

Frankly Speaking

This is our final issue of Frankly Speaking!

Beginning in Fall 2026 we will be mailing a printed issue of our Backyard Conversation e-newsletter to Frankly Speaking subscribers. This change will allow us to dedicate more time to effective environmental outreach that keeps our water clean.

Shop Our 2026 Tree and Plant Sale!

www.franklinswcd.org/tree-and-plant-sale

2026 TREE SALE DATES!

*Online Ordering Begins: January 5
Order by: March 22
Pick Up: April 10 & 11*



Place your order now and pick it up in April when it's the perfect time to plant! Pick-up will take place at our office at 1404 Goodale Blvd Suite 100 in Grandview on April 10 and 11. Our trees are small (usually 1-2') and easily transportable in any vehicle.



Landscaping on Urban Streets

The District is often asked by communities and residents about what species make the "best" street trees and landscaping. Combining issues like sound abatement, screening and shading, plant hardiness, and environmental services into one silver bullet that accomplishes the desired landscaping goals creates a lot of nuances. Whether one or many species are used to accomplish the goals, there are some basic considerations to be made.

Continued on next page

Landscaping on Urban Streets *continued*

Sound abatement is often a goal for roadside plantings and can be done with density, layers of vegetation, and proximity to the road surface. A mix of grasses, shrubs, and trees can create a multi-textured buffer that helps with sound. A nice example of this technique is Trueman Blvd in Hilliard north of the Target. The median and near the road is turfgrass and switchgrass backed by shrubby dogwood and larger trees. A sound wall, as well as a walking path, add to the buffer area of the road to the residential area.



This Google Maps image shows the multi-layered native planting separating Trueman Blvd from the sidewalk and the adjacent neighborhood. This screening helps protect from both noise and pollution from vehicles on the road.

Screening is often accomplished with evergreens like arborvitae, hollies, and yew. Many evergreens are susceptible to salt spray and drought. Salt affects the waxy cuticle of many evergreen species, leading to desiccation. Combining evergreen plants with the layering of other plant forms, like grasses, can help with the potential salt spray as well. Hollies, yews, and hemlock are natives that are attractive choices because they keep year-round foliage. Evergreen vegetation can be problematic with sight lines (as with most landscaping), so selective locations are key. On the flip side of the coin is shading. Deciduous plants are often needed where there are flower beds of spring ephemerals, summer blooming plants, and groundcover, or winter heating by the available sunlight is wanted, particularly around southern exposures. Consider a plant's seasonality when deciding on your specific landscape goals.



Downy Serviceberry is a tough small tree, making it a great choice for tight spaces next to buildings, roads, or beneath power lines.

The roadway environment poses some major challenges to plant hardiness, making it the toughest challenge to face. Heat, mechanical stress from wind and road maintenance (think snow and ice, salt spray, and snow removal), and soil conditions within the right of way pose some difficult conditions. Heat from the pavement or direct sun exposure causes a lot of plant stress, so shade, soil moisture, and drought tolerance are important. Some tough native urban

trees are Hackberry (*Celtis occidentalis*) (tall tree), Eastern Redbud (*Cercis canadensis*), and

Landscaping on Urban Streets *continued*

Downy Serviceberry (*Amelanchier arborea*) (both a small flowering ornate tree and suitable replacement for crabapple and invasive species used in the past). Northern Bayberry (*Myrica pensylvanica*) is a particularly salt tolerant plant.

Look to develop a systematic approach to site landscaping. Narrow medians and right of ways using turf grasses and deep rooted warm season native grasses in the near road environment, like varieties of switchgrass and little bluestem, can help with sound and be low maintenance while not blocking site lines. Small trees and shrubs placed behind the grasses will be protected from mechanical and heat stress and create a multi-textured buffer to help with sound dampening.

