



# Conservation Highlights

*Serving Conservation Needs in Darke County Since 1955*

## Nutrient Management Standard Revisions

Public comment period open until August 31, 2020

From USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

COLUMBUS, Ohio – USDA’s Ohio Natural Resources Conservation Service is inviting input, until August 31, 2020, during a 30-day comment period on their draft revisions to the Nutrient Management Practice Standard (Code 590). If approved, this Nutrient Management Standard would revise the current Ohio Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG) and provide the criteria and considerations required for all USDA Farm Bill financial and technical assistance related to the application of plant nutrients and manures.

“NRCS, with our partners, is committed to increasing the knowledge of nutrient loss risk and we will continue to implement a comprehensive approach to protect and enhance water quality,” said Terry Cosby, state conservationist for Ohio. “The task force is to be commended for achieving consensus, given the complicated issues involved, the need to both protect Ohio’s water resources and agricultural industry, and the need to develop something that was responsible yet practical, simple, and economical for Ohio’s farmers to adopt.”



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A broad and diverse 19-member sub-committee of the State Technical Committee (590 Task Force) worked diligently over a six-month period to develop a science-based and implementable farm scale standard that uses the 4R approach as the basis to draw down high Phosphorus soils over time. The revised standard will protect Ohio’s water quality and is practical and realistic for Ohio farmers to implement.

“I appreciate the committee’s work to develop science-based guidelines to keep nutrients on the land,” said Greg LaBarge, field specialist, Agronomic Systems Ohio State University Extension. “I look forward to continued work on site specific tools that help farmers identify better conservation practice placement.”

Summary of the draft Nutrient Management Standard achievements:

- The draft standard will better protect Ohio’s Water Quality by reducing losses of nutrients from crop fields.
- Simplified the language and made the standard more practical and usable at the field/farm level.
- The recommendations align with the newly revised Tri State

# Unsolicited Seed Reporter

## From the Ohio Department of Agriculture

The Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA) has been notified that several Ohio residents have received unsolicited packages containing seeds that appear to have originated from China or other Asian countries. The types of seeds in the packages are currently unknown. The packages were sent by mail and may have Chinese writing on them. Unsolicited packages of seeds have been received by people in several other states across the United States over the last several days.

The USDA-APHIS and ODA are asking Ohioans who have received these unsolicited packages not to open, plant, or throw them away. Instead, citizens should report receiving seeds here and then submit the packages to USDA using one of the following methods:



1. If possible, place the materials including the seeds, original packaging material and your contact information in a resealable plastic bag and mail them to USDA-APHIS at the following address:

**Attn: USDA -SITC  
8995 E. Main St, Building 23  
Reynoldsburg, OH 43068**

-or-

2. Place the materials including the seeds, original packaging material and your contact information in a resealable plastic bag and drop them off at your county's OSU Extension Office during business hours. You can find the nearest extension office

here: <https://extension.osu.edu/lao>. Please note that extension facilities may have COVID-19 specific signage detailing procedures such as wearing a facial covering that must be followed.

Unsolicited seeds could be invasive species, contain noxious weeds, could introduce diseases to local plants, or could be harmful to livestock. Invasive species and noxious weeds can displace native plants and increase costs of food production. ODA and APHIS work hard to prevent the introduction of invasive species and protect Ohio agriculture. All foreign seeds shipped to the United States should have a phytosanitary certificate which guarantees the seeds meet important requirements.

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# Nutrient Management Cont'd

Fertility Guide and are converted to the now standard Melich III soil test extraction method.

- Developed a more defined path to draw down high soil test phosphorus fields.
- Updated numerical criteria, including establishment of an upper soil test phosphorus limit on manure applications.
- Wider use of in-field and edge-of-field trapping practices was incorporated into the recommendations.
- Updated nutrient assessment procedures and tools identified to help farmers reduce risk of phosphorus loss at all soil test levels.
- Made a commitment to continue the work of the 590 Task Force to improve and refine assessment tools and procedures to evaluate nutrient loss risk.

