



## HortusScope | What's Up in the Central Indiana

Gardening Community | [Earth mockup courtesy Joel Ferrell](#)

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### **Tuesday, February 18 Marion County Soil & Water Conservation District 55th Annual Meeting**

The SWCD welcomes you to a free catered dinner, SWCD program, and business updates, and a guest presentation. This annual meeting is hosted in collaboration with the Bethany Community Garden's first garden club of the year. Dr. Dharmarthne of University of Indianapolis and the student Crimper Team will share their experiences with the DesignSpine program offered by UINDY's R.B. Annis School of Engineering. In 2023-2024, an enthusiastic student team assisted the SWCD to design and build a tool that can be used on small farms to terminate cover crops in a crop rotation, resulting in the best sophomore project award and a feature in the Indianapolis Business Journal. Dinner by Yamallama Delicatessen sponsored by Marion County Farm Bureau. 6:00 to 8:00 p.m., Bethany Lutheran Church, 4702 S East St, Indianapolis. [Register](#)

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### **Wednesday February 19 Hamilton County Invasives Partnership (HIP) Invasive Tool Maintenance**

**Workshop** Proper maintenance extends the life of your tools and keeps them working efficiently. Join us for a free hands-on workshop where you'll learn how to clean, sharpen, and lubricate your invasive species removal tools & even get to work on your own tools. Space is limited so register soon. Attendees will be required to sign a liability waiver on site. All attendees must be 18+ years of age. 6:00 to 8:00 p.m., Strawtown Koteewi Park Maintenance Facility, 22699 Essig Ave, Noblesville. [Register](#)

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**Thursday, February 20 Native Plants as Delicious Herbal Teas: Let's Make Some!** Native plants provide delicious beverages but also offer a vast pharmacopoeia of herbal medicines for those who know how to employ them. Get to know Greg Monzel, co-founder of Persimmon Herb School, as he shares tips on easy herbal teas that anyone can prepare at home. Making tea from dried plants is inexpensive and can be effective for home remedies. Greg will cover six native medicinal plants, how they are used, and will demonstrate an herbal tea brewing. He'll also cover how to dry herbs from the garden and answer any questions you have. Presented by Indiana Native Plant Society Central Chapter. 7:00 to 8:00 p.m. online. [Register](#)

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**Tuesday, February 25 Hamilton County Soil & Water Conservation District Annual Meeting** Join us for an afternoon of lunch and learning! Our speaker, Jeanette Jaskula, will present "Welcome to the Dark Side: Gardening for Moths." The meeting is free and lunch will be provided from [Yats](#). Attendees will hear a summary report of 2024 SWCD activities, and a vote will be held to elect a supervisor for the open position on the SWCD board. 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., Delaware Township Community Center, 9094 E 131st Street, Fishers. Register [here](#).

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**Wednesday, March 12 Hamilton County Invasives Partnership (HIP) Landscaping with Natives Workshop** Discover how to transform your yard with native plants! Join us for a free educational presentation, the launch of free native landscape plans, and the opportunity to connect with local native

plant retailers and landscape designers. Learn how to create a beautiful, sustainable landscape that supports local wildlife. 6:30 to 8:00 p.m., Cool Creek Park Nature Center, 2000 E 151st Street, Carmel. [Register](#)

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**Advocacy Opp Hoosier Environmental Council Bill Watch** More than a thousand bills have been filed since the Indiana General Assembly convened on January 8, and HEC is diligently scanning for environmental bills to share with us. Check their [2025 Bill Watch page](#) for regular updates and new additions to the bills HEC is following. Our legislators are often unpredictable, especially during budget sessions, so pay attention and hang on for a wild ride! You can count on HEC to keep you updated and to provide you with context so you can call and write to your representatives as needed.

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**Alice's Garden Workshops** Alice's Garden on Indy's northwest side is offering a series of in-person hands-on sessions with all materials furnished. **February 1: Terrarium Workshop** Create your very own mini garden in an 8" glass fishbowl. Our workshop will guide you through the process of selecting plants, arranging them beautifully, and caring for your new terrarium. [Register](#) **February 8: Mossy Mirrors Workshop** Immerse yourself in a world of mossy mirrors reflecting the beauty of your surroundings. You'll decorate a 12" round mirror with preserved mosses, dried flowers, preserved and artificial mushrooms, crystals, and anything else your creativity inspires. [Register](#) **February 15: Cupcake Bouquets with Floral & Frosting Co.** Turn delicious cupcakes into realistic-looking carnations, roses, and baby's breath as you learn the secrets of buttercream art and decorate your very own set to show off your skills! [Register](#) **February 22 OR March 1: Vegetable & Flower Seed Starting** Learn the best practices for germinating seeds, caring for seedlings, and transplanting them into your garden. Each person receives a sprouting tray, seedling pots, markers, seed starting soil, and a selection of seeds to grow a beautiful and bountiful garden! [Register for Feb 22](#) [Register for Mar 1](#) All workshops are held at Alice's Garden, 3205 West 71st Street, Indianapolis.

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**One to Watch Buy Now! The Shopping Conspiracy** It's a new Netflix documentary written and directed by Emmy Award nominee Nic Stacey. The architects of our collective desire for endless consumption reveal how corporations are hell-bent on increasing profits, how they convince unsuspecting consumers time and time again to part with their money, and what happens when all our discarded purchases make their way to landfills. Commentators who witnessed the inner workings of corporations from Amazon to Apple sit down to talk about the unsavory practices their former employers are still using. But while we're all being encouraged to quench a bottomless thirst for more stuff, it's the future generations and our environment that end up paying the price. [Trailer](#)

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**Scholarship Opp Indiana Wildlife Federation** Are you a college student exploring environmental studies? You may be eligible for the 2025 Holt Scholarship. The IWF Endowment awards a \$1,000 scholarship in memory of Charles Holt, a lifelong member and champion of fish and wildlife resources. Applicants must be at or above a sophomore level and studying a field related to resource conservation or environmental education. Applications are accepted until June 15. Visit [www.indianawildlife.org/Holt-Scholarship](http://www.indianawildlife.org/Holt-Scholarship) to apply.

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**Plant Shopping! Indiana Wildlife Federation** IWF's Native Plant Sale is back and bigger than ever in 2025! We are continuing our partnership with Stantec Native Plant Nursery with an expanded collection of all new plant kits! AND we have a smaller, bespoke plant sale through our partnership with the National Wildlife Federation and Garden For Wildlife. Orders for Stantec kits must be placed by April 1st. For more info on some of the plants, don't forget to check out our Native Plant Finder! For our Stantec

sale, visit <https://indianawildlife.org/native-plant-sale/>. For our Garden for Wildlife sale, visit <https://fundraising.gardenforwildlife.com/uf0fSv>.

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**Photo Notes** Is there hope for our benighted planet when it appears that all around us is going haywire? I've found something that helps me focus. It's a smartphone app called Climate Action Now. It presents five positive actions you can take every day, with detailed explanations of why. I've learned a lot about the mechanics of energy use just from following these actions. The fun part is you win points for actions taken, with a prize of a tree planted on your behalf. Woot!

[Check It Out](#)

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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 GNBees," 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. GNBees: [website](#) iNaturalist: [project](#) Instagram: [projectGNBees](#).

## Resources

**Winter Plant ID** Hamilton County SWCD says 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](#).

**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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**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.