Tall canopy trees need root space to grow successfully, so soil conditions may need improvement for the long term, as well as increased soil volume, to accommodate the long-term health of maturing trees. We see a lot of bark damage from mechanical issues caused by things like mowers and string trimmers. Sun scald can impact larger trees in maintained medians, right of ways, and parking lot tree islands, and as the tree matures, stress from the lack of soil volume and drought can also affect the health of the tree.

Native analogs of most landscaping plants have become more widely available and used. Your landscaping contractors should be able to suggest appropriate native species, if asked. The District can provide input to residents and municipalities on native tree selections provided by landscaping companies. We hope our plant sale gives you some inspiration to use native species and explore the variety of native plants available to you! Native plant analogs can be found for any introduced ornamental plant and be more sustainable moving into the future while promoting native pollinators and wildlife.



The 9/11 Memorial Plaza in New York City is home to over 400 Swamp White Oak trees. The species was chosen specifically for its resiliency in urban environments. 47 of the trees were sourced from Wade and Gatton Nursery (Now closed) 65 miles north of Columbus in Bellville, Ohio.

Get to Know Our AmeriCorps program!

The Central Ohio Collaborative for Conservation is an environmental stewardship AmeriCorps State program that receives funding from ServeOhio (Ohio's Commission on Service on Volunteerism). AmeriCorps programs are all about increasing capacity to "Get Things Done" to address local challenges and fill community needs. For us, our program is dedicated to supporting conservation efforts in Central Ohio!

We focus our impact on five focus areas: (1) On-the-ground conservation services, (2) Environmental support services, (3) Environmental education, (4) Volunteer engagement, and (5) AmeriCorps member professional development.

Franklin Soil and Water is responsible for overseeing this program, but we partner with other nonprofit and government organizations to offer AmeriCorps service opportunities. Since our program launch in 2023, 10 different organizations have hosted 38 AmeriCorps members, which resulted in over 39,600 hours of AmeriCorps national service being served to support local communities across Franklin, Delaware, and Licking Counties!

Our AmeriCorps members are at the heart of our program. They are the people going directly into our communities to plant trees, remove litter and invasives, and educate others about conservation's importance. Each year, they treat hundreds of acres of land through land stewardship and reach tens of thousands of people through educational programs. They also engage hundreds of volunteers in over 10,500 hours of community volunteering annually. Talk about getting things done!

Our program is always looking for new opportunities to increase our impact. If you're interested in learning more, reach out to our AmeriCorps Program Coordinator, Abby Thiel at athiel@franklinswcd.org.



Franklin SWCD News

- Erin Miller was elected to our Board of Supervisors.
- Staff Updates: Jenny Barton joins us as our new Outreach Program Specialist and Katie Bennett is our new Environmental Education Assistant!
- We will have summer internships posted in January.

Conservation Grants- Opportunities For Funding in 2026!

Due to our various funding sources, we have multiple grant programs available! Our 2026 grant programs are summarized below with links to more information. Please note, these grants and their details may change from year to year. If you are interested in applying, whether you're totally new to this or a seasoned pro, please reach out ahead of the deadline. We can provide technical assistance or help fine-tune your application before you submit. Learn more about each of these programs below.

Learn more about our grants at our virtual info session on February 4, 2026 from 6-7pm. Register at www.franklinswcd.org/grants

3 GRANTS AVAILABLE



Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District
Creating Conservation Solutions for Over 70 Years



Conservation Mini Grants

What: Conservation projects
Who: 501(c) non-profit organizations
Where: Franklin County
Amount: \$2,000/awardee



Tree Assistance Program

What: Native tree plantings on private property
Who: Private landowners
Where: City of Columbus on private property
Amount: Up to \$10,000/awardee (May increase based on available funds)



Community Beyond Backyards Grant

What: Green infrastructure
Who: For-profits and non-profits
Where: Columbus, Bexley, Dublin, Grove City, Westerville, Franklin County
Amount: \$2,500/awardee

For additional details, application dates, or project examples, visit:
www.franklinswcd.org/grants

2026 Annual Spring Tree & Plant Sale

For detailed plant descriptions, pricing and to order online visit:
www.franklinswcd.org/tree-and-plant-sale

Introducing our 2026 plant selections!

