KANKAKEE COUNTY SOIL & WATER
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

CONSERVATION *in the classroom*

March 2020 NEWSLETTER

K3SWCD OFFICE HOURS:
M-F 8:00 AM—4:00 PM

685 Larry Power Road
Bourbonnais, IL 60914

PHONE (815) 937-8940 ext. 3

www.kankakeecountyswcd.org

STAFF
Emilie Janes
Resource Conservationist

Crystal Sauder
Educational Coordinator

Dakota Behrends
Agricultural Coordinator

If you would like to receive future *Conservation in the Classroom* newsletters, email **Crystal.Sauder@il.nacdnet.net!**

Visit our website at **kankakeecountyswcd.org** to learn more about our District!

Find us on Facebook

Classroom Equipment for Kankakee County Teachers

The Kankakee County SWCD is offering a limited number of "Conservation Kit" equipment bundles to educators in the county. All educators that teach within Kankakee County are eligible to apply to receive a Conservation Kit of their choice. Five equipment bundles focusing on the following topics are available this year:

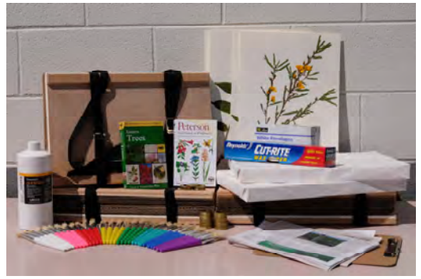
Soil Health
Water Quality & Bioindicators
Native Plant Herbarium
Insect Collection
Nature Journaling & Illustration

Educators teaching at public schools, private schools, or for homeschool co-ops are encouraged to apply. In addition to being awarded a Conservation Kit, the educator will receive hands-on training and a resources binder with guidelines, activities, and more. The District's Educational Coordinator will work to create a conservation-related activity that utilizes the equipment and fits within the educator's curriculum.

For kit contents and application information, please give Crystal a call at 815.937.8940 x 3 or visit our website.

Applications are due on **Friday, May 1.**

Insect Collection Conservation Kit



Native Plant Herbarium Kit

Pressed and mounted Partridge Pea wildflower

SWCD Upcoming Events

March 18 & 19 — **Kankakee Farm Bureau's Kids Day at the Farm**
An immersive ag experience for 4th grade classes!

March 27 — **Citizen Science for Backyard Naturalists**, 10am at the U of I Extension Office
Learn about citizen science projects that will get you, your kids, or your students outdoors and immersed in nature—as well as free tools that every naturalist needs.

April 1 — **Native Plant Sale Orders Due**

April 22 — **Earth Day!**

May 1 — **Conservation Kit Applications Due**

June 6 — **Native Plant Sale pick-up,** 9am—1pm at the SWCD office

August 7 — **Insects on the Prairie Walk**, 10am at Shannon Bayou

August 28-29 — **Perry Farm BioBlitz,** Aug 28 at 3pm to Aug 29 at 3pm
Join us for a race against the clock to discover the hidden creatures of Perry Farm! Come and go during the 2-day event and participate in guided tours with local experts, workshops, activities, and more! An event for all ages.

September 25 — **Winterizing for Wildlife Workshop,** 10am at the U of I Extension Office
Join us to learn what you can do to help our wildlife during the winter months.

Visit kankakeecountyswcd.org/district-events to RSVP and learn more about our upcoming events!

Know Your Natives: Skunk Cabbage

Skunk cabbage (*Symplocarpus foetidus*) is a curious looking plant that reminds me of Audrey from *Little Shop of Horrors.* Skunk cabbage is one of the first native plants to emerge each spring, often while there is still snow on the ground! If you are lucky enough to find skunk cabbage during the winter months, you will see that it has made a snowless ring around its base. Skunk cabbage can produce its own heat, an amazing adaptation that allows the plant to combat the cold by raising its internal temperature.

Why is it called skunk cabbage, you ask? This plant will emit a strong and unpleasant odor, especially when damaged. The smell attracts flies and carrion beetles, which pollinate the plant. Skunk cabbage is a unique native plant, and provides a great example of winter adaptation!

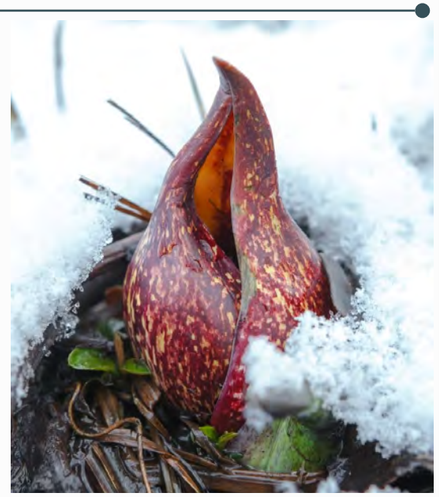


Photo by The Herb Society of America

Visit our new teacher resources webpage! **www.kankakeecountyswcd.org/teaching-resources**

Citizen Science: Project FeederWatch

Watching the birds at my birdfeeder is one of my favorite winter activities to do snuggled up with a cup of hot chocolate! Project Feeder Watch turns your love of feeding birds into scientific discoveries. FeederWatch is a winter -long (November-April) survey of birds that visit feeders at backyards, nature centers, and community areas. Participants periodically count the birds they see at their feeders and send their counts to Project FeederWatch.

Your students' bird counts will help them keep track of what is happening in their own backyard and help scientists track long -term trends in bird distribution and abundance!

Learn more at feederwatch.org!

Grants: Illinois Schoolyard Habitat Action Grant

FOR WHO? K-12 teachers, nature center personnel, and youth group leaders

WHAT? To create or maintain a pollinator garden, rain garden, bird feeding station, bat boxes, and more!

WHEN? Grant due November 30, 2020 with a 5 year maintenance commitment

WHERE? Pollinator garden must be planted on school grounds or a public place

WHY? Native plants are vital for beneficial pollinators and other wildlife!

HOW? Visit **https://www.dnr.illinois.gov/education/Pages/GrantsSHAG.aspx** for guidelines.

If you are interested in learning about grant opportunities or **partnering with the Kankakee County Soil & Water Conservation for a grant project**, please reach out to Crystal Sauder, Educational Coordinator, at Crystal.Sauder@il.nacdnet.net!

Illinois Schoolyard Habitat ACTION GRANT PROGRAM

March 2020 Newsletter

Kankakee County SWCD Board & Staff

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Our Mission at the Kankakee County Soil and Water Conservation District is to provide leadership and coordinate programs focusing technical, financial and educational assistance to help the landowner and the public protect, preserve and enhance our natural resources.

www.kankakeecountyswcd.org | 815-937-8940 ext. 3

Associate Directors: John Settle & Ed Brown

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