

THE CONSERVATION CONNECTION

News from MCSWCD

2025 Monroe County Farm Tour

The District collaborated with the Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) of Monroe County this summer to host a farm tour for local and state policymakers at three Monroe County farms. The goal of this tour was to strengthen the connection between legislators and local agriculture, while highlighting the continued support both of our organizations offer to the farming communities.

During the tour, legislators learned about each farm's rich generational legacy, the daily challenges and successes of farm life, and how farms are embracing science and technology to remain competitive and sustainable. They gained insights into the impressive scale of produce harvested and the vital role these farms play in supporting local families - not only through food production but also the jobs they provide. The tour offered a rare, behind-the-scenes look at the facilities where it all takes place.

We extend our sincere thanks to Colby Homestead Farms (Ogden), Conrow Farms (Clarkson), and Brightly Farms (Hamlin) for graciously opening their farms and delivering engaging, informative presentations. Special thanks also to Brightly's Farm Market for their warm hospitality and the delicious dinner that concluded the tour at their family-run market. Learn more about these farms on the next page.

And of course, thank you to all the county and state legislators who dedicated their afternoon and evening to learning more about and supporting local agriculture. Your engagement is deeply appreciated.



Cornell Cooperative Extension
Monroe County

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Protecting Today, Providing Tomorrow

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2025 District Dates & Deadlines

NYS DEC Endorsed 4-Hr Erosion
& Sediment Control Training
October 22nd

Our office will be closed:

Columbus Day -
October 13th

Veterans Day -
November 11th

Thanksgiving -
November 27th & 28th

Meet the Farms that Participated in the 2025 Monroe County Farm Tour

Colby Homestead Farms



Since 1802, **Colby Homestead Farms** has been a staple of western Monroe County. Generations of Colbys have expanded the farmstead into what it has become now - a large dairy farm supplying to wholesale and local restaurants and retail. Colby Homestead Farms has continued to embrace the newest science and technology available for their operation. Legislators were treated to a tour of the dairy cow barn, their manure management, silage storage and management of leachate, and their robotic milking operation.

In the early 1900s, a young couple owned a truck farm supplying produce to the very first Wegmans. This operation would grow to become the current **Conrow Farms** through generations of farmers. Conrow Farms currently operates 1,000 acres of land, cultivating apples, hay, winter squash, and soybeans. Their apples are grown for Mott's, a local NY company. Legislators toured the farm's apple orchards, the farm's pesticide management practices, and their fuel secondary containment system.

Conrow Farms



Brightly Farms



After WWII, **Brightly Farms** was started on just 120 acres of open land, woods, and farmland. These 120 acres have grown to over 2,000 acres today producing cabbage, corn, and more. Legislators learned about the farm's soil health management and regenerative agriculture practices, use of precision farming technology, alternative energy use, processing of corn grain, and the family's market that sells fresh produce, homemade pies, jellies, jams, and more.

District Ends the Summer with the 36th Annual Conservation Field Days

The 36th annual Conservation Field Days ended the summer and kicked off the school year for over 680 students from 12 local schools. Fifth and sixth grade classes from these schools enjoyed two beautiful days at Ellison Park learning about various environmental conservation topics including urban wildlife, forestry, watershed conservation, and more. New stations welcomed this year explored invasive species, the Great Lakes, bird banding, and the importance of wetlands. Various activities included making leaf plant presses, pretending to be bacteria going through a waste water treatment plant, and germinating their own seeds.

Thirty instructors representing 18 organizations participated this year! For a full list of this year's participating organization please visit our website:

<https://monroecountyswcd.org/conservation-field-days/>

Thank you to all of our instructors, volunteers, and sponsors of this year's event. Conservation Field Days is a truly special event, bringing together so many organizations and schools together to educate and learn about conservation topics and the District is proud to be able to host this event for our local schools!

If you are interested in being involved in next year's Conservation Field Days event, whether as an instructor or local school teacher, please reach out to our office (contact info on last page of this newsletter).

Students watch bird banding up close with Braddock Bay Bird Observatory



Students unload for Day One!



Students act out the spread of invasive species with US Army Corps of Engineers

Managing Leaves and Stormwater Goes Hand in Hand

With the start of fall, Monroe County's landscape will be reds, yellows, and oranges in no time followed by them blanketing our properties. Keeping leaves in your yard can be good for the soil, but large amounts or bulky piles will take a while to decompose. Mulching the dry leaves via shredding/mowing will reduce decomposition time and allow for less large, bulky leaf piles. These shredded leaves can be applied to your yard or garden beds to act as natural fertilizer. A layer less than 3/4" deep should be all that is needed.