"These new guidelines include revisions that incorporate updated scientific research while emphasizing that conservation on all farm fields is needed to achieve both agronomic crop needs and protection of Ohio's valuable waters," said Jessica D'Ambrosio, Ohio agriculture director for The Nature Conservancy and 590 Task Force member.

NRCS will continue to involve the 590 Task Force and its expertise as the process moves forward through the public comment period, to the adoption and implementation phase.

"We are appreciative of the process used by NRCS to review the Nutrient Management Standard here in Ohio," said Dr. Larry Antosch, senior director of Policy Development and Environmental Policy for Ohio Farm Bureau. "It provided the opportunity for all stakeholders to have a voice and to have their questions answered. The final draft document reflects the viewpoints of the diverse workgroup as all sides were able to come to agreement on the final draft document."

To view the draft Nutrient Management Standard (Code 590) documents open for public comment visit <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/oh/technical/>.

To submit a comment, email [SM.RC.OH.StandardComments@USDA.GOV](mailto:SM.RC.OH.StandardComments@USDA.GOV).

– USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

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**Greenville, OH 45331**  
[tom@menkeconsulting.net](mailto:tom@menkeconsulting.net)

# How to reach a truce in the war with weeds

**From Lee Reich, Associated Press**

WASHINGTON – If you want to avoid chemical weedkillers but don't like the idea of hand hoeing or bouncing along behind a rototiller, you still have options to keep weeds from taking over your garden.

## MULCH

For starters, there's mulches, which can smother weeds. Pile organic mulches such as leaves, grass clippings, or wood chips a few inches deep over the ground to slow evaporation of water from the soil and keep it cooler. Be careful not to pile mulches right up against young plants or their stems might rot.

Organic mulches decompose over time so need regular replenishment. That's not a bad thing, because their decomposition feeds beneficial soil microorganisms and releases nutrients for plant use. These mulches also enrich the soil with humus, which helps keep soils moist and well aerated.

Synthetic mulches are another way to quell weeds. Black plastic is the most common. It's easy to lay down, effectively suppresses weeds, and hastens warming of the soil in spring. Recent experiments with other colored plastic films have shown effects on both pests and plant growth. A reflective plastic mulch, for example, keeps aphids at bay.



A big disadvantage of plastics is that they break apart over time, so eventually need to be disposed of. Plastic mulch also can cause problems due to poor soil aeration, and it adds nothing to the soil as far as nutrients or humus or stimulating beneficial microorganisms.

A mulch that combines some of the benefits of both plastics and organic materials is paper. Use recycled paper manufactured specifically as mulch, any plain paper such as newspaper (black and white pages only) or building paper (such as Gray Rosin Paper). Paper mulches are easy to lay down and eventually decompose, so they don't cause a disposal problem. Paper adds little to the soil, however, in terms of humus or nutrients.



## WEEDING GEESE

Looking for something offbeat in weed control? If your garden is large and your weeds are mostly grasses, consider geese.

## Reforestation & Wildlife Services

**Gary Steinbrunner**

Phone: 419-375-7708 PO Box 593, Ft.Recovery, OH 45846

Young geese will eat their weight in weeds every day. All you need to provide is water, shade, and some supplemental feed, as well as fencing to keep the geese in and predators out.

A couple of geese will patrol up to about an acre, and keep each other company. One caution: Don't forget that corn is a grass. Plant corn and they'll eat that too.

*Cont'd on Page 5*

# Scholarship Winner



Congratulations to Hannah Bey for being awarded this year's Darke SWCD scholarship. Hannah is a 2020 graduate of Versailles High School.

She will be pursuing a degree in biology and environmental science at the Miami University this fall.

Each year Darke SWCD awards a \$500 scholarship for a graduating senior pursuing a degree in an agricultural or natural resources related field. Congratulations Hannah!

