HAMILTON COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT

ADVANCING SOIL AND WATER SUSTAINABILITY

Let's Grow!

Hamilton County Ag News

July 2026

Message from the Ag Specialist

It is truly summer and the recent heat wave made sure there was no confusion about the season. But summer heat, along with some rain showers, brings us summer harvests.

Agriculture is often defined as the production of "food, fiber, and fuel," but I would add one more item to that list: flowers! Local floral production is an expanding business model in our region, and we are excited to showcase three area farms on our Flower Farm Tour on August 23rd. Just like food production, locally-grown flowers travel fewer miles to get to our tables and vases. Unlike the flowers found at grocery stores and florists, local flowers are often grown using good conservation practices that protect soil and water and without the use of herbicides and pesticides. When you support local flower farms, you support your local economy! The next time you bring flowers to your home or special event, consider sourcing them locally. You can buy local flowers directly from a farm or find them at area farmers markets. You can also learn the joys of growing your own cut flowers!

Read on for more agriculture opportunities, programs, and events from the Hamilton County Conservation District, along with those from our partner organizations.

I hope you enjoy the beauty and bounty that summer brings. And stay cool!

Nicole Gunderman
Agriculture Specialist
Hamilton County Conservation District

A bouquet featuring beautiful flowers from the 2025 HCCD Flower Farm Tour.
Find registration for this year's event featuring 3 area flower farms below.

Upcoming District Events

Cover Crops Program

The Cover Crop Seed Sale is open online with seed pickup in August! Click below to order:

Seed Sale

Cover Crops for Small Gardens & Raised Beds

Wednesday, July 15
6:00-7:30pm
HCCD Training Center
2710 E. Kemper Rd.

Cover crops aren't just for big crop fields! Learn the benefits of using cover crops in small garden systems. Cover crops keep soil covered and roots in the ground outside the regular growing season and provide benefits to improve soil health, support beneficial pollinators, and help to manage weeds. This class and our accompanying Cover Crop Seed Sale will get you ready to integrate these helpful plants in your garden.

Native Warm Season Grass for Pasture and Hay at Bahr Farm

Tuesday, July 28
6:00 - 8:00pm
969 W. North Bend Rd

Join us at Cardinal Land Conservancy's Bahr Farm in College Hill for a summer evening program on warm season grass pastures and hay production. Bahr Farm has successfully installed warm season grass hay fields and pollinator-friendly pasture within its 32-acre site. Learn from Farm Manager Nick Hartley about the Farm's experience and from Jason Jones of Pheasants Forever on grass ecology, grazing systems, and support of wildlife. Nick will do a hay sampling demonstration and share data on their nutritional analysis. We will end with a pasture walk to identify warm season grasses and see the Farm's cattle herd. Free, but registration is required.

Cardinal LAND CONSERVANCY

Register for Warm Season Grass Program

Flower Farm Tour

Sunday, August 23
9:00 am - 12:00pm

Spend your morning amidst beautiful blooms on a tour of three area flower farms! The Flower Lady OTR, Lore Floral, and Westwind Flower Farm will welcome us to learn their production methods and business strategies. Then we will harvest flowers and greens to build a progressive floral arrangement. By the end of the tour, you'll have a one-of-a-kind floral creation featuring blooms from all three farms to take home! Registration includes beverages, light bites, and a bouquet (vase and travel box included). Map and driving directions provided.

Flower Farm Tour Registration

Hay Probe Rental Program

Hay testing is important whether you are buying hay or growing it yourself. Having your hay tested provides a measurable breakdown of forage nutrition, allows you to best meet the needs of your animals, prevents dangerous health issues, and can help you avoid expensive over-supplementation. When you understand what is in your feed you can match it to the specific energy and protein demands of your livestock and be assured you are feeding quality nutrition. If you are a hay producer, you can assure your customers they are purchasing a quality product.

The first step in hay testing is collecting samples of your hay, and we've got the tool for that. A hay probe easily attaches to a cordless drill and enables you to collect the cores you need to send to a lab for analysis.

Contact Nicole Gunderman to schedule your **free hay probe rental** by emailing **nicole.gunderman@hamiltoncountyohio.gov**

Cover Crop Seed Sale!

Open through July 31st
Pickup begins August 17th

Cover crops are an important conservation practice. Keeping roots in the soil year-round helps support soil microbes, builds organic matter, increases water retention and decreases soil erosion. Some cover crop varieties also support pollinators. A win for your garden and the environment!

Select from two cover crop seed mixes specially designed for raised beds and small gardens by Walnut Creek Seed, premier cover crop seed company in Ohio. Place your seed order online before July 31, 2025 and pick up your seeds at the Hamilton County Conservation District office between August 17-31, just in time for fall planting.