This year we are offering bare root trees, shrubs, and fruits as well as live stakes, mushroom growing kits, and wildflower seed packets.



Pages 6-9 contain bare root plants!

Bare root trees and shrubs are around **1-3 years old and only 12-24" tall**, and they are a more cost-effective option than container trees. They will likely still be dormant (leafless) when you pick them up, but rest assured their root systems are alive and leaves will emerge once warmer temperatures arrive. Most of our bare root plants are sold in bundles of 5 or 10. Several plants may require a male and female plant to produce fruit. While we can't guarantee you'll receive both sexes, odds are you will wind up with both. Prices vary, but are generally \$1-\$3 for each bare root tree or shrub.

Shrubs



Bayberry

Myrica pensylvanica

A 3-12' tall round and densely branched shrub with inconspicuous flowers that prefers part shade. The berries feed Eastern Bluebirds and Yellow-rumped Warblers in winter.



Gray Dogwood

Cornus racemosa

Can be planted in full sun to partial shade and in a wide variety of soil types. While it prefers moist soil, it withstands dry, wet, and poor soils well. Makes a great hedge and hosts wildlife with both flowers and fruits.



Sweetshrub

Calycanthus floridus

This fragrant shrub grows 6-9' tall. Tolerant of both wet and dry soils. Grows in full sun to part shade. Produces maroon flowers that have a spicy aroma.

Shrubs *continued*



American Hazelnut

Corylus americana

An 8-15' tall thicketing shrub with 1/2" diameter nuts loved

by wildlife and

humans alike! Grows in any light condition and most any soil unless it is consistently moist.



Highbush Cranberry

Viburnum trilobum

While this 8-15' tall shrub produces tasty berries in fall, it's not a true cranberry, but a

Viburnum. This plant is

happiest in full sun to semi-shade, and is tolerant of most soil types that aren't bone dry.



Staghorn Sumac

Rhus typhinum

A large thicketing shrub 25-30' tall that forms a nice hedge. It can also be trained into a small statement tree. Birds

love the towers of berries that can also be used to make a lemonade-type drink. Rich red fall color.



Spicebush

Lindera benzoin

A popular 6-15' tall shrub for shady areas, Spicebush's chartreuse flowers light up in early spring before any leaves have emerged. Tasty red berries form in fall. The fresh leaves can be used to make tea.

Live Stakes



Nannyberry

Viburnum lentago

A Viburnum for shady, moist areas, Nannyberry has white umbels of flowers that give way to black and white fruits loved by birds.



Red Osier Dogwood

Cornus sericea

A short, clumping Dogwood best known for its bright red color in the winter time. A great choice for wet areas although it can also tolerate drought.



Black Willow

Salix nigra

A fast-growing tree for moist areas, this Willow lives only about 60 years, but is highly beneficial to wildlife.

Conifers



White Pine

Pinus strobus

A rapid-growing, long-lived native evergreen tree that commonly reaches 50-80' tall.

Given enough time row plantings can make great windscreens. White Pines don't tolerate poorly draining soils.



Bald Cypress

Taxodium distichum

A great choice for wet areas that are near salted roads, this adaptable deciduous conifer grows up to 120' tall. The fall

color is brilliant bronze.

Small Trees



Downy Serviceberry

Amelanchier arborea

This multi-stemmed tree grows in a wide variety of soil

conditions in full sun to part shade. Fuzzy new leaves differ from other serviceberries. The fruits are edible, although Cedar Waxwings, American Robins and Gray Catbirds may beat you to the harvest.



Redbud

Cercis canadensis

A classic small tree whose unique pink flowers contrast with the dark bark as they bloom all over the tree in spring. Redbud can be multi-stemmed, and seldom exceeds 25' in height. While it prefers moist, well-drained soil it's tolerant of clay as well. While this tree typically only survives a few decades, it will readily produce seedlings that fill its space.