You should **never** burn your leaves as it contributes to air pollution and is actually banned in New York State.

Another great option is having your leaves collected by your municipalities. The City of Rochester has a Materials Give Back Program where they will pick up curbside leaf piles and transport them to be composted. If you are a City resident and want to learn more about this program



visit here: <https://www.cityofrochester.gov/departments/des/materials-give-back-program>



Many towns and villages in Monroe County also offer leaf collections, some starting as early as October 1st, so be sure to visit your town/village website to check for pick-up dates.

Remember to also remove leaves from storm drains to prevent clogging and reduce stormwater pollution.

Agricultural BMP Spotlight: Cover Cropping

As we enter the fall, crops are being harvested and the many farm fields of Monroe County will begin to look quite bare. When farm fields are left bare, they are subject to increased erosion, loss of nutrients in the soil, and the overall decline of beneficial soil biology.



An increasingly common practice on farms nowadays is cover cropping. This is a simple practice where a non-cash crop species is planted in the field between harvest and next year's growth to prevent erosion, suppress unwanted weeds, reduce soil compaction,

A local Monroe County farm field cover cropped with a rye, radish, and clover mix



increase moisture and nutrients in the soil, and even attract pollinators and other beneficial wildlife depending on the species used. All of these factors combine to improve overall soil health and make your soils more productive come time for the next season of crops. Common cover crop species include clover, ryegrass, legumes, and radish.

2025 Soil Health Field Day Held in the City of Rochester

Earlier this month, a soil health field day was held at Foodlink Farm as part of the 2025 Soil Health & Climate Resiliency Field Days series. The topics of the workshop were urban soil health and cover cropping. The District was one of several organizations who tabled at this event along with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Monroe County (Harvest NY), Urban Agriculture Working Group, Foodlink Community Farm, New York Soil Health, and more.

In between tabling, staff attended presentations throughout the field day with the 65 attendees including soil health principles, establishment and termination strategies of urban beds, dealing with heavy metals, crop species selection, and much more!



Summer Education Programming

It was a pleasure for the District to participate in two community events this summer: the Mendon Public Library's Summer Reading Program and the Genesee Country Village & Museum's Annual Outdoor Fest.

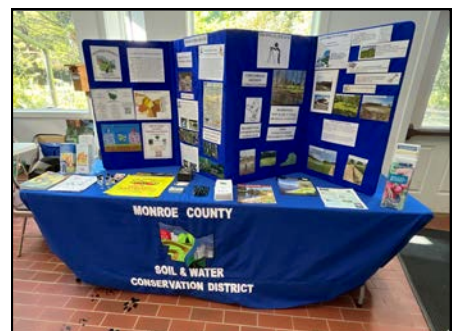
Each year the Mendon Public Library's Summer Reading Program has a new theme. This year's theme was "Color Our World." Incorporating this theme, the District hosted a morning of fun and investigation at Rotary Park in the Village of Honeoye Falls where families went on a color scavenger hunt around the park to find different items in nature to match each color they were given.

Families found lots of cool things to fill their color grids including wildflowers (white, yellow, purple), berries (red, black), fungus (pink), cicada shells (brown), butterflies (white, black), and even a Great Blue Heron (blue). After finding their colored items, each group shared the coolest item they found or saw and what color it was, where the entire group then discussed what that item's role and importance in its ecosystem might be. Thanks again to the Mendon Public Library for including us in their programming and we can't wait for next year's theme and program!



Families investigate the stream buffer zone for what colors they can find!

The District closed out the summer participating in the Genesee Country Village & Museum's 3rd Annual Outdoor Fest. The District set up an informational booth for participants to see what projects we are currently undertaking as well as past projects around the county. Tabling next to Oatka Creek Watershed Committee at this event also provided the District with the opportunity to showcase our long-standing partnership with the committee as well as other organizations.



Spotted Lanternfly Monitoring Wraps Up Next Month

If you've seen our spotted lanternfly (SLF) traps around the county this year, they will soon be taken down for the season. So far, no SLF were found in any of our traps, including a trap that had two adults found late in the season in 2024. While the traps may come down, that does not mean full monitoring ends. SLF egg masses can be spotted in late fall, winter, and early spring and a single egg mass can contain up to 50 eggs. If an egg mass is spotted on a tree or other surface, you can simply scrape the egg mass off the tree. Make sure you are positive the egg mass belongs to SLF though, so you are not destroying the egg mass of a native species.

