



The Conservation Connection

Berrien County Conservation District

Local Agriculture Field Day Planned *Invitation Open to All*



Berrien Conservation District is pleased to announce an educational field day that will be held on August 22, 2013. The On-Farm Agriculture Field Day is sponsored by a partnership with Berrien County Farm Bureau, Berrien Conservation District, and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. Speakers from The Michigan Department of Agriculture & Rural Development, K-Line Irrigation/Trickl-Eez, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Berrien County Farm Bureau and Michigan State University Extension, will cover the following topics and be available to answer questions on:

- MAEAP Phase 1
 - Spill Response Cleanup Demonstration
 - Nitrogen Utilization Study
 - Sub Surface Micro irrigation
 - Payback and Benefits of Conservation Practices
 - Update on Michigan Agriculture from the MI Dept. of Ag. & Rural Development
- Dinner will be provided free of charge but reservations are required to attend. The host farm and location for this year's event is at Hinkelman Farms, 2201 N. M-140, Watervliet, MI 49098. It will be held from 4pm to 8pm eastern standard time. For questions about this event please call the Berrien Conservation District at 269-471-9111 x121. To RSVP please call the Berrien County Farm Bureau at 269-473-4701. RUP credits are pending.

Spotlight on Cover Crops—Oilseed Radish

Cover crops are plants seeded into agricultural fields, either within or outside of the regular growing season; and provide many benefits for the environment and for farmland. Benefits of cover crops may: reduce erosion, improve soil quality, retain nutrients that would otherwise be lost, add nitrogen through fixation (leguminous cover crops), combat weeds, break disease cycles, enhance biodiversity, increase soil infiltration, create wild life habitat, and attract honey bees and beneficial insects.

Studies have been done through Michigan State University on the use of Oil Seed Radish as a new cover crop alternative for Michigan. Oilseed radish is in the mustard family. MSU Extension Bulletin E2907, states that oilseed radish is beneficial as a cover crop for the following reasons:

Continued on page 2

In This Issue

- *Ag Field Day*
- *Spotlight on Cover Crops*
- *Free Well Water Screening*
- *Annual Awards*
- *New Director Elected*
- *Upcoming Events/Notices*

District Board Meetings

*Second Monday of each month,
7:00 pm*

District Board Members

- *Bonnie Kuehl, Chairman*
- *Terry Holloway, Vice-Chair*
- *Aaron Molter, Secretary*
- *Ernie Klug, Treasurer*
- *Alan Martin, Director*

District Staff

- *Nancy Carpenter, Administrator*
- *Suzanne Forraht, MAEAP Technician*

NRCS Staff

- *Sherman Reed, District Conservationist*
- *Bruce Green, Soil Conservation Technician*
- *Mike Stickle, Soil Conservation Technician*

Free Drinking Well Water Screening

The Berrien Conservation District and the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) will sponsor a free drinking water well screening on July 30th and 31st from 8:00am-5:00 pm. Those wishing to have their well water tested free of charge can bring water samples to the Berrien Conservation District Office at 3334 Edgewood Road, Berrien Springs.

Samples from drinking water wells will be screened for nitrate and nitrite. The screening is open to everyone who uses a personal well for drinking water. **Forms should be filled out in advance and are available at the Conservation District office or online at www.berriencd.org.** This service is for private drinking water wells only. Public water supplies are tested regularly. Please do not bring samples from public water supplies or non-drinking water sources. Only drinking water well samples will be tested. You do not have to use a special bottle for this screening. Any small clean jar will work—one ounce of water is enough.

Please follow the directions below to sample your well. Collect samples just before bringing them to be sampled. Samples must be less than 48 hours old for a valid nitrate result.

1. Fill out the water Sample Information Sheet. (These will also be available when you bring your sample in)
2. Pick a tap that supplies water that has not run through any treatment devices (water softener, carbon filter, etc.). An outdoor faucet often works well.
3. Run the water for 20-30 minutes before collecting the sample. This will give the pump time to flush the water pressure tank and plumbing so you can collect a valid sample. Disconnect any hoses before collecting the sample; do not sample through a hose. Rinse the sample bottle and lid thoroughly in the water to be sampled; then fill and cap the bottle.
4. Label the bottle clearly with your name, the sampling date, and the well name (cottage well, Mom's well, etc.) using a waterproof pen.
5. Keep the sample dark and cold (on ice or refrigerated) until it is dropped off.

All results are confidential. You will get your results as well as information on what to do should nitrite or nitrates show up in your drinking water. If you do not wish to wait a few minutes for your results you may just drop off the sample along with your completed form.

Please fill out the Sample Information Sheet completely and bring it with your water sample, or fill one out when you arrive. You can get more information from The Berrien Conservation District Office at 269-471-9111 ext 121, at www.berriencd.org, or email suzanne.forraht@mi.nacdnet.net.

Spotlight on Cover Crops—Oilseed Radish *continued from page 1*

Benefits of Oilseed Radish

Fast growth and large biomass production, erosion control, forage, soil aeration – decomposing large taproots leave large holes in the ground that improve water infiltration, weed suppression, nitrate cycling, insect, disease and nematode suppression.