American Hop-hornbeam

Ostrya virginiana

One of our toughest native understory trees, American Hop-hornbeam, also known as Musclewood or Blue Beech, grows up to 35 feet tall. It prefers full shade, but can handle full sun. It can succeed in most any soil type that is not too dry. The hop-like nutlets can persist into winter, but are usually eaten by a variety of birds and mammals before then.

Large Trees



Swamp White Oak

Quercus bicolor

The Swamp White Oak (*Quercus bicolor*) is a durable and handsome native tree, highly valued for its tolerance of urban conditions. It features distinctive, bi-colored leaf that are dark, glossy green on top and silvery-white underneath. This medium-to-large oak develops an attractive, rounded, and open crown, providing moderate shade. A valuable asset to the landscape, it offers critical habitat and food for wildlife, including large acorns that are favorites of many birds and mammals.



Burr Oak

Quercus macrocarpus

One of the toughest and most majestic native oaks, known for its rapid establishment and long lifespan of over 100 years. Its deeply furrowed, corky bark and massive, spreading canopy make this a rugged looking statement tree. This highly adaptable shade tree thrives in a wide range of conditions, from alkaline soils to urban stress and drought once established, making it exceptionally reliable. The Burr Oak produces the largest acorns of any North American oak, and their fringed mossy-looking cap gives the tree its common name.



Kentucky Coffee Tree

Gymnocladus dioica

A tough and beautiful shade tree that thrives in most conditions. Its stately shape and hardiness have made it a popular street tree. The fruit it produces can be brewed into a bitter coffee.