## Aultman Farm & Livestock

**Matt Aultman**

Greenville, Ohio



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# Weeds Cont'd

## INDIRECT WEED CONTROL

Besides direct attacks on weeds, consider how your gardening practices indirectly influence weed growth in your garden.

Close spacing of plants, for example, shades the ground so lessens weed growth.

How you water also has an effect. When you use a sprinkler, you blanket your whole garden with moisture, including paths and spaces between large plants. Weeds sprout in those bare spaces opportunistically, gulp up that extra water and thrive. Drip irrigation, on the other hand, pinpoints the water supply right to the roots of your cultivated plants.



Whether or not you till your soil also influences weed growth. Lying dormant in every soil are millions of weed seeds just waiting to be awakened by light and air. Although hand digging, rototilling and plowing bury existing growth, these practices also inadvertently "sow" new weeds as seeds are brought to the surface.

If you do not till, you can avoid potential problems with soil compaction by laying out your garden in permanent beds on which you never step, roll your wheelbarrow or drive machinery. Just lay any compost or fertilizer right on top of the ground.

Using any or all of the techniques mentioned will not permanently eradicate weeds. Your goal, rather, is to keep weeds in check. You are looking for a truce – one that requires constant attention rather than massive effort.

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**Don Kahlig**

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# Thank you 2020 Affiliate Members

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# Rain Barrel Contest Winner

This year's rain barrel contest theme was famous works of art. Local schools were asked to choose a famous work of art or works of art and capture it on the rain barrel. This year in addition to our panel of judges, we asked our Facebook community to vote on their favorite rain barrel. Congratulations to Greenville Art for their winning barrel, "Andy Warhol- Mickey Mouse/Marilyn Monroe". There were many terrific entries this year, thank you to all of the schools that participated.

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ANDY WARHOL- MICKEY MOUSE/ MARILYN MONROE

**1st Place:** Andy Warhol Mickey Mouse and Marilyn Monroe by Greenville Art (left)

**2nd Place:** Van Gogh's Starry Night and Andy Warhol Campbell's Soup by Versailles Art (below)

**3rd Place:** Van Gogh's Starry Night by Ansonia Art Club (lower left)



ANDY WARHOL- CAMPBELL'S SOUP/ VAN GOGH STARRY NIGHT



VAN GOGH'S- STARRY NIGHT



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# Common Pond Problems

Pond management and ownership can be stressful at times throughout the year. Over the past several weeks we have received several phone calls from landowners with concerns of fish kills in area ponds. Each season brings its own set of challenges for managing a pond. The key is to not wait to help your pond!

Here are a few of the main threats to your pond:

## Sunlight

During the summer, days are longer and the sun shines stronger. Shallow ponds receive sunlight from the surface to the bottom, heating the entire waterbody. Excess light and heat create a prime environment for algae and aquatic weeds to thrive. These plants and algae also grow at their maximum rate and can quickly cover the surface of the pond with a green film. The higher water temperatures also reduce dissolved oxygen levels necessary for aquatic life to survive and bacteria that help the pond function.



In the fall and winter, the opposite is true. The days are shorter and the ponds aquatic vegetation has less access to light. This reduces the amount of oxygen that the plants produce, thus reducing oxygen levels for healthy bacteria to breakdown pond sludge.

## Nutrient Overload

Increased rainfall over farm fields and lawns cause excess fertilizer and other waste products to enter the waterway. Fertilizer runoff in ponds can create algal blooms and quick growth of other aquatic weeds.

Additionally, warmer pond water temperatures increase the metabolism and lifecycle of plant and animal life. This increases the amount of leaves, decaying plants and fish waste accumulating in the pond. This waste can build up to dangerous levels and the pond can no longer support aquatic life.

