



Backyard Conversation Connecting Community + Conservation

Welcome to the Backyard Conversation! Each month we'll be sharing a conservation topic from a more personal viewpoint for our readers. To make this successful, I want to hear feedback from you! I'll include a poll at the bottom regarding our topic and share links to some of our partner organizations with similar messages. So, let's get to it!

Respecting our Wetland Vernal Pools



You're walking in the woods in late winter or early spring and you hear frogs and toads calling in the distance. You investigate and find what looks like a large puddle containing various amphibians like salamanders and frogs.

What have you found?

Puddle vs. Vernal Pool

Photo Credit: Distant Hill Gardens

You may have stumbled upon a vernal pool without even knowing it! What may look like a large puddle to some is actually an important wetland breeding habitat for amphibians called a vernal pool. They are typically small, shallow depressions. They can be temporary or semi-permanent. You can find a variety of species in a vernal pool including frogs, salamanders, macroinvertebrates and insects, but you will not find any fish. After mating, you can also find a population of young amphibians in egg or tadpole form in a vernal pool. They can typically be found during late winter to spring.



Why are vernal pools important?

Vernal pools provide a breeding habitat for thousands of species, some of which depend on them for survival. An estimated 85% of amphibians return to breed to the same vernal pool in which they were born. If the vernal pool is destroyed, the amphibians will try to breed elsewhere, such as on your house or in a parking lot, with less chance of survival.

Furthermore, they reduce seasonal flooding, replenish the groundwater supply, purify surface water runoff, and maintain biodiversity. Vernal pools are nearly impossible to replace, and they should be protected.

Questions and Answers

Photo credit: David Celebreeze, [Vernal Pool Guy](#)

- Do vernal pools contribute to mosquito populations? Not quite. Mosquito populations in vernal pools are controlled by bats and birds in flight, and dragonflies, salamanders, and water sliders in the water before the mosquito larvae hatch.
- Why do vernal pools generally disappear each year? When the foliage come back, the water is sucked up by the leaves to be used for photosynthesis. They are usually dried up by early summer.
- Are there other critters that use vernal pools? Yes! Eastern box turtles, Eastern garter snakes, and bats greatly benefit from vernal pools as a resource for food and habitat.



Native Plants for Wetlands and Vernal Pools

Plant health in a wetland is an indicator of overall health of the wetland. Some common plants found in or around vernal pools include:

- Trees: Silver Maple, Swamp White Oak.
- Shrubs: Buttonbush, Spicebush.
- Ferns: Sensitive Fern, Cinnamon Fern.
- Flowering: Jewelweed, Fringed Loosestrife, Golden Ragwort, Marsh Marigold.
- Grasses: Brome Sedge, Fowl Mannagrass, Hop Sedge, White Grass.



For more vernal pool plant information, visit [Ohio Vernal Pool Network](#).

POLL TIME

What are you excited to find in a vernal pool this spring?

Frogs

Select

Salamanders

Select

Tadpoles

Select

Plants and Trees

Select

Water

Select

Here were the full results from last month's poll about what readers want to hear about this year from us:

41.4%	15.3%	10.3%
Native Plants & Trees	Green Infrastructure	Rain Gardens
9.4%	9.4%	7.4%
Stream Buffers	Composting	Watershed
3.9%		3.0%
Stormwater Solutions		Other

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