

Providing today...
Protecting tomorrow...

The Conservation Corner



Highlighting the Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District's projects, programs, and events.

March 2011

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Working to manage and promote the wise use of natural resources in Hamilton County

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Backyard Conservation

With spring right around the corner, you can take some easy conservation steps in your backyard that will make the environment a little greener:

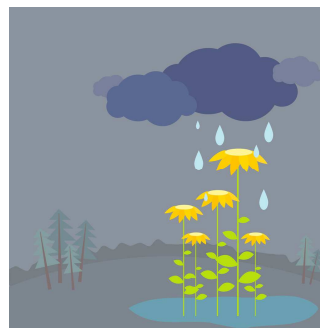
Plant natives, not invasives. Native plants are well suited for our Adirondack soils and climate. Invasive plants may be beautiful, but they out-compete natives by quickly reproducing and establishing dense, often monotypic populations. They inhibit recreation, diminish property value, degrade biodiversity, and some are toxic to humans. Native plants attract song birds and wildlife, produce delicious berries, act as windbreaks, prevent soil erosion, and provide privacy screens.

Harvest rainwater from your roof with a rain barrel to lower your water bill. Use the wa-

ter collected in the barrel to wash your car or top off your pool. Rainwater contains dissolved minerals that your lawn and plants will love.

Don't let mosquitoes ruin a lovely summer evening. Install a bat house on your property to decrease your bug population. These shy, gentle mammals eat 3,000 insects a night, pollinate flowers, and disperse seeds. Keep bats out of your home by providing them a house of their very own where they can safely roost.

Create a rain garden and add a beautiful space on your property



that provides habitat for butterflies and birds, prevents flooding, recharges groundwater, and removes pollutants from runoff.

Use low phosphorus, low release, or organic fertilizers on your lawn, or eliminate them all together.

Plant a buffer of trees or shrubs between your lawn and a lake or stream to absorb polluted runoff.

The Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District (District) provides a wealth of information, as well as free presentations, on these and other conservation topics. Native plants, rain barrels, and bat houses are offered in our Native Tree and Shrub Sale. Orders are due March 30. Contact the District or visit our website for more information.

Earth Hour

Join people around the world who are taking a stand against climate change by turning the lights off on March 26 from 8:30-9:30 PM. Earth Hour began in 2007, when 2.2 million businesses and homes in Sydney, Australia shut their lights off for an hour advocating the importance of global sustainability. In 2008, the rest of the world joined in, with 50 million people in 35 countries spreading the word about climate change. Landmarks including the Coliseum and the Empire State Building were enshrouded in darkness. Last year, participation sky rocketed to 128 countries.

Create a better future for our planet by hitting the off switch on March 26. During this hour, enjoy a candle lit meal made without electricity. Menu ideas could include salads, sandwiches, a cheese plate, deli meats, fresh fruit and veggies, peanut butter, tuna, beans, or cook a meal on the grill. When the lights go out, gaze at the stars, organize a game night for friends, look at photo al-

bums, build a fort with your kids, go for a walk, read, or



make a campfire.

District staff will participate by turning off our lights. Why not join us in this global event? For more info: earthhour.org

Practicing Conservation? Get Money!

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) offers a number of financial and technical assistance programs to land owners participating in conservation practices.



1. **Forestry Initiative.** Financial and technical assistance is offered to eligible landowners who will address environmental issues by implementing conservation practices on their non-industrial forestland or land capable of growing trees.
2. **Wetlands Reserve Program.** This voluntary program preserves, protects, and restores

valuable wetlands to improve wildlife habitat and water quality, and provide flood water retention, ground water recharge, open space, and aesthetic value. Eligible lands include wetlands farmed under natural conditions, prior converted cropland, commenced converted wetlands, stream corridors, and land substantially altered by flooding.

3. **Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program.** This voluntary program provided financial and technical assistance to help participants develop fish and wildlife habitat on private ag land, or non industrial private forest land.
4. **Conservation Stewardship Program.** This volun-

tary program provides financial and technical assistance to eligible producers to conserve and enhance soil, water, air, and natural resources on cropland, grassland, improved pastureland, nonindustrial private forests, and private ag land.

For more information on these and other programs, visit www.ny.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/ or contact NRCS District Conservationist Tom Bielli at 518-853-4015 or thomas.bielli@ny.usda.gov.

From January to March,
Hamilton County and
SWCD offices recycled
1,281 lbs of paper!