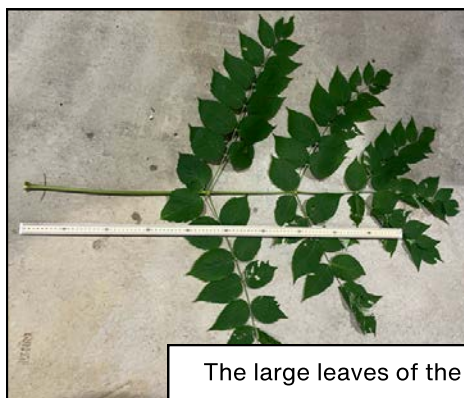
Thank you to all of our town, village, and city partners for assisting us with monitoring this year!



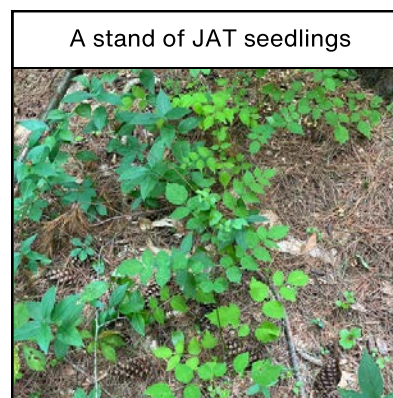
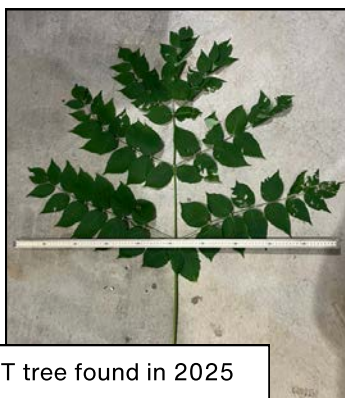
SLF egg masses can be identified by it's gray or light-brown coloring and putty-like covering that is put over the eggs to protect them

Sixth Year of Japanese Angelica Surveying and Treatment

2025 was year six of continued monitoring check-ups and surveying for the invasive Japanese angelica tree (JAT) (*Aralia elata*) at Mendon Ponds Park and Durand Eastman Park. In partnership with SUNY Brockport Department of Environmental Science & Ecology, District staff and department students surveyed the former plots where the angelica tree was treated for eradication. Despite continued spot treatments, JAT has still continued to grow seedlings. While JAT presence has significantly decreased, continued growth is a persisting threat due to its fast growth and spread through tubers. While most JAT can be hand-pulled at this point, an individual that had evaded detection throughout the years was found and had already grown over 8 feet tall in only 3-5 years of growth. The leaves had already reached over one meter wide and long as well showing how in just this short amount of time, JAT can easily shade out native understory species.



The large leaves of the JAT tree found in 2025



A stand of JAT seedlings

District Hosts Workshops on Invasive Species and Riparian Habitat Restoration

This year the District was included as a partner on a project headlined by the SUNY Brockport Department of Environmental Science & Ecology funded through the Sustain Our Great Lakes grant program under the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation. This project is focused on the restoration of riparian habitats that have been decimated by the arrival of the emerald ash borer (EAB) (*Agilus planipennis*) over a decade ago.

Since first detected in 2013, EAB has destroyed Monroe County's mature ash populations leading to ecological and economical disruptions including an increase in invasive species, increased economic costs for tree removal, and safety hazards in many of our public lands. Monroe County historically has had some of the highest ash tree density in New York, so restoring a healthy forest is of upmost importance to benefit our residents with clean air and drinking water, wildlife habitat and food, erosion control, carbon sequestration, and more.

Over a two year period, SUNY Brockport will remove invasive species from certain areas before planting over 13 acres of trees to replace the lost forest canopy.

Participants examine a fallen ash tree for signs of EAB



A telltale sign of EAB is D-shaped exit holes from adults emerging from the tree



NFWF

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Genesee River Watershed Implementation Plan Updates

During the summer, the District co-hosted a community engagement workshop to support development of the Genesee River Watershed Implementation Plan. This plan will focus on improving water quality in the Genesee River watershed, including the river's tributaries, lakes, and ponds.

As one of six workshops, this one allowed the opportunity to share knowledge of local water quality concerns and project opportunities. Members of the public as well as organizations and municipalities representing different areas throughout the entire 2,500 square mile watershed participated in the various workshops.

To learn more about the Watershed Improvement Plan and become involved with the development of the plan visit their website:

[https://engage.gflrpc.org/
g/genesee-river-wip](https://engage.gflrpc.org/genesee-river-wip)