Hackberry

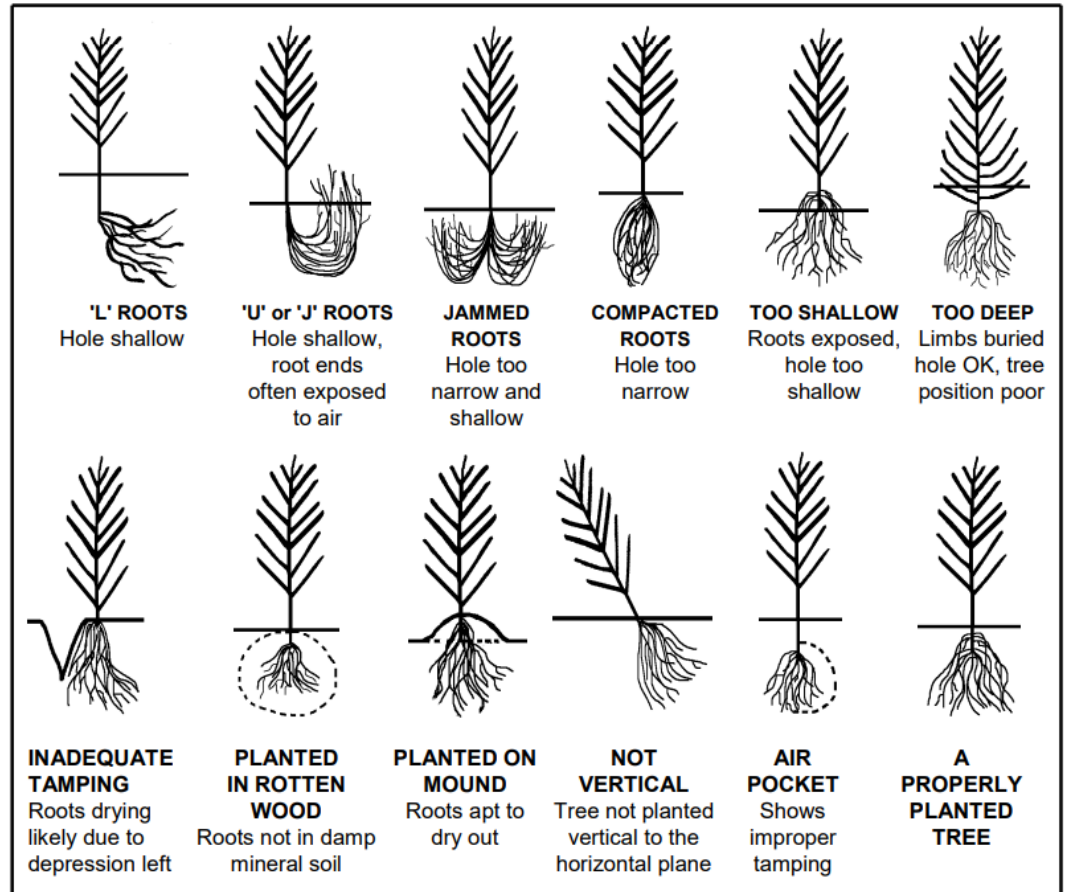
Celtis occidentalis

This medium-sized relative of the elm tree grows 40-60' tall. It is hardy and adaptable to urban conditions but grows best in moist soils and floodplains in full sun. The deeply furrowed bark is unique.

How to plant your trees

Fun Fact:

This diagram from USDA-NRCS first appeared in one of our newsletters in 1974.



Mushroom Kit

We will once again have shiitake mushroom kits! Don't worry if you are new to growing mushrooms. Included in the kit are easy to follow instructions, inoculated wooden plugs, wax, and dauber. All you need are seasoned hardwood logs, and a curiosity and willingness to learn about mushroom cultivation!

Seed Packet



Pollinator Wildflower Mix (1/8 oz packet covers 100 sq. ft.)

NATIVE OHIO PERENNIALS: Black-eyed Susan, Eastern Columbine, Dense Blazingstar, Purple Coneflower, Hairy Mountain Mint, Royal Catchfly, Bergamot, Foxglove, Beardtongue, Red Milkweed, Tall Larkspur, Hoary Mountain Mint, Spotted Beebalm, Blue Mistflower, Side Oats Grama.
NATIVE AMERICAN ANNUALS: , Cosmos, Scarlet Sage, Plains Coreopsis.

PLANTING INSTRUCTIONS: Sow in early spring in full sun and in well-drained soil. Lightly cover seeds and keep moist until plants are established. Packet should plant 100 sq. ft.

Important Information about Franklin Soil and Water's Spring Tree and Plant Sale



plant
NATIVE
plants

- Last day to order is **March 22!** It is best to place orders early as there may be limited quantities of some plants.
- **There are no refunds** unless a plant you ordered and paid for is unavailable at time of pickup.
- Conservation-grade, bare root seedlings are generally small, so a large-capacity vehicle is not necessary for pick-up.
- It is important to plant bare root seedlings immediately. Do not leave them in your car or hot garage. You can read about proper tree planting here: www.franklinswcd.org/plant-your-trees-right
- The species we sell (except for edible landscaping) are Ohio natives or cultivars, but may not be native to Franklin County.

Instructions for Tree Sale Ordering & Pickup

1. Place your order online and pay with a credit card at www.franklinswcd.org/tree-and-plant-sale -OR-
2. Call our office at 614-486-9613 if you are paying via check or if you are a tax exempt organization. We will send you an invoice payable via check at your request. Please note, we cannot take credit cards over the phone.
3. Last day to order from the tree sale is Sunday, March 22.
4. **Pick up your order of bare root plants at the Franklin SWCD Office (1404 Goodale Blvd., Suite 100, Columbus, OH 43212). See below for details.**
5. Orders not picked up by Tuesday, April 14 will be donated to local non-profits.

Pick-up Your Order at

Franklin SWCD Office, 1404 Goodale Blvd., Suite 100, Columbus, OH 43212

Friday, April 10
7:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

&

Saturday, April 11
8 a.m. - Noon

We will have a drive-thru pick-up and there will be no day-of sales.
If you can, please bring your own boxes or bags to safely transport your plants home.



District programs and services are offered on a non-discriminatory basis.

Connect With Us

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Conservation District**
Creating Conservation Solutions for Over 70 Years

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