

# Nature Talks

Sherburne Soil and Water Conservation District

Nature Talks  
April 2022

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**Sherburne  
SWCD**



## Conservation Webinar Series

Tuesday Nights in April, 6:00pm

*Webinars highlighting topics and tools that promote conservation in our own backyard*



### The Benefits of Native Plants

Tuesday, April 12th 6:00pm

Questions about native plants? Franny's got you covered. During this webinar, you will learn about the plants native to Sherburne County and how they can help you attract more pollinators to your yard.



### Protecting our Wetlands and Shorelines

Tuesday, April 19th 6:00pm

The Sherburne SWCD is partnering with Sherburne County Planning and Zoning to provide an overview of the rules and regulations for wetland and shoreline alterations. The presentation will also provide resources for native plantings including opportunities for technical and financial assistance.

Click here to register online at:

<https://www.sherburneswcd.org/webinars1.html>

## Support Spring Pollinators with Early Bloomers

In summer, pollinators are not often hard-pressed to find flowers. But what about in spring? You can support pollinators during these cooler months of the year when the ground has just begun to thaw and there haven't been that many warm days, by planting native flowering shrubs or trees. Here are a few options of native trees and shrubs that support bees, followed by average flowering times.

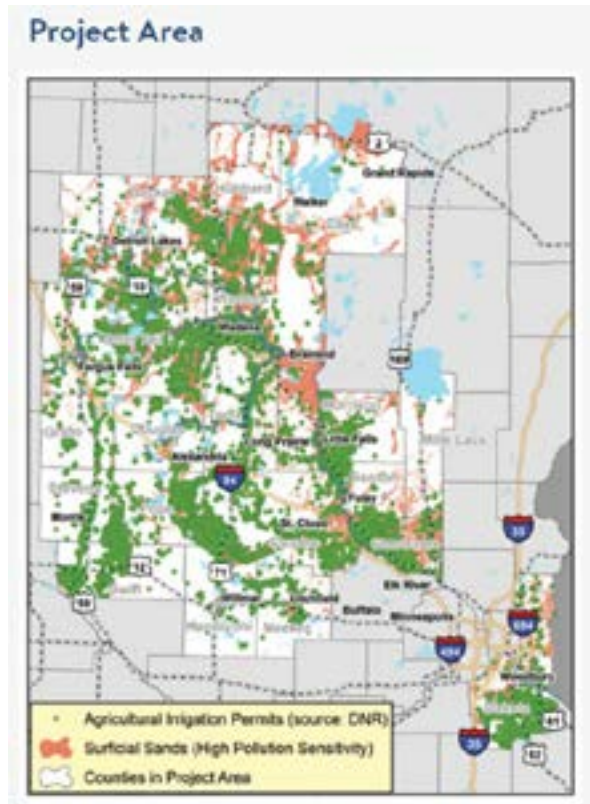
**Pussy Willow (*Salix discolor*, April - May)**  
**Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*, April - May)**  
**Chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana*, May - June)**  
**Nannyberry (*Viburnum lentago*, May - June)**  
**Black Cherry (*Prunus serotina*, May - June)**  
**Red Osier Dogwood (*Cornus sericea*, May - August)**  
**Serviceberry (*Amelanchier interior* April - May)**



## Opportunity for Sherburne County Irrigators

The Sherburne SWCD is part of a large group of SWCDs, Universities, Businesses, State Agencies, and the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe who are committed to providing technical and financial assistance to agricultural irrigators. The Implementing Innovative Irrigation Practices to Protect Groundwater Quality and Quantity was awarded funds through the RCPP – Regional Conservation Partnership Program and will start offering assistance in 2022. The goals of the project are:

- **Apply conservation practices that protect groundwater quality and quantity**
- **Promote expanded precision irrigation practices**
- **Build technical expertise among NRCS and SWCD staff to guide farmers in applying conservation practices**
- **Promote and organize farmer to farmer learning opportunities**
- **Utilize partners' expertise to design innovative approaches to expand conservation efforts**
- **Quantify the environmental, economic, and social impacts of the implemented practices**



For information on this and other producer targeted programs, contact Miranda Wagner at [mwagner@sherburneswcd.org](mailto:mwagner@sherburneswcd.org) or 763-220-3434 ext. 105.

