

2024 AUTUMN NEWSLETTER



SUMMIT
Soil & Water
Conservation District



2024 ANNUAL MEETING

Summit SWCD’s 78th annual meeting and election for the Board of Supervis0rs took place on September 26, 2024, at Sarah’s Vineyard in Cuyahoga Falls. Sarah’s Vineyard Stone-Fired Pizza and luncheon refreshments were served.

The event featured highlights of progress and programs. Rob Curtis, Vice-Chair of Summit SWCD’s Board of Supervisors, presented awards, and chair Ana Burns, Secretary Catherine Perrow, and Member Andrew Brown also made remarks.

Urban Conservation Award

Mike Jones, with the City of Stow, received the 2024 Urban Conservation Award for his outstanding responsiveness and proactive efforts in stormwater management and community engagement. Mike is also highly responsive in managing Stow’s construction site inspection and post-construction programs, ensuring that projects meet regulatory standards. Mike is the hub of Stow’s Stormwater Program and credits his supportive co-workers, who accepted the award on his behalf.



Left to Right Trevor Simpkins, City of Stow, Rob Curtis, Vice-Chair, and Jim McCleary, City of Stow.



Left to Right-Steve Newlon, Steve McIntosh and Rob Curtis

Conservation Educator Award

The Conservation Educator of the Year Award was awarded to the Cuyahoga Falls High School “Fresh Farm Program” leaders, Steve McIntosh and Steve Newlon. Through gardening, students are not only growing vegetables, but are also cultivating essential life skills, confidence, friendships, sustainability, and valuable lessons that will last a lifetime. This program extends beyond the classroom with much of the produce being donated to local nonprofits, helping those in need. The dedication and leadership of the “Two Steves” has been integral to the program’s growth and impact on the school and the broader community.



Big Tree Awards

Summit SWCD decided to host a Big Tree contest again this year to promote the beauty and benefits of our County's biggest and oldest trees and their contributions to clean water and healthy soil. We asked participants to submit nominations for the 2024 featured tree, the American Sycamore, *Platanus occidentalis*. We chose the American Sycamore because it is known as "Guardian of the Stream." Sycamores grow along the banks of streams and rivers and are masters of runoff reduction because they intercept and keep sediment and pollutants out of the stream, stabilize banks and channels, slow down stormwater runoff, and reduce erosion.

We are pleased to award our winners with gift certificates from [Native Roots native plant nursery in Richfield.](#)

The 2024 first place winners.....

are Pat and Nancy Messmore of Silver Lake. Their daughter, Amy Messmore Jones accepted their award. The Messmores' Sycamore stands about 82 feet, with a crown spread of 93.5 feet and a circumference of 217 inches. Using Ohio's Big Tree ranking formula, this tree's index is 322 points.



Rob Curtis & Amy Messmore Jones



The Messmores with Silver Lake Service Department staff



Rob Curtis and Richard Reyman



Ann McClellan and Richard Reyman

The 2024 second place winners....

are Ann McClellan and Richard Reyman of Tallmadge. Their Big Sycamore is located in the City of Akron on an ancestral property. It stands 81 feet high with a crown spread of 99 feet and circumference of 132 inches. Using Ohio's Big Tree ranking formula, this tree's index is 238 points.

Board of Supervisors Election Results

Welcome to Our New Board Member!



Sarah Blakely

Congratulations to Sarah Blakely, our new Summit SWCD Board member. Sarah has served as a Grants Manager at Western Reserve Land Conservancy since 2021.

Originally from Indiana, Sarah has lived in Summit County since 2011 and currently resides in Fairlawn with her husband Ross and their dog Wallace. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Economics and Finance from Huntington University (Huntington, IN) and a Master's degree in Wellness Management from Ball State University (Muncie, IN). Sarah has invested her time and efforts in volunteering for several local Northeast Ohio organizations.

Dave Whited

We are grateful to Dave Whited, our former Board Member, for participating in our election. Dave continues to serve Northeast Ohio in numerous volunteer capacities and we are fortunate for David's past and continued support for Summit SWCD and our goals.



