



Backyard Conservation

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Conservation is moving from the country to backyards across Indiana. Everyone is interested in natural resource protection. An exciting new project in central Indiana called “Plant a Million” will add to this movement. The primary goals of this ten year project to help people plant over one million native trees here in central Indiana and to help them understand the importance of trees and their management.

Many of the new homes being built are virtually bare of trees and shrubbery. They lack tree “canopy”. Canopy cover is that part of the ground surface under mature tree cover. America Forests recommends residential areas have about 60 percent canopy cover when the trees mature. This high level of cover offers many benefits. Probably the most important are reduced air-conditioning costs as the shade provided by the trees cool temperatures around the home. The second is simply the higher quality of life that happens in the lower temperatures of tree-shaded property. Another important benefit is that homes surrounded by trees and shrubs are usually worth 20 to 30 percent more than homes without trees.

Your local Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) and its cooperating partners not only help rural land users with natural resource concerns but also have valuable information for homeowners, neighborhood associations and others.

Over ninety five percent of the land in Indiana is privately owned. Therefore private landowners and how they treat the land largely determine the quality of our environment. Farmers use conservation plans to help them manage their natural resources. These plans, developed with technical assistance from the local SWCD and cooperating agencies, help them apply practices to meet production objectives while protecting soil, water, air, plants and animal resources.

Homeowners may want to develop a similar plan for their backyard. Stop by the local Soil and Water Conservation District Office to get a copy of publications like Backyard Conservation or Your Yard, Your Trees to help you develop a plan for your backyard. This booklet and others information available from your SWCD will help you plan for erosion control, wildlife habitat, tree planting and many other activities. They will help you consider pesticide application and natural ways to overcome pest problems.

Think about joining with your neighbors for a neighborhood effort. The joys of natural beauty, song birds, butterflies, mosquito control, cooler summer evenings and the great outdoors will become a satisfying reward for a little planning and neighborhood effort for backyard conservation.

Other values include outdoor education for young people, maintenance of property values, improved air and water quality, overall esthetics and building community pride. With a little imagination other activities such as a Backyard Tree Farm or Bluebird Trail can be incorporated.



Stop by the your SWCD Office to find out what is available to help you and the neighbors. Find the office location on the Contact Us page at www.plantamillion.org. The Plant a Million effort sponsored by the Hoosier Heartland Resource Conservation and Development Council and the ten central Indiana Soil and Water Conservation Districts

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