



Otsego Conservation District *The Otsego Conserver* Winter & Spring 2024

“Working toward greater harmony with our natural resources”

Otsego Conservation District Mission

The mission of the Otsego Conservation District is to assist the people of Otsego County in the wise use and management of their natural resources, for a healthy environment and sustained economic growth.



800 Livingston Blvd. Suite 4A
Gaylord, MI 49735
(989) 732-4021
www.otsegocd.org
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Libby Benjamin
CTAI Conservationist

USDA-NRCS
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District Conservationist
(989) 732-6526

Michigan Bats

Bats are the only mammals that are capable of true flight, and contrary to popular belief, these misunderstood creatures won't fly into your hair or suck your blood. Michigan is home to 9 species of bats, 6 of which are present in northern Michigan. All of these bats are nocturnal, and feed exclusively on insects like moths, beetles, and mosquitoes. For this reason, bats are more often found in forested areas near water, which is perfect habitat for feeding and roosting. A roost is any place a bat uses for shelter and protection, and depending on the species may include tree cavities, under loose bark, in buildings, and under bridges. Some bats, like the hoary bat, silