



# Grass Roots for Conservation



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## Elkhart County Soil & Water Conservation District

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### *2017 River Friendly Farmer - Marv and Judy Roush*

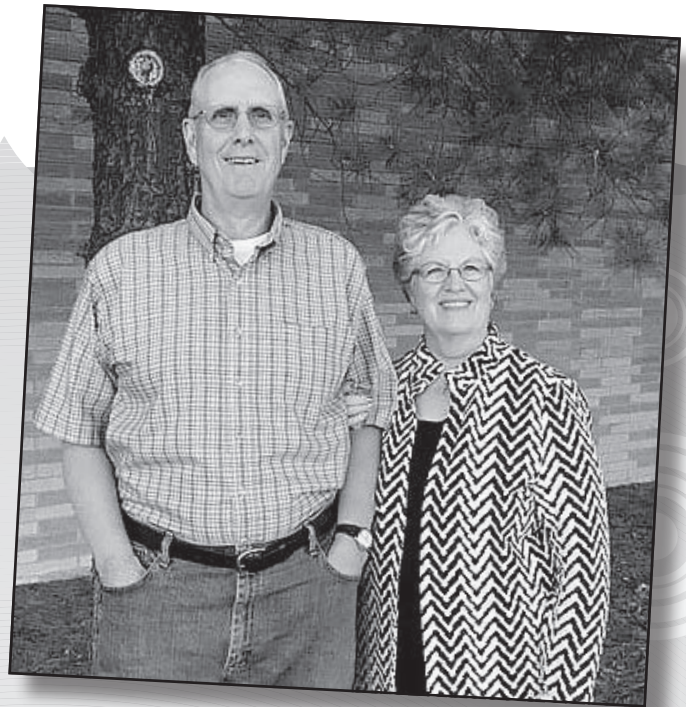
Out of 58,000 farms in the state of Indiana, one farm in Elkhart County received the state-wide award of River-Friendly Farmer at the Indiana State Fair on Farmers' Day August 16.

Marvin Roush was among 49 farmers who received the River-Friendly Farmer award from the Indiana Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (IASWCD) for the work he does on his land to protect Indiana's natural resources.

The Elkhart County Soil and Water Conservation District nominated Marvin and Judy Roush for the award based upon their farm management practices that protect Indiana's rivers, lakes, and streams.

Marv has been 100% no-till farming for 15 years, he farms corn, soybeans, and wheat. For 5 years Marv has been planting rye as a cover crop in 50% of his fields, with adding the cover crops to the farming practices they have noticed far less erosion, nutrient loss, and been able to retain more water. The most positive impact they have seen on their operation is the Wildlife aspect. Along with that has come soil structure and healthier soils. By using no-till fuel consumption and maintenance costs have been reduced greatly. A 4 Acre wetland is located on the farm as well as some woods and pond that provide habitat for turkeys and sand hill cranes.

The River-Friendly Farmer Award has been presented by the IASWCD and sponsored by the 92 local Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and Indiana Farm Bureau, Inc. since 2000. This year's group of award winners brings the total number of River-Friendly Farmers in Indiana since the award's beginning to 1912.



# PUTTING YOUR OUTDOORS TO BED

Ready or not, fall season is upon us. With changing temperatures and diminishing daylight, it's time for this lawn and garden season to end. But, in northern Indiana, it's also a great time to plant native shrubs and trees. It sounds rather unpleasant while we're enjoying this current warm weather, but winter's coming soon. Here are a couple tips to help prepare yourself and your surroundings.



For rain barrels, just give them a look-over. To avoid freeze damage, disconnect the barrel from the downspout and replace with an extension directed away from your foundation. Turn the barrel upside down or store indoors. Or just leave it in place with the spigot open and allow the water to drain out the hose. Inspect for any leaks or damage. Clean the screen and remove any debris in the bottom. Scrub with water and a couple tablespoons of bleach if algae is a problem.

Rain gardens also appreciate care at this time. Clear all noxious weeds and invasive plants from the area. Deposit those seed heads in the trash to prevent further spreading. Leave other healthy plants and seeds for wildlife cover and food sources for over-wintering birds and mammals. A new layer of mulch will help the soil if vegetation is thin. A deep drink from the hose while it's still out will give plants a boost after this dry fall.

In other established flower beds, it's an opportunity to divide perennials that are crowded or lacking in vigor, or rethink a design that's not working. Do the same maintenance as above, then supply friends, neighbors or fall plant exchanges with the extras, or add new beds to your area.

Lawns in Indiana are mostly comprised of cool-season grasses like fescue, Kentucky bluegrass or perennial ryegrass. So if you're going to fertilize, October is a good time to use a "winterizer", then the provided nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium will go to the roots and be stored for next year's growth. Leaves can be mulched with a mower, providing additional nutrients and organic matter that improve the soil.

Make sure to leave plenty of "messy" areas. Not every leaf and spent plant needs to be removed. These spots provide habitat for many beneficial species. Many native insects, including bees, butterflies and ladybugs use leaf litter, old plant parts or crevices in bark or rocks as nesting spots.

Brush and leaf piles also make great habitats. All those nuts, seeds and berries that are left will also be appreciated by over-wintering birds and mammals. Imagine the new things

to discover in your natural winter wonderland by allowing a more natural system to play itself out. Not to mention how much easier fall will be on your back if you give your rake a break.



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## Indiana NRCS Announces EQIP Application Deadline

Indiana's agricultural and forestry producers who want to improve natural resources and address concerns on their land are encouraged to sign up for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) through the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). **December 15, 2017 will be the EQIP application deadline in Indiana to be considered for 2018 funding.**

EQIP is a voluntary conservation program available for agricultural producers and forest landowners. Through EQIP, NRCS provides financial and technical assistance to install conservation practices that reduce soil erosion and sedimentation, improve soil health, improve water and air quality, and create wildlife habitat. Conservation practices offered include, but are not limited to, cover crops, no-till, nutrient management plans, pasture planting, exclusion fencing, invasive species control, and tree planting.

Also included in this sign up are several state and national initiatives including:

- National Organic Initiative: NRCS provides financial payments and technical assistance to help producers implement conservation measures in keeping with organic production. Beginning, limited resource, and socially disadvantaged producers may obtain additional assistance.

- National On-Farm Energy Initiative: NRCS provides agricultural producers with technical and financial assistance that quantifies how energy can be used more efficiently to reduce input costs, increase productivity and reduce air pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions. This initiative only offers assistance for 128 Conservation Activity Plans-Ag Energy Management Plans (AgEMPs) and certain energy conservation practices.
- Monarch Butterfly Habitat Development Initiative (EQIP): The Monarch Butterfly Habitat Development Project is a multi-state effort focused on increasing monarch habitat on private lands through plantings of milkweed and nectaring forms as well as managing pesticide use in proximity to monarch habitat.
- Working Lands for Wildlife Initiative (EQIP): The goal of this initiative is to convert tall fescue and other non-native forages to native grasses and forbs and develop prescribed grazing plans to address the habitat needs of bobwhite quail and associated grassland/shrub land species. This category is available statewide on land which overlaps one of the Indiana DNR C.O.R.R.I.D.O.R.S. priority areas.

Producers interested in EQIP should submit a signed application to the local NRCS field office. **Applications submitted by the December 15th deadline will be evaluated for the funding period submitted.** Participants in EQIP must meet eligibility requirements. NRCS staff will work with producers to determine eligibility and complete necessary worksheets and rankings in order for the applicant to compete for funding.

For more information about EQIP and other technical and financial assistance available through Indiana NRCS conservation programs, visit <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/in/programs/financial/eqip/> or contact Amanda Kautz at (574) 533-4383 Ext. 3

### Sweet Corn Charlie Produce, LLC Chuck & Tami Mohler and Family



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# 2018 Tree Sale Showcase

## Evergreens



### American Arborvitae (*Thuja occidentalis*)

Though a native of Indiana, the arborvitae is now found in the wild in only a few counties in the northwestern part of the state. However, it is “domesticated” everywhere! Their medium size – they can reach 40 -60 ft., but usually stop around 30 ft., - and conical shape make them a versatile addition to the landscape. Being evergreen, they make beautiful windbreaks or privacy screens.



### Canaan Fir (*Abies balsamea var. phanerolepis*)

Canaan (pronounced Ka-na-an') Fir is closely related to both the balsam and the Fraser Firs. In fact, there has been some debate in how it should be classified. What makes the Canaan fir a good landscape tree is its ability to tolerate many types of soil conditions and its medium size. It also breaks dormancy later than other firs and so is more resistant to spring frost injury.



### Eastern White Pine (*Pinus strobus*)

This native Hoosier can claim Elkhart County in its original growing range. Now it is widely planted in yards by homeowners and along fields by farmers. It is fast growing and reaches 100 ft. Like all the pines, its needles are long. The white pine is tolerant of many diverse growing conditions, thriving in moist to dry soils and partial shade to full sun. This tolerant tree makes a great privacy screen, especially when combined with the American Arborvitae.

## UPCOMING EVENTS!



**October 25 Cover Crop Field Day:** 9:00 am-12:00 noon  
- Come learn in the Morning Harvest in the Afternoon! Guest speakers are Dr. Jennifer Tank~University of Notre Dame and Rich Schlipf from Precision Ag – 1400 Miami Trl, Bremen, IN; Registration is free call (574) 936-2024 ext 4 or email: [info@stjosephswcd.org](mailto:info@stjosephswcd.org)

**November 20 SWCD Board Meeting:** 7:00 PM, SWCD Office, Elkhart County 4-H Fairgrounds, Goshen

**November 23-24 Thanksgiving Holiday:** The SWCD & NRCS Offices will be closed for the Thanksgiving Holiday

**December 18 SWCD Board Meeting:** 7:00 PM, SWCD Office, Elkhart County 4-H Fairgrounds, Goshen

**December 25-26 Christmas Holiday:** The SWCD & NRCS Offices will be closed for the Christmas Holiday.

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