



SUMMIT SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

SPRING 2024
NEWSLETTER



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2024 Big Tree Contest Announcement

Summit Soil & Water Conservation District (SSWCD) will be sponsoring a Big Tree Contest in 2024. The **American sycamore** (*Platanus occidentalis*) has been chosen as the tree for this year!

American sycamore trees are easily identified by their height and distinct white bark. Also known as sycamore or American planetree, this tree easily reaches heights of 80 feet tall and 60 feet wide but can grow much larger.

Participants will fill out the nomination form to submit a nomination for a tree they believe might be the largest in the county. Qualified personnel will measure the trees to determine the winner. In addition to size information, the Summit SWCD will look at the ability of the tree to capture storm water.

Trees are wonderful reservoirs for storing rainwater. For example: one American sycamore with a diameter of 45 inches can absorb as much as 7,540 gallons of stormwater runoff each year! Imagine how much stormwater can be absorbed over the lifetime of that tree. Every tree that you see has the potential to reduce stormwater quantity and improve stormwater quality by filtering out pollutants.

For more information about the Big Tree Contest and to receive a Nomination Form, contact Sandy at (330) 926-2452 or sbarbic@summitoh.net.



Photos courtesy of NC State Extension



What to do with e-Waste?

Do you have old phones, computers or televisions collecting dust in your homes? Before discarding these electronics in the trash, consider locating an electronic waste (e-Waste) disposal event or bin near your community.

What exactly is e-Waste?

E-waste is any piece of electronic equipment that's been discarded. This includes working and broken items that are thrown in the garbage or donated to a charity reseller like Goodwill. Often, if the item goes unsold in the store, it will be thrown away.

E-waste is particularly dangerous due to the toxic chemicals that naturally leach from the metals inside when buried.

Where can I take e-Waste?

Summit e-Waste Recycling Solutions has partnered with many local communities to hold e-Waste events for residents. However, these events can be few and far between, so the company has come up with an amazing solution! E-Waste bins are a safe and easy way to dispose of your e-waste year-round. Bins are located in library, town hall and even school parking lots for safe electronic disposal. Check out their website to find one near you!



Photo courtesy of Summit e-Waste Recycling Solutions

It's Not Hard to Have a Healthy Yard!

When many people think of a healthy yard, they may think of green grass with a few non-flowering shrubs. However, while it may look neat and well kept, this lack of biodiversity is not what's best for our ecosystem. A healthy yard needs deep-rooted native plants to soak up water, blooms that attract pollinators, and plants that provide habitat for mammals and birds. Implementing small changes in your yard can create this healthy, biodiverse ecosystem we all need to live on this planet. One of the easiest places to start is with native plants! Native plants have co-evolved with native pollinators and they need each other. Without one, the other cannot survive and thrive.

Are you ready to plant natives? Let's get started! First, make sure the plants you select are native to Northeast Ohio. Many plants might be marked native but are not naturally found in this area. Northeast Ohio plants are adapted to survive our specific climate, like cold conditions and snow. Also, consider if the plant is a straight native species or a cultivar. Cultivars are marketed as "improved" species, yet they may not give our pollinators all the essential nutrients they need to thrive. For example, the double purple coneflower is beautiful and full, with twice the number of petals. However, these tightly bunched petals make it nearly impossible for pollinators to gather nectar and pollen from them. This cultivar would not be the best option for your yard.

Healthy Yard! Cont'd.

Planting natives requires some additional planning just like any type of garden. The characteristics of your yard, such as soil composition, amount of daily sunlight and moisture, all need to be considered. The soil needs to contain organic matter, like compost or manure, for best results. Observe how much sun the site receives (full, partial or shade). Does the area you are considering hold a lot of moisture or is it typically dry? Choosing your plants to match your yard's characteristics will give them the best chance at being healthy. Once you've compiled a dream list of plants that will thrive in your chosen spot, narrow it down by choosing just one to three species to start with.

New gardens take a bit to establish themselves but after a year or two, you may notice a difference in the types of pollinators and birds coming to your landscape. Another thing many people notice, is that they have less standing water in their yards. Native plants have naturally deep roots, some as long as 6 feet, that soak up surface water. This is a significant benefit that many people do not realize is happening below the surface. Having a healthy yard does not have to be a huge expense or workload. Starting small can lead to big changes for all!

For more information on how to create a healthy backyard, visit Summit Metro Parks Wild Back Yards page at <https://www.summitmetroparks.org/wildbackyards.aspx>

Plant Trees For Water Quality & Backyard Conservation!

Polluted stormwater runoff entering our streams and rivers, then flowing into Lake Erie and the Ohio River, is not a new problem. Developed spaces are constantly expanding, adding more hardened and impervious surfaces to the landscape. This increases runoff which will travel through a network of stormwater sewers designed to remove water from our streets and our properties. This results in concentrated pollutants in stormwater drains and increases the speed at which the runoff exits the property.

Urban stormwater runoff containing non-point source pollution washes chemicals (oil, gasoline, road salts, fertilizers, and other lawn chemicals) from hard surfaces such as roadways and parking lots, into streams, wetlands, rivers, and oceans. Drinking water, aquatic life, and the health of our entire ecosystem can be adversely affected by this process.



Photo courtesy of NCRS

Trees For Water Quality Cont'd.

Planting native trees is one solution to combat polluted runoff. The practice of planting trees plays a major role in stormwater runoff control. The United States EPA even states, "Trees are natural managers of stormwater. When included as part of a system engineered to manage stormwater, they can improve infiltration and capacity, reducing the overall amount of runoff."

