



CONSERVATION CORNER

Winter 2026 Newsletter of the
Tippecanoe County Soil & Water Conservation District



Tippecanoe County
Soil & Water
Conservation District

Annual Meeting

February 11, 2026 at 9:00 a.m.
John S Wright Forestry Center
1007 N 725 W
West Lafayette, IN



Lenny Farlee

Lenny Farlee, Extension Forester with Purdue Forestry and Natural Resources will take you on a winter walk to discuss a healthy forest in winter.



Emily Usher

Emily Usher, Diverse Corn Belt Project Manager at Purdue, will share insights on the latest research and recommendations from the Diverse Corn Belt Project. Reimagining Agricultural Diversity



Business Meeting & Breakfast

Registration is free!

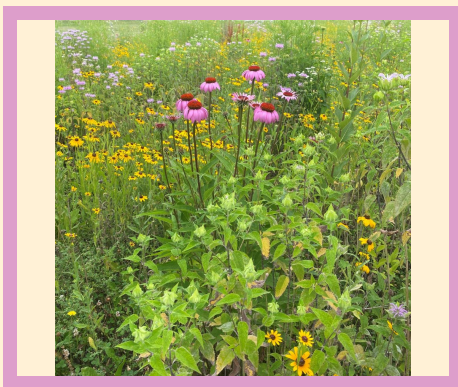
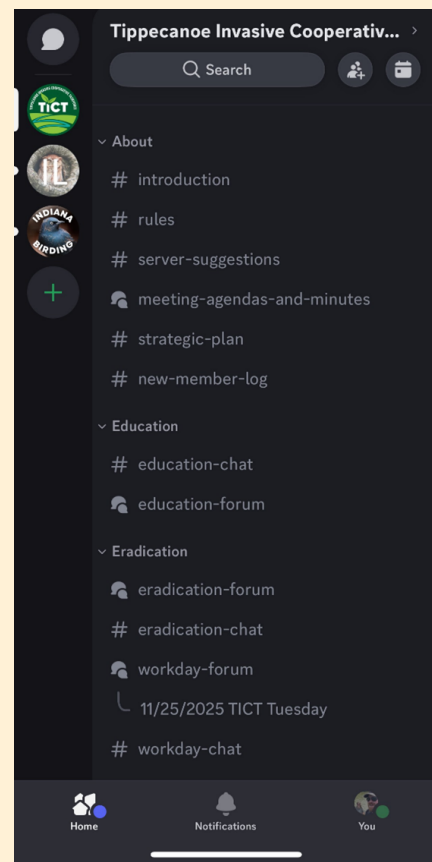
tippecanoecountyswcd.org/2026-annual-meeting

A New Way to Collaborate on Invasive Species Management

By Robert Suseland

The Tippecanoe Invasive Cooperative Taskforce is now on Discord. Discord allows real-time, curated collaboration. Discord will allow us to build camaraderie and accelerate invasive species education, eradication, and reporting in Tippecanoe County. Discord can be used on both desktop computers and mobile devices. You can change settings to receive notifications about channels that are interesting to you. You can also choose to receive no notifications. Do not worry if you do not wish to use Discord. There will be no changes to the other ways we communicate with you including via email, Facebook, and Instagram.

Our Discord server can be found here: discord.gg/UfutMrSpc4. You will need to create an account before you can join. The signup process is simple. If you have questions about using Discord, please email me at rsuseland@tippecanoe.in.gov or call me at (765) 474-9992 ext 4008.



Native Plant Sale

Our Annual Native Plant Sale will open in February. Check out our website for this year's selection.

[Tippecanoe SWCD](#)



Crop Insurance Premium Discount for Cover Cropped Fields

The Indiana State Department of Agriculture, The Nature Conservancy and partners throughout the state have worked with the USDA Risk Management Agency to establish an initiative to increase cover crop usage in Indiana.

This project will provide eligible participants with a \$5/acre premium discount on the following year's



crop insurance invoice for up to 750-acres that get enrolled and verified in the program. Funding will be provided through RMA as an additional insurance premium discount through normal crop insurance processes. Only acres in cover crops (absent other state or federally incentivized cover crops) will be eligible for the premium discount. Confirmed applications will be forwarded to the USDA-RMA for processing premium discounts on crop insurance premium invoices for the 2026 cash crop.

