportunities to help with invasive removal this season at Hamilton County Invasives Partnership (HIP) Weed Wrangles! Visit our website to find details on each event. [www.hcinvasives.org/weedwrangle](http://www.hcinvasives.org/weedwrangle) Volunteers are also invited to join our HIP Strike Team, a group led by experienced volunteers and/or SWCD staff volunteers who provide technical support and labor to remove invasive species at partner sites. These are typically public use sites such as parks, schools, land trusts, nature reserves, etc. See upcoming Strike Team dates here: [www.hcinvasives.org/striketeam](http://www.hcinvasives.org/striketeam)

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**Citizen Science Mapping Ground Nesting Bees** Cornell University researchers have built a community science project, “Project GNBee,” focused on mapping aggregations of diverse ground-nesting bees. They hope to facilitate the study of their nesting requirements as well as the biology of these bees across space and through time. They are asking a broad community of participants to upload observations they have made of ground-nesting bee aggregations to their iNaturalist project, adding to more than 3,000 observations of over 300 bee species worldwide. GNBee: [website](#) iNaturalist: [project](#) Instagram: [projectGNBee](#).

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## Resources

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**Interactive Indiana Native Plant Finder** It's the Indiana Native Plant Society's searchable database of Indiana native plants and their pollinators. This colorful, user-friendly tool can filter on numerous characteristics to present an array of plants suited to your site conditions. Garden-friendly natives are noted, as well as plants designated as caterpillar and pollinator magnets. The Finder holds 140 complete records now and will grow to 500 as details are added. Find it at <https://finder.indiananativeplants.org>.

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**Videos Indiana Native Plant Society YouTube Channel** Enjoy a break from gardening chores with videos on landscaping with natives, propagating with native seeds, native plant conservation, nature preserves, land stewardship, rain gardens, and other goodies. Find them at <https://www.youtube.com/@indiananativeplantsociety8035/playlists>

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**Video Cover Crop Training** Visit Marion County SWCD's Soil Health Guide and check out the updates to the cover crop section. We've added the Indiana Cover Crop Tool and a 20-minute training video on how to use it. <https://marionswcd.org/indiana-cover-crop-tool-for-small-farms-and-gardens/>

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**Reference The Gardener's Guide to Prairie Plants** Promising to be the definitive reference on the subject, this thoroughly researched and illustrated handbook is a one-stop compendium for gardeners passionate about native plants and prairie restoration. Author/photographers Neil Diboll of Prairie Nursery and Hilary Cox of our own Indiana Native Plant Society offer details every gardener might need to know to welcome these plants into their landscapes. Available in bookstores and online.

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**How-To Rain Gardens for Homeowners** Rain gardens are not just landscape features-- they absorb water and pollutants, reduce runoff, protect water quality, and prevent flooding. Claire Lane, Urban Conservationist with Hamilton County SWCD is eager for you to know how to manage stormwater on your property and clean it of contaminants. The SWCD is offering a free booklet online and downloadable [here](#). Print copies are available at the SWCD office Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

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**How-To Prairie Up! Designing a Small Meadow Garden with Commonly Available Native Plants** by Benjamin Vogt. It's easy to be overwhelmed when shopping for new plants, especially when you want to create a wildlife habitat, and plant tags seldom provide enough or even the right information to make informed decisions suitable for our specific site conditions. Drawn from Benjamin's own experience designing and maintaining suburban gardens, this book features lists of which plants to use, in what combinations, and under what conditions. Available at bookstores and online.

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**Design New Directions in the American Landscape (NDAL)** This educational organization is dedicated to the art, culture, and science of ecology-based landscape design. Although the message of ecological design is increasingly popular, our knowledge of how to implement that message and make it successful remains limited. NDAL's conferences for landscape architects and designers regularly feature topics in ecology and sustainability, creatively integrating science and design. They also include topics in anthropology, history, and the arts, providing a rich framework for understanding the full extent of what's possible and required by ecological design. Paired with this approach is a commitment to exploring tangible, practical techniques applicable at diverse scales and contexts. View courses for the Professional, Home Gardener, Students & Educators [here](https://www.ndal.org/). <https://www.ndal.org/>  
NOTE: NDAL received the **AHS 2024 Horticultural Innovation Award** as part of the American Horticultural Society's Great American Gardeners Awards. This award is "given to an individual or company whose innovations have made the field of horticulture more sustainable and accessible to all."

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**Podcast Bug Banter with the Xerces Society** Cozy up to your invertebrate friends with this podcast exploring the world of invertebrates and how to help these extraordinary animals. Co-hosts Matthew Shepherd and Rachel Dunham dive into the mysteries of native insects and other invertebrates in North America. Your imagination will travel underground, overhead, and in between as you listen to expert guests share the secrets of tiny creatures that live amongst us but are often unknown. In just half-hour sessions, become an apprentice in the ways we can better share the earth with wildlife and help these precious animals in peril.

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**Pollinator Partnership Pollinator-Friendly Solar Habitat** Solar energy is good for the environment. It can be even better when integrated with habitat that supports pollinators and biodiversity. Find out how to make solar pollinator habitat work for you and how Pollinator Partnership can help ensure that your project is successful. Pollinator-friendly solar habitat refers to co-locating deep-rooted and regionally appropriate native grasses, wildflowers, and non-invasive cover-crop plants within solar sites, to provide multiple benefits for solar operation and maintenance, the environment, and surrounding communities. [Learn more](#)

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**Best Practices Good Reasons to Have Your Soil Tested** A soil test is a process by which elements are measured for their "plant available" content within the sample. The quantity of available nutrients in the sample determines the amount of fertilizer or other soil amendments that are recommended. A soil test also measures soil pH, organic matter, and cation exchange capacity (CEC). These analyses indicate

whether lime, elemental sulfur, or iron is needed and, if so, how much to apply. [More from Hamilton County Soil & Water Conservation District](#)

## Inspiration

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**Life Support Doug Tallamy's 4 Universal Landscape Goals** Our landscapes must do the things that enable ecosystems to produce the life support we and every other species require. They must: 1) Support a diverse community of pollinators throughout the growing season. 2) Provide energy for the local food web. 3) Manage the watershed in which they lie. 4) Remove carbon from the atmosphere where it is wreaking havoc on the earth's climate. How well a landscape accomplishes these goals depends on how well we, as landscape managers, choose and deploy the plants on our landscapes. Learn why lawns fail and native plants succeed at these four goals [here](#).

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**Start a New HABITAT!® Homegrown National Park®** Doug Tallamy's remarkable book *Nature's Best Hope* outlines a grassroots approach to conservation that homeowners everywhere can participate in. Relying on the initiatives of private individuals, this approach is immune from the whims of government policy, and is practical, effective, and easy. When you've planted some native plants, add your property to the national map of the growing Homegrown National Park. Learn more at [HomegrownNationalPark.org](http://HomegrownNationalPark.org).

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**Garden Travel Tours with Cole Burrell** Contact [Cole Burrell](#) to add your name to the list for advance brochures and registration information and visit the [Garden and Nature Tours](#) website for more information.