## Spring Garden Clean Up

The first sign of warm weather typically sparks the urge in every gardener to get outside and start prepping for the gardening season. This is your reminder to take it slow, the pollinators in your yard and gardens aren't quite ready to wake up yet. Many butterfly species overwinter in leaf litter, while many bee species have provisioned nests for their young in standing plant stems. Only a few species of bee emerge as early as April, but most hold out for the warmer days to arrive in May. This time after snow melt and before regularly 50-degree days it is still very crucial for overwintering pollinators to be left alone.

When is the right time to get back into the garden? Typically, when you think it is warm enough to start planting new seedlings outside. If it is warm enough for new plants that usually means the pollinators think it is warm enough to emerge after the long winter. It might be hard to look away from the "messy" garden for that long but it is worth it if we can do our part to help our friendly pollinators.





## 2022 Aquatic Invasive Species Programs



On behalf of Sherburne County, the SWCD utilizes funding directed by the MN State Legislature to support local AIS prevention programs. Sherburne County's programs are outlined in the 2020-2024 AIS Prevention Plan which was created in 2019 in partnership with the Sherburne County AIS Task Force, an advisory committee consisting of citizens of the county and representatives from cities, townships and county offices. Annual activities include education and outreach events, early detection monitoring programs, watercraft inspections and AIS law enforcement, and administration of AIS grant programs which increase capacity for AIS monitoring and management.

The Sherburne County AIS prevention efforts include dozens of active volunteers from the Sherburne County Coalition of Lake Associations, individual lake associations and improvement districts, as well as individuals who have an interest and passion in keeping our lakes and streams free of invasive plants and animals. Here are a few opportunities for you to participate:



**1. AIS Detector Course:** AIS prevention starts with knowing your enemy! The University Minnesota Extension and MN AIS Research Center sponsors the AIS Detector Course, which trains individuals on identifying / reporting AIS, understanding AIS regulations, and more. There is a cost for the training, however, Sherburne SWCD provides reimbursements for this course as our funding allows (please contact us for more information).

**Learn more about the course here:** <https://maisrc.umn.edu/detectors-core>.



**2. Sign up for Zebra Mussel Monitoring:** Do you live on a Sherburne County lake? The SWCD has zebra mussel sampling plates that are designed to quickly check for presence of an early infestation from these mussels.

**Contact the SWCD to be enrolled in this program.**



**3. Starry Trek:** Sherburne County volunteers regularly participate in the University of Minnesota Extension's Starry Trek program, a state-wide day of AIS monitoring for Starry Stonewort and other AIS. The 2022 event will be held on Saturday August 20th at Big Lake Township Park.

**For more information on Starry Trek, visit** <https://maisrc.umn.edu/starrytrek>.



**4. Early Detection:** The SWCD and Sherburne County COLA have teamed up to create a user-friendly AIS early detection tool for any lake user to use. With this resource, someone who suspects they have found a non-native plant or animal has information on how to identify it, whom to report it to, and can outline a strategy for further assessment. **The tool can be found on the Sherburne County COLA website:** <https://sherburnecola.org/projects/>.

For information on Sherburne County's AIS Prevention program, contact Dan Cibulka at [dcibulka@sherburneswcd.org](mailto:dcibulka@sherburneswcd.org) or 763-220-3434 ext. 103.

## William H. Houlton Conservation Area Streambank Stabilization

The William H. Houlton Conservation Area consists of 336 acres and seven miles of river shoreline along the confluence of the Mississippi and Elk Rivers. This area is historically significant and there is much documentation of Native American activities here along with records and some physical remnants of buildings and other features establishing settlement of the City of Elk River in the mid 1800's. The property was transferred from private to public ownership in 2014 through a partnership with the Houlton family, the Trust for Public Land, and the City of Elk River. Staff from the Friends of the Mississippi River have worked hard on developing, then implementing, a restoration plan for the property that restored the area to native prairie, oak savannah, and floodplain forests. Funding was provided by the Outdoor Heritage Fund as recommended by the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council. Since the restoration, there have been numerous observations of rare species returning to the site along with an increase in wildlife biodiversity. The site is open to the public for recreation including hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, and canoeing/kayaking. More information on the William H. Houlton Conservation Area can be found [here](#).



The property's south border runs adjacent to a bend in the Mississippi River. Roughly 1,100 feet of the 20-25 ft streambank has been eroding into the river for many years. Preliminary estimates are that about 907 lbs of phosphorus and 1,067 tons of sediment are leaving the site every year, polluting the Mississippi River. In September 2021 the Sherburne SWCD partnered with staff from the City of Elk River and Friends of the Mississippi River to apply for funding to address the eroding streambank. In early 2022, the SWCD was notified that we received nearly \$370,000 in funding through the Conservation Partners Legacy Grant Program, administered by the Department of Natural Resources, to stabilize the eroding shoreline. A natural restoration approach was drafted, including a series of toewood benches at the water/land interface and native upland plantings on a regraded slope. Toewood structures will provide stabilization as well as important habitat for aquatic organisms, while the native plantings will further stabilize the slope and provide habitat for terrestrial animals.

Partners from the City of Elk River, Friends of the Mississippi River and Sherburne SWCD will begin the project in 2022. Much preparatory work is required, including assessments for archeological artifacts that might be buried in the area, mitigation strategies developed for rare or threatened species that are known to exist in the area, final plan design, and coordination of construction activities. Look for updates on the important project soon!

For more information on this project,  
contact Dan Cibulka at [dcibulka@sherburneswcd.org](mailto:dcibulka@sherburneswcd.org) or 763-220-3434 ext. 103.

## Conservation Comedy

Why is the mushroom always invited to parties?



Because he's a fungi!

# SWCD Tree and Native Plant Sale



The Sherburne Soil and Water Conservation District is holding its annual tree sale to encourage tree planting in Sherburne County. The Tree Sale program originated in order to provide landowners with an affordable and convenient way to purchase trees and shrubs for conservation practices, such as, windbreaks, shelterbelts, living snowfences, scenic buffers, and wildlife habitat.

### Trees

Bare root seedlings are easy to plant, grow quickly and come in bundles of 25. Many of the species being offered provide food and shelter for birds and wildlife year round. Additionally, trees can increase the value of your property and conserve energy by shading your house in summer and sheltering it from cold winds in winter. Tree orders will be available for pick-up the April 29 - 30 at our new office location on Jackson Ave in Elk River. Stock is limited and orders are entered on a first-come, first-serve basis.



### Native Plants

The SWCD is excited to offer Native plant kits, seed mixes and My Pocket Prairies during this years tree sale. All plants and seeds are provided through Minnesota Native Landscapes and are specifically chosen to flourish in our Sherburne County soils. Plants and seed will be available for pick up during our regular tree sale pick up dates.



**SWCD Online Tree Store**  
[www.sherburneswcd.org/tree-sale-store.html](http://www.sherburneswcd.org/tree-sale-store.html)

## Upcoming Events

- |                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| <b>April 12</b>      | <b>6:00pm Webinar on Native Plants</b> |
| <b>April 19</b>      | <b>6:00pm Webinar on Shorelines</b>    |
| <b>April 29 - 30</b> | <b>SWCD Tree Sale Pick Up</b>          |
| <b>May 20</b>        | <b>World Bee Day</b>                   |
| <b>May 30</b>        | <b>Memorial Day (Office Closed)</b>    |





## Woodpecker Activity Training

In partnership with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) and the Sherburne SWCD, 11 volunteers were trained in the early detection of the invasive forest pest Emerald Ash Borer (EAB). Volunteers learned how to identify the early warning signs of an EAB infestation and were tasked with monitoring parks throughout Sherburne County during the month of April. The key warning signs volunteers are on the lookout for is heavy woodpecker activity on ash trees. There is a strong correlation between heavy woodpecker activity on ash trees in late winter and the presence of EAB larvae. Early detection of EAB is an essential strategy to help minimize the loss of green infrastructure and allow time for management. There has not been a positive identification of an EAB infestation in Sherburne County but it has been found in neighboring counties. The SWCD sends out a big thank you to all who volunteered for this program.



## Peterson Farms Receives MAWQCP Certification

A & L Peterson Farms were recently certified through the Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP). This voluntary program works with farmers and landowners to identify and fix risks to water quality on a field-by-field, whole farm basis. Farmers who treat all risks to water quality on their operation are certified and deemed to be in compliance with new water quality rules and laws for 10 years. The MAWQCP is a statewide program that is delivered locally through a partnership between the MDA and Minnesota's 89 soil and water conservation districts. A & L Peterson Farms are conservation minded producers that deserve to be commended for their conservation efforts!

Farmers and landowners interested in learning more should contact the Sherburne Soil and Water Conservation District, or visit <http://www.sherburneswcd.org/>.



## Pollinator Week 2022



Mark your calendars and celebrate our pollinators. Pollinators positively affect all our lives, supporting wildlife, healthy watershed and more. Each year the SWCD along with countless other organizations celebrate our pollinators during Pollinator Week. Pollinator Week promotes the valuable ecosystem services provided by bees, birds, butterflies, bats, beetles, moths, wasps, and flies. Throughout the week of June 20 - 26 the SWCD will be recognizing our pollinators with info, activities, events and more!

## SWCD Poster Contest



Each year the SWCD hosts a poster contest for 5th grade students throughout the County. The students are presented with a theme in which they are to design a poster around. The theme for 2022 is "Healthy Soil, Healthy Life." The purpose of this contest is to provide students with a creative way to gain a better appreciation for the environment. Prizes are awarded to the top 4 posters. *Good luck students!*