Applicants must maintain documentation on cover crops that have been seeded (e.g. Seed Tags, Application Invoices) and utilize the [Midwest Cover Crop Council - Cover Crop Tool](#) or the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide recommendations. Contact mjsmith@tippecanoe.in.gov for help selecting a cover crop or ensuring yours is eligible for this discount.

[More information and how to apply here.](#)

A Simple Practice with Big Benefits

Mulching is one of the most accessible and effective conservation practices available to small-scale and urban farmers. Fundamentally, mulching involves covering the soil surface with a protective layer of organic or inorganic material. This layer can be made up of natural materials such as straw, wood chips, shredded leaves or cover crop residue as well as synthetic materials like plastic mulch or landscape fabric. While it may seem like a modest step in farm management, mulching with organic materials has powerful implications for soil health, crop productivity, water conservation and weed suppression, making it a key practice in sustainable farming systems.

For farmers working in smaller or urban spaces, where soil quality may already be compromised due to previous development, compaction or limited access to soil amendments, mulching can offer immediate and long-lasting benefits. One of the most significant advantages is the decrease in soil temperature fluctuations and retention of moisture. Mulch acts as a protective blanket over the soil, reducing heat from the sun's rays and water loss from evaporation while promoting maximum root growth. In cooler months, dark colored mulch can warm the soil and promote spring crop germination or help insulate young transplants from frost.

Mulching also plays a critical role in weed suppression. By blocking sunlight from reaching the soil surface, mulch helps prevent the germination and growth of

unwanted plants. This can dramatically cut down on the labor and time small-scale farmers must dedicate to weeding, allowing them to focus on other aspects of their land.

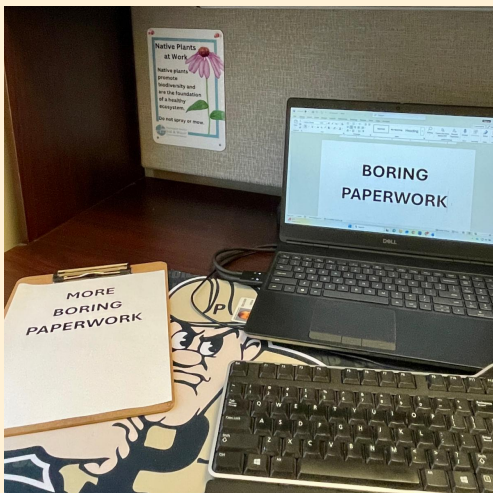
Urban soils are often low in organic matter and biological diversity, which can limit crop yields and soil resilience. Organic mulches break down over time, gradually contributing to soil organic matter and enhancing soil structure, microbial activity and nutrient cycling. This function supports the development of a healthy soil ecosystem by providing habitat and food for beneficial organisms like earthworms and microorganisms. These soil lifeforms play a crucial role in breaking down additional organic matter, improving nutrient availability and enhancing overall soil fertility. As such, mulching becomes more than just a surface treatment, it becomes an integral part of soil regeneration.

Erosion control is another important function of mulch. In areas with limited vegetative cover or sloped terrain, precipitation can quickly wash way topsoil, carrying nutrients with it. A well-applied layer of mulch protects the soil from the impact of raindrops and reduces runoff, helping to maintain the integrity of the land and the productivity of the garden or farm plot.

The USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) recognizes mulching as a key conservation practice and offers technical assistance to help farmers implement it effectively. Through programs like the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), eligible small-scale and urban producers may also qualify for financial assistance to support the use of natural mulch material (synthetic materials are not covered under EQIP) and complimentary conservation activities like cover crops and reduced tillage. Local NRCS field offices can work with producers to develop a conservation plan tailored to their specific needs, ensuring that mulching and other practices are applied in a way that maximizes their benefits.

In short, mulching is a simple, high impact tool for building healthy, productive soils in small-scale and urban farm settings. With support from NRCS, even the smallest growers can apply this practice to grow food while increasing resiliency on their farm.





Help Us Get Out of the Office!

We love getting out of the office, even in winter! Let us know if there is anything on your property you would like us to come look at. Do you have eroding soil? Have invasive species destroyed your woodlands? Would you like to attract more wildlife to your property? Do you have cropland that isn't making you money? Give us a call at (765) 474-9992 ext. 3 or send us an email at soil.water@tippecanoe.in.gov.

[Click Here for Our Linktree](#)



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