Oilseed Radish is widely used in Canada and is being adapted in Michigan as a cover crop. It establishes and grows quickly during cool weather. It can be planted early in the spring to provide fast cover and a green manure crop for cash crops planted in late May or early June. Oilseed Radish has a thick, deep root that can help break up compacted soil and scavenge nitrate that has leached beyond the root zone of other crops. It is also a highly digestible forage for early and late season grazing. In Michigan, oilseed radish is being evaluated for organic matter production in the preparation of cherry orchards. Also, sugar beet and snap bean growers are evaluating oilseed radish as a tool to help break up compacted soil.

Information for this article was compiled from the Midwest Cover Crops Council, MSU's Kellogg Biological Station Research, and MSU Extension. For further information on a specific cover crop please contact MSU extension. If you would like to find out how planting cover crops can be incorporated into a conservation plan for your farm please contact the Natural Resources Conservation Service at 269-471-9111 ext. 117.

Awards Presented at Annual Meeting, March 7, 2013

Blue Jay Farms wins 2012 MAEAP Environmental Stewardship Award

Art and Linda King of Blue Jay Farms, were awarded the Agriculture Environmental Stewardship Award for 2012 for Berrien County. They spent over a year making changes to their Three Oaks row-crop and vegetable farm to implement groundwater risk reduction practices. They installed a pesticide and fertilizer storage & mix and load facility, planted a filter strip along Blue Jay Creek, they identified environmentally sensitive areas, and developed a thorough nutrient management plan in addition to other practices. In 2012 the farm was MAEAP verified in the cropping system through the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program meaning they have voluntarily identified and addressed environmental risks.



Phil & Terri Prillwitz win 2012 Conservation Farmers of the Year

Phil and Terri Prillwitz accepted the Conservation District's annual Conservation Farmers of the Year Award for 2012. Each year the Berrien Conservation District recognizes landowners who do an outstanding job of preserving natural resources and using best management practices on their land. This award is based on conservation practices implemented and/or maintained by a local farmer. The Prillwitz's have addressed many resource needs on their farm including a windbreak, nutrient and pest management, crop rotation, residue management, cover crops, heavy use area protection, and a field border in addition to other best management practices. They live in the Eau Claire area and grow a variety of fruits and vegetables.



Special Recognition Award



Pete Palis received a special Certificate of Recognition for his longtime support of conservation efforts throughout Berrien County and surrounding areas. Pete is a former Conservation District Board Member and also served on the Sauk Trails Council. He and his wife Virginia live in Sodus and grow a variety of fruit.

New Board Member

The Conservation District is pleased to announce that Alan Martin was elected to the Board of Directors at the election held on March 7th. Mr. Martin replaces Richard Rieth who was appointed to fulfill a vacancy. Welcome Alan Martin! A special thank you to Richard Rieth for serving as director this past year.

**Berrien County
Conservation District**

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We're on the web!

www.berriencd.org

Your land, your water, your Michigan



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Upcoming Events/Notices

Free Well Water Screening July 30th and 31st from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm at the Berrien Conservation District Office, 3334 Edgewood Road, Berrien Springs. Sampling for nitrites and nitrates will be performed. Call 269-471-9111 ext. 121 or visit www.berriencd.org for details.

Hickory Creek Community Festival & Cleanup Event. August 3rd from 10:00 am to 12:30 pm. Volunteers sought for trash pick up at several locations along Hickory Creek. Registration from 10-10:30 at the St. Paul's Lutheran Church parking lot in Stevensville, MI. Information on Hickory Creek will be available along with an "Enviroscape" display for children. Rain barrels, well water testing, and refreshments. Event hosted by the Hickory Creek Watershed Partnership and Miss Stevensville and Court. Wear sturdy shoes if participating in trash pickup.

Board meeting rescheduled. The regular monthly board meeting for Berrien Conservation District has been rescheduled to August 5th at 7:00 pm at the District Office located at 3334 Edgewood Road, Berrien Springs, MI.

Berrien County Youth Fair August 12th through the 17th. Please visit the Berrien Conservation District and USDA Natural Resources Conservation Booth in the Ag Expo/USA Building. Pick up literature on a wide range of conservation subjects from using rain barrels to soil erosion control and more.

On-Farm Agriculture Field Day August 22nd from 4:00 pm to 8:00 pm. Location: Hinkelman Farms, 2201 North M-140, Watervliet. No cost; registration is required. Call Berrien County Farm Bureau to register at 269-473-4701.

MAEAP Phase I Meeting. At the On-Farm Agriculture Field Day August 22nd from 4:00pm to 8:00pm. See listing above. For questions call the Berrien Conservation District at 269-471-9111 ext. 121

USDA Farm Service Agency CRP Signup. The Farm Service Agency (FSA) currently has a noncompetitive signup for enrolling land into the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Some of the practices include: pollinator planting, filter strips, grass waterways, constructing wetlands, windbreaks, and shelterbelts. Please contact the FSA office for more information at 269-471-9111 ext 2.

All Berrien Conservation District programs and services prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, marital or family status, political belief, sexual orientation, or disability.