

Putnam County SWCD News

Summer 2023

Tackling Invasive Plants

Join us at a Weed Wrangle!

The Putnam County Remove Invasive Plants (PC RIP) group hosts Weed Wrangles each month from March to October on the 4th Saturday from 9 to 11 am. Locations vary around the county and include parks, trails, and other public areas.

At the weed wrangles, volunteers work to cut, pull, hack, and otherwise remove invasive plants from the area. While there is some work involved, they are a fun time! We work together in small groups to focus on an area. It is an accomplishment to see what can be done in only 2 hours!

August 26: Jaycee Park

September 23: Vandalia Trail (meet at trailhead behind Ascena)

October 28: Tansy Wells Nature Trail (next to Tzouanakis School)

No experience with invasive plants is needed. We will work beside you to teach plant identification and removal techniques. All you need to bring is a water bottle, gardening/work gloves (if you have them) and a willingness to participate and have fun!

Contact the Putnam County SWCD office with any questions or for more information.



“Out of the long list of nature’s gifts to man, none is perhaps so utterly essential to human life as soil.”

-Hugh Hammond
Bennett

Keep In Touch!

Putnam County Soil & Water
Conservation District

1007 Mill Pond Drive
Greencastle, IN 46135

765-653-5716 x3

Putnamswcd.org

Members of PC RIP have different reasons to participate, from being concerned with wildlife habitat to taking frustrations out in a positive way. We take all volunteers who are willing to come out and join us! No experience required!

Cover Crops: Good for fields of all sizes

From backyard gardens to huge crop fields

Cover crops are increasingly being used in large cropping systems as they can offer many benefits. Those same benefits can also be brought to a backyard garden with the same cover crops!

The benefits of cover crops are well documented, from helping to reduce soil erosion to building organic matter. Cover crops can also help with weed control and improve soil health. With a willing grower, cover crops can be incorporated into almost any growing operation.

But let's be realistic, any change to a cropping system will have bumps in the road. There will likely be weather challenges and lessons that get learned the hard way. But most dedicated cover croppers will tell you that the long-term benefits outweigh the short-term challenges.

These benefits are not only eligible to large row crop farmers. Even the backyard garden can benefit from cover crops. The same benefits are available no matter the size of the planting. Cover crops can help supply nitrogen to next year's tomato crop or help control the weeds around the green beans.

Which cover crop species to choose depends on the goals of the are to receive cover crops. For more information on choosing a cover crop, you can contact our office or Purdue Extension. Seeds are available in small quantities in some local businesses or online. Be sure to read seed labels for germination and seed purity rates.

Pictured below is a tillage radish growing in a garden.



Trying to decide which cover crop?

There is a lot of information available online about cover crops, but it can easily get overwhelming. If you have questions, staff at the SWCD or Purdue Extension can help by answering questions or giving you targeted information.

Septic Systems Impact Water Quality

Failing septic systems contribute E. coli

In the Big Walnut Watershed, there are over 600 miles of stream that have elevated levels of E.coli according to records from the Indiana Department of Environmental Management. There are many potential sources of the E. coli, including animal waste from livestock, wildlife, and pets. But another likely source of E. coli is septic systems that aren't working properly.

When they work properly, septic systems allow organic matter to break down so that pathogens and nutrients are neutralized. The water component is then released into the leach field and allowed to slowly soak into the ground.

Septic systems should be inspected at least every 3 years by a professional. The individual will inspect for leaks and determine the levels of the various layers within the tank. They will determine if the tank needs pumped or if repairs are needed. If repairs are needed, they should be completed ASAP. Regular maintenance decreases the chances of a septic system failure.

Failing septic systems can contaminate surrounding groundwater or surface waters by leaking E. coli and other pathogens. When the wastewater isn't broken down properly, pathogens can be released into the leach field. When this happens, the pathogens get into the ground water. When there is a lake or stream close, the pathogens can easily get into the surface water.

If it has been several years since your septic system has been inspected, it would be a good idea to call a professional out. Together, we can decrease the E. coli levels in Big Walnut Creek.



For more information about Septic Systems and how to care for them, check out [www.epa.gov/septic!](http://www.epa.gov/septic)

**SepticSmart
Week is
Sept 18-22**

Each year, communities and local groups work to bring awareness of septic system care and maintenance. SepticSmart Week is held the third week of September. Check out our FaceBook page that week to learn more!

Do you want input on local resource concerns?

LWG meeting scheduled...

Each year, residents of Putnam County are invited to share their concerns relating to the natural resources of Putnam County. These concerns are developed into a list that is used to rank applications for certain federal NRCS programs, such as the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). Each of the practices in EQIP and CSP are associated with at least one resource concern that they help to address. For example, a riparian buffer is a practice that helps to address the concern of streambank erosion. If the residents of Putnam County identify streambank erosion as a resource concern, each application that includes a riparian buffer would receive additional points.

This year's Local Working Group (LWG) meeting will be held on August 18 in the York Community Building at the Putnam County Fairgrounds. The meeting will start at approximately 11:30, or immediately following the PARP meeting and will last roughly an hour.

For those interested in contributing their concerns but not able to participate in the meeting, a survey has been developed. Participation in the survey is limited to those who live in or own land in Putnam County. The survey is available online at <https://tinyurl.com/PutnamLWG24> or by contacting the Putnam County SWCD office at 765-653-5716 x3. If you would like the link for the survey emailed to you, please send a request to office@putnamswcd.org. Surveys must be completed no later than August 16 to be included in final ranking.



SWCD Offerings

If you are interested in knowing what programs are being offered, the best tool is to follow our Facebook page at Putnam County Soil & Water Conservation District.