

THE CONSERVATION DIRT

BENTON SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

2023 FALL NEWSLETTER

2023 Tour of Practices



First stop, Schefers' 160 milk cow operation. They built a milk cow shed (172' x 60') to house dry cows and heifers. They also had a roof put over their feedlot and stacking slab installed to hold manure.



A carp control structure will be put in with the help of the USFWS and the MN DNR to block the connection from Mayhew Creek to Sucker Creek on the Bemboom property.

This Issue:

Tour of Practices

Try Leaving the Leaves This Fall

Emerald Ash Borer Found in Benton County

Soil Health Field Day

Winter is On the Horizon

Upcoming Events

Tree Sale

Contact Us:

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Foley, MN 56329
(320)-968-5300 ext. 3**



SERVING BENTON COUNTY

Since 1948

Try “Leaving the Leaves” This Fall

As the leaves on your trees start falling, keep them on your lawn rather than bagging them. Experts say that there are many benefits to your lawn or garden when you “leave the leaves”. There are nutrients like nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium that make soil healthier, by adding organic matter back into the soil and lessens the need for fertilizer. Maintenance is still required in order to optimize the fallen leaves, use a mower to cut the leaves up to create a thin layer, this will help them break down more quickly. Thick layers of leaves are actually bad for your lawn by not letting light in to let the grass do photosynthesis.



Not bagging leaves can also create habitat for wildlife such as lizards, birds, turtles, insects, and frogs that winter in the leaves that have fallen. Depending on the species, some butterflies and moths spend the winter as eggs that are laid on top of leaves, those leaves provide the first food for the emerging caterpillars.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) says that leaves and other yard waste make up more than 13% of the nation’s solid waste (33 million tons a year). There isn’t enough oxygen to decompose leaves, so this organic matter releases methane, a greenhouse gas. Solid-waste landfills are actually the largest source of man-made methane gas in the United States.



YARD WASTE = 33 MILLION TONS/ YEAR

Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) Found in Benton County

On May 14th, 2009, EAB were found in South St. Anthony Park neighborhood in St. Paul, MN. It has continued to spread and was found in Duluth in 2015. There are now 44 counties in Minnesota that have been confirmed to have EAB infestations with Benton County being one of them.

Minnesota forests have an estimated one billion ash trees, most of these trees are black ash, which tend to grow in wet areas. These trees help maintain the water table and provide habitat for game birds, song birds, small animals, and the twigs and leaves are food for deer and moose. The infestations of EAB have killed these ash trees and may change the wet forest habitat in the coming years.

Signs of EAB

The life cycle mostly takes place below the bark of ash trees. The feeding larvae create tunnels or “galleries” that disrupt the transportation of the tree’s nutrients. The emerging adults create 1/8" wide, D-shaped exit holes that can be used in confirming an EAB infestation. Once symptoms of an infestation have start to show, the ash trees will typically die within one to three years.

If you think you have seen evidence of an infestation of EAB, call [888-545-6684](tel:888-545-6684) or email reportapest@state.mn.us.



EAB larva, photo by Minnesota Dept. of Agriculture.



EAB larva exit holes, photo by Minnesota Dept. of Agriculture.



EAB adult, photo by University of Minnesota Extension.

Soil Health Initiative Field Day

Benton SWCD held their Soil Health Initiative Field Day on September 12th, 2023, in Oak Park, Minnesota. There were several speakers throughout the day, a local farmer panel and several soil health demonstrations.



Mark Gutierrez (above) Soil Health Coalition Executive Director, does a demonstration of 1-inch rainfall event on tilled soil. This demo shows the amount of sediment run-off that is captured in the jars and the absorption rates of the soil. One tip that Mark gave the audience was to minimize soil disturbance, tilling reduces the soil capacity to infiltrate, filter and store water.

The speakers also highlighted on the importance of cover crops and expanding crop rotation diversity. Cover crops are there to protect from soil erosion, reduces evaporation, helps with soil temperature and decreases weed growth. When adding crop diversity to your rotations it helps create different types of biology and microorganisms in the soil.



For more information regarding soil health, contact Jessica Hoheisel, Megan Tritz or Mike McMillin at (320)-968-5300 ext. 3.

Winter is On The Horizon

With winter soon to be here, remember to use salt responsibly. Minnesota uses 350,000 tons of salt a year in winter maintenance, which is costing tax payers 25 million dollars a year. Using that much salt permanently pollutes more than a trillion gallons of water, it affect our lakes, streams and groundwater. It can also cause damage to roads, vehicles, bridges, buildings, people and wildlife.



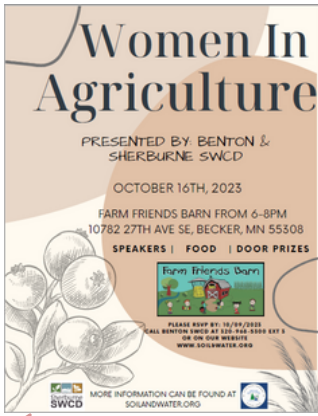
Product	Relative Direct Cost	Effective Lower Limit (degrees F)	Corrosive?	Aquatic Toxicity	Other Environmental Impacts
Road Salt or Rock Salt	Low	15	Yes	Moderate	Roadside tree damage
Potassium Chloride	Moderate	12	Yes	High	Potassium fertilization
Magnesium Chloride	Moderate	5	Yes	High	Magnesium addition to soil
Calcium Chloride	Moderate	-25	Very	Moderate	Calcium addition to soil
CMA - Calcium Magnesium Acetate	High	-17	No	Indirect	Decreased aquatic oxygen
Potassium Acetate	High	-15	No	Indirect	Decreased aquatic oxygen
Sand	Low		No	Indirect	Sedimentation

Chart provided by Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies.

Check out the MPCA website for more information on smart salting, parking lot, sidewalk, and road certification training. https://www.pca.state.mn.us/events-and-meetings?field_event_category_trainings_target_id=326#events

The recommended amount of salt to be used is 12 ounces for a 20-foot driveway or ten sidewalk squares. Keep the salt granules about 3 inches apart and sweep up any extra. Road salt only works above 15°F, for colder temperatures use sand for traction or an ice melting solution that works at cooler temperatures.





Upcoming Events

Women in Agriculture - October 16th



Benton SWCD Tree Sale

LOOK FOR ORDER FORMS TO BE MAILED OUT THE FIRST WEEK OF NOVEMBER.

TREE OPEN HOUSE 11/13-11/16

TREE PICKUP - LAST WEEK OF APRIL 2024 (weather dependent)

ORDER FORMS FOUND HERE

- OUR WEBSITE
- IN THE OFFICE
- CALL IN YOUR ORDER (be prepared to pay with credit card)

(320)-968-5300 EXT. 3



“ CONSERVATION TIP:

Turning down your thermostat from 72 degrees to 68 degrees for 8 hours can save as much as 10% on energy costs.



Acer saccharum