## Water Stratification

Another danger to ponds is water stratification. This occurs when pond water segments into layers due to changes in water temperature. The warmer and oxygen rich layers congregate towards the surface while the bottom layers become colder and less oxygenated. These layers form when there is little or no natural movement of the water, especially in deeper ponds with areas that sunlight cannot reach.

This can occur anytime, but is especially dangerous during the summer months. Heavy rainfall events and summer storms can provide a sudden rush of water into the pond, thus

*Cont'd on Page 10*

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# Rain Barrel Contest Continued



MONET'S WATER LILIES



VAN GOGH'S- STARRY NIGHT

Above: Monet's Water Lilies by Darke County Homeschool

Above Right: Van Gogh's Starry Night by Darke County Homeschool

Right: The Great Wave off Kanagawa and Girl with Pearl Earring by Greenville FFA

**Thank you to all schools that participated.  
We look forward to the 2021 rain barrel contest!**



THE GREAT WAVE OFF KANAGAWA/ GIRL WITH PEARL EARRING

## Thank you Darke County Commissioners

**Matt Aultman, Mike Rhoades & Mike Stegall**

The Darke Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors and Staff would like to thank the Darke County Commissioners for their financial support and dedication to soil and water conservation. The annual financial assistance from the county is matched by funds from the state which enables the District to continue to provide assistance to all Darke County landowners

**Thank you!!**

# Ponds Continued

breaking these stratified layers. This sudden change causes massive fish kills where huge portions of the pond's population die in a single storm. Stratification also makes it difficult for bacterial to do their job or breaking down nutrient rich material.

## Waterfowl

Geese and ducks add a sense of life and energy to a pond, but they can also alter a pond's ecosystem and surrounding area. When there are more birds present than a pond can support, they may consume too many plants. The plants are needed to absorb excess nutrient runoff. Waterfowl also create a large amount of waste that can lead to an increase in algae.

## So what can you do to help your pond?

The keys to help your pond include: increase the oxygen levels in the water and create water movement.

The most effective way to prevent a summer fish kill is to install an aeration system. This type of system introduces oxygen into the water and also increases water movement. Aerators also provide aerobic bacteria oxygen necessary to break down excess nutrients and also break up water stratification.



If your pond suffers from excess vegetation, control patches of vegetation with herbicides. Do not treat the entire pond at one time. This creates an excess of decaying plant material that can adversely affect oxygen levels.

Having trouble with waterfowl? Adding predator decoys and noise-

## Items for Sale

Marking Flags (30" Tall).....	\$0.08/ea	Tree Protectors .....	\$1/ea
Rain Barrel & Kit .....	\$40	Filter Fabric.....	\$1/ft <sup>2</sup>
Rain Barrel.....	\$20		
Garden Cover Crop Seed.....	\$3/lb		

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# Upcoming Events

**Downtown Greenville Farmers' Market**

*Downtown Greenville*

**June 6– Oct 10**

*9am-1pm*

**Office Closed– Labor Day**

**September 7**

**First Friday: Popcorn & Prohibition**

*Downtown Greenville*

**September 4**

*6-9pm*

**Fall Cruise-In Car Show**

*Downtown Greenville*

**September 5**

*2-9pm*

**Tire Recycling Day**

*Pre-registration required 937.547.0827*

**September 23**

**Trash Bash 2020**

**September 12-13**

**Prairie Days**

*Shawnee Prairie*

**September 26-27**

*10am-5pm*

**First Friday: Pay It Forward**

*Downtown Greenville*

**October 2**

*6-9pm*

**Household Hazardous Waste Day**

*Darke County Fairgrounds*

**October 3**

**Office Closed– Columbus Day**

**October 12**

## Darke SWCD Staff

Brian Cope– *Technician*

Jared Coppess– *District Administrator*

Elizabeth Farver– *Nutrient Mgmt Technician*

Tim Rank– *Technician*

Doug Steinbrunner– *Wildlife Specialist/Technician*

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