Cover Crop Seed Sale

Partner Programs

If you would like us to include your upcoming events in this bi-monthly newsletter, please email pertinent information and a link to: **nicole.gunderman@hamiltoncountyohio.gov**

Education Programs:

July 25: Healthy Harvest @ Mt. Airy, Civic Garden Center
July 29: Farmland Succession Webinar, American Farmland Trust
Aug 1: Creative Garden Construction, Civic Garden Center
Aug 6: Gather in the Garden: U Pick, Winton Woods Farm
Aug 13: Mushroom Harvest, Civic Garden Center
Aug 15: Farm Encounters Walk, Gorman Heritage Farm
Aug 15: Seed Saving for Kitchen Gardens, Civic Garden Center
Aug 22: From Yard to Habitat, Gorman Heritage Farm
Aug 22: Perennials & Biennials, Turner Farm
Sept 22-24: Farm Science Review, London, OH

Equine Excellence Expo

July 28, 4:00-6:00pm
Ohio State ATI Equine Center
Wooster, OH

This event brings together horse owners, enthusiasts and industry professionals for an evening of learning, connection and hands-on education. Session topics include:

- Equine body composition
- Emergency preparedness for horse owners
- Composting practices for equine operations
- NSC levels in pastures & forages
- Equine behavior & good citizenship
- Thermal imaging & fire-risk awareness
- Fundamentals of equine nutrition

Whether you're a seasoned horse owner or just getting started, there's something for everyone. Learn more and register **HERE**.

Agriculture Literacy Education Program

August 3, 9:30am-3:30pm
Ohio Agriculture Center, Columbus, OH
This free one-day training is open to Ohio Farm Bureau Members and is designed to equip you with skills and resources to engage with youth on agriculture topics in your community. Made possible by the Ohio Farm Bureau Foundation, this training is held alongside the new imAGine Ag exhibit in the brand-new Ohio Agriculture Center at the Ohio State Fair. There is no cost to attend. Find out more and register **HERE**.

Bowyer Farm Agrivoltaics Tour

August 29, 10:00am-12:00pm
2210 Mason Montgomery Rd, Mason, OH
Owned by the Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden, Bowyer Farm is home to one of the largest solar arrays in southwest Ohio. This tour will explore their 140-acre (28MW) agrivoltaic solar grazing site, where hundreds of sheep are rotationally grazed under a commercial solar array. Walk through the farm with hosts and shepherds Amanda Wilson and Brady Kirwan from Ohio Solar Grazing, where they demonstrate and discuss their role in this agrivoltaic operation. This event is a part of the 2026 OEFFA Farm Tour Series. Find out more and register **HERE**.

Grants & Other Opportunities

USDA Fertilizer Investment & Expansion for Long-Term Domestic Supply (FEILDS

Amount: $100 million
The FIELDS program is intended to expand, or bring into operation new, independent domestic fertilizer production capacity in order to provide agricultural producers with additional domestic fertilizer options and strengthen the U. S. fertilizer supply chain. Program funding is intended to support projects that significantly increase domestic process manufacturing capacity and fertilizer availability, including expansions or upgrades of existing facilities, construction of new domestic production facility, shovel-ready projects capable of rapidly increasing domestic supply, and on-site fertilizer terminals and transportation infrastructure that improve supply chain efficiency. Learn more and apply **HERE**.

NC-SARE Farmer Rancher Grant

Amount: $15,000/Individual, $30,000/Team
August Call for Proposals
This competitive grant program is for farmers and ranchers who want to explore sustainable solutions to problems through on-farm research, demonstration, and education project. Farmers and ranchers have

critical insight when it comes to improving their systems. Whether they need to limit off-farm inputs, reduce erosion, create more time for family or community activities, learn marketing skills, or find other ways to enhance their livelihoods, farmers and ranchers can turn to NC-SARE for grant opportunities and information. Learn more **HERE**.

Partner Spotlight

The Southwest Chapter of the Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association (SWOEFFA) is a group of individuals in our area who adhere to the goals of OEFFA (advancing sustainable and organic farming, local food, and agricultural practices to protect and enhance our environment). The group sponsors tours of local farms/gardens/reclaimed habitats. If you are interested in adding your name to our mailing list to receive information about tours and gatherings, please contact Cori Yaeger **iroc1949@icloud.com**. Learn more about the statewide organization **HERE**.

Hamilton County Conservation District

Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) like us were established in response to the environmental devastation of the Dust Bowl in the 1930s, with the mission of promoting sustainable land management practices. These districts, which exist in almost every U.S. county, work to conserve and protect local soil, water, and natural resources through education, technical assistance, and community collaboration. In agriculture, SWCDs help farmers and landowners implement practices that prevent erosion, improve water quality, and enhance soil health, supporting long-term sustainability and resilience. Hamilton County presents unique challenges as a mostly urban county, but it also has a rich and vibrant agriculture community.

All District programs and services are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis without regard to race, color, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, pregnancy,

religion, national origin, genetic information, ancestry, age, marital/parental status, political affiliation, military service, disability, or other non-job-related criteria.

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Mendi Hartley - Business Service Officer
Gwen Z Roth - Education & Outreach Mngr.
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Michaela Werling, Soil Conservationist
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Laura Boyd
Amanda Nurre
Ken Petren
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(513) 946-8020
www.hcswcd.org

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HCCD | 2702 E. Kemper Road | Sharonville, OH 45241 US

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