AmeriCorps NowCorps Service Member

We express our appreciation to Zach Randolph, our 2023-2024 NowCorps Service Member who was an integral part of our Watershed program this year and who engineered our series of Streamside Chats podcasts. Zach is now an Outreach Coordinator at Sandusky Soil and Water Conservation District. Congratulations, Zach!



AmeriCorps NowCorps Service Member

We are delighted to introduce our 2024-2025 AmeriCorps, NOWCorps Service Member, Alexander Kirchner. We are looking forward to having Alex on our team, working together to improve water quality and ecosystem health and biodiversity. Welcome, Alex!



Summit SWCD Mascot

Meet Ricky, the adventurous sowbug who always knew he was destined for more than just nibbling on leaves and hiding under rocks! While exploring a local stream, Ricky stumbled upon the Summit Soil and Water Conservation District team and discovered a whole new way to make a difference. Now, as the District's mascot, Ricky is on a mission to inspire others to protect our water and land. His small size is no match for his big heart, and his journey has only just begun! Follow along with Ricky as he travels, educates, and shows us how we can all help the environment.

#RickySSWCD



Watershed Volunteers

We would like to recognize a very important part of our Soil and Water team, our volunteers. These 34 dedicated individuals perform monthly sampling on 40 sites to assist us with water quality data collections, so we can observe trends and changes in the watersheds. This year, there are almost twice as many sites as in 2023.



Appreciation for our Sponsor, ADS

We also wish to thank Matt and Jim from Advanced Drainage Systems, (ADS) of Hudson, Ohio, for sponsoring the wine bar at our annual meeting.



MILKWEED POD COLLECTION



It's that time again! Help the Monarch Butterfly!



The 2024 Summit County Milkweed Pod collection sponsored by the Ohio Pollinator Habitat Initiative runs from October 1 to October 31. The collection bin is located at the Ohio State University Extension Summit County Office, at 440 Vernon Odum Boulevard in Akron, OH, 44306, Door # 20. The office hours are Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Milkweed is crucial for the Monarch butterflies whose population has declined by 80% in the last 20 years. You can help by harvesting Common Milkweed pods when they turn brown or grey and the seam pops with gentle pressure. Collect pods in paper bags, label them with the date and county, and drop them off at the Extension office.


For more details, visit the Ohio Pollinator Habitat Initiative at ohiopollinator.org or contact Summit SWCD at sbarbic@summitoh.net.




Photo courtesy of OPHI




Autumn Leaves Are Falling! “Leave” Them on Your Lawn, For a Healthy Yard & Clean Water!



As autumn leaves begin to fall, now is the perfect time to consider alternatives to piling them in the street for removal. While many communities offer leaf pick-up services, recycling leaves on your property is a simple and environmentally friendly option that mimics nature’s method of enriching the soil. It also helps prevent leaves from clogging storm drains, which can lead to water pollution and harmful algae blooms in local lakes and streams.




When left to decompose naturally, leaves break down into rich humus, providing essential nutrients to trees and plants. Removing leaves disrupts this natural cycle, and while chemical fertilizers can replace some nutrients, they often wash into nearby waterways, contributing to pollution. By recycling leaves on your lawn, you can enhance soil health without relying on synthetic fertilizers.



One of the easiest ways to recycle your leaves is by using your lawnmower as a mulcher. Mow over the leaves to shred them into small particles, which will break down quickly and provide valuable nourishment for your lawn. A layer of shredded leaves also supports beneficial soil organisms like worms, which help improve soil structure and plant health. Shredded leaves can be used beyond your lawn as well. You can apply them as mulch around trees, shrubs, and garden beds to conserve moisture, protect tender roots during winter, and suppress weeds. They can also be added to compost piles, where their smaller size will speed up decomposition, providing nutrient-rich compost for next spring's garden.

In addition to mulching, aerating your lawn in the fall helps improve soil structure and allows water and nutrients to penetrate deeper into the soil. Testing your soil to determine its nutrient needs is another great step, and if fertilizing is necessary, consider using organic, slow-release fertilizers like manure. This will feed your soil throughout the winter and prepare it for a healthy start in spring.



By recycling your leaves and grass clippings, you’re not only creating a healthier landscape but also helping to improve water quality in our local streams and lakes.

For more information on this and other backyard conservation tips, visit summitswcd.com.



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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.