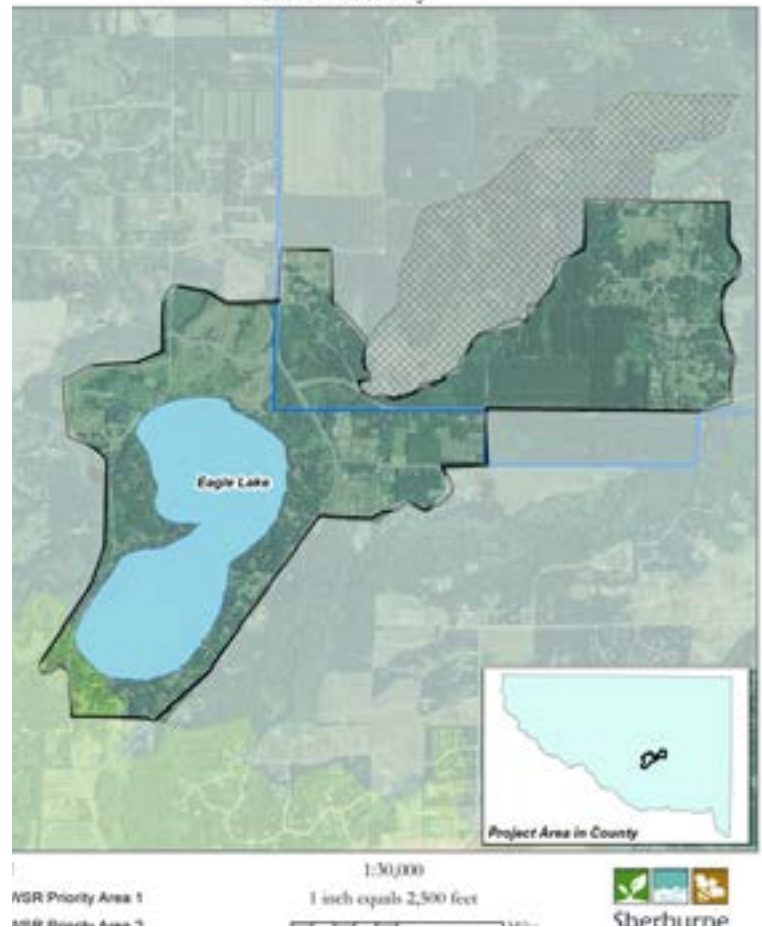


## Lawns 2 Legumes Funding Available

The Sherburne SWCD was awarded funding to help promote and install pollinator habitat in the Big Eagle Lake Community! The goal of this program is to change public perspective on traditional lawn care with incorporating ways to make them pollinator friendly. The grant is meant to transform neighborhoods in order to create pathways for pollinators that link up with existing natural corridors. The Eagle Lake community was selected because of its proximity to nearby natural areas and the density of parcels around the lake. The SWCD plans to work with landowners to install a variety of projects including pollinator lawns, backyard meadows, beneficial trees and shrubs and native gardens. This is the last year the funding will be offered so don't miss out on the opportunity and act fast! To find out if you qualify for this funding opportunity contact the SWCD office! Don't live next to Big Elk Lake? No problem! The SWCD is available to provide technical guidance on increasing pollinator habitat to your yard or neighborhood.



Lawns 2 Legumes Demonstration Neighborhood  
Sherburne County



## Spring Tree Care



Winter has come and gone, and spring is here to stay! But what does that mean for your trees that were stressed by drought last summer? What can you do to give them the best opportunity to thrive in 2022? Below are 3 great tips for maintaining healthy trees this year.

First, make sure that you have about 3-4 inches of mulch around the base of your trees. This is most important for younger and less established trees, but all trees will benefit from this. When mulching, it is important to NOT create a mulch volcano with the mulch piled against the trunk of the tree. Instead, create a mulch donut with the mulch pulled away from the trunk of the tree. Mulch does a great job of maintaining soil moisture and if it is against the trunk of your tree, it can create the perfect environment for fungal pathogens to thrive.

Second, check your trees for broken or hanging limbs. We have had high winds and heavy ice loads this winter which may have led to broken or damaged limbs. Spring is a great time to prune out these defects to stimulate growth in the coming summer. However, if you have an oak tree, you should

NOT prune your oaks from April through July at a minimum. The best time to prune oaks is from November through March.

Finally, should you be fertilizing your trees? In general, trees in a forested setting typically do not need fertilizer, however trees in more of an urban setting might. If your tree has discolored leaves, less annual growth, undersized leaves, or a thinning canopy then your tree might need fertilizer. If you do not observe these symptoms your tree more than likely doesn't need fertilizer. If you decide to fertilize your tree, it is best to use a slow/controlled release fertilizer. Fertilizer should either be applied in the late fall or in the early spring-before leaves form. Additionally, if you fertilize your tree, ensure that it gets at least 1 inch of water a week because trees need water to make the fertilizer available for their roots to uptake.

**If you have any questions about your tree's health, please contact David Wick at [dwick@sherburneswcd.org](mailto:dwick@sherburneswcd.org) or (763) 220-3434 ext. 102**

## Grassland CRP Now Open



The enrollment period for grassland CRP which will be held from April 4, 2022, to May 13, 2022. Grassland CRP protects grassland, including rangeland, pastureland, and certain other lands, while maintaining the area as working grazing lands. Grassland CRP is a working-lands program that emphasizes support for grazing operations, plant, and animal biodiversity, and provides an incentive for grassland under the greatest threat of conversion. Grassland CRP provides participants with annual rental payments and C/S assistance. Grassland CRP is not eligible for signup incentive payments or practice incentive payments. Contract duration is 10 or 15 years.

**Please contact NRCS District Conservationist Christopher Hogge [christopher.hogge@usda.gov](mailto:christopher.hogge@usda.gov) or (320) 251-7800**