One of the most important benefits of trees is their ability to capture and hold stormwater. This leads to a reduction in the volume of water rushing through gutters and pipes following a storm. The result is less investment in expensive infrastructure (storm sewers) and consequently cleaner water when the runoff reaches rivers and lakes.

Trees act as reservoirs, controlling runoff at the source. Trees reduce runoff by:

- Intercepting and holding rain on leaves, branches, and bark.
- Increasing infiltration and storage of rainwater through the tree's root system.
- Reducing soil erosion by slowing rainfall before it strikes the soil.
- Tree roots hold the soil in place and prevent soil (the major component of non-point source pollution) from entering lakes and streams.



Besides keeping you dry, the leaves and bark of trees retain large volumes of water, allowing some to evaporate, and some to reach the ground at a slower rate. Depending on the species, a single tree may store 100 gallons or more of rainwater, after only one or two inches of rainfall. A single Eastern White Pine planted in Northeastern Ohio, with a trunk diameter of 24 inches will intercept as much as 3,787 gallons of stormwater runoff annually. When trees are combined with other natural landscaping features such as native flowers, as much as 65% of stormwater runoff can be reduced in residential developments. So do your part to keep polluted storm water out of our streams, rivers, and lakes by planting some native trees, shrubs, or flowers today!

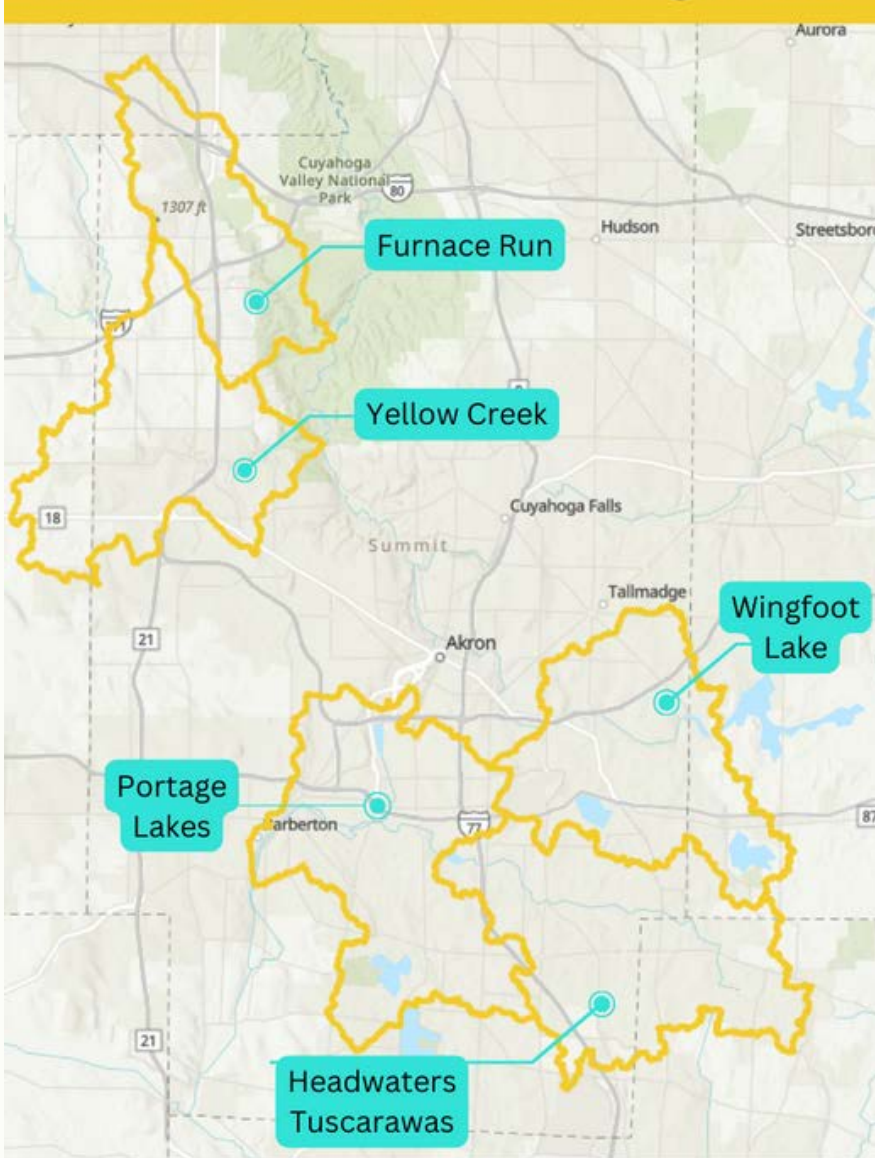


Photos courtesy of Canva

Get into Action!

Be a Volunteer Stream Scientist!

2024 Volunteer Monitoring Areas

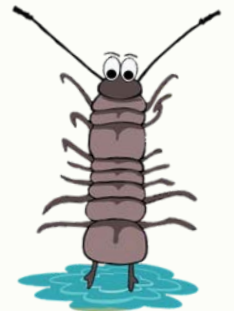


We're seeking passionate volunteers who want to join our local stream monitoring team for the 2024 field season!

This year, our program includes both the Cuyahoga River Basin and the Tuscarawas River Basin, meaning more opportunities for you to make a meaningful impact in your community.

Our watershed coordinators will teach you all you need to know to measure the health of our local streams, so no prior experience needed! All monitoring equipment is provided, and our coordinators are available to support your efforts throughout the season.

Interested in learning more about joining our volunteer program, or other volunteer opportunities? [Click here to sign up!](#)





SUMMIT SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Contact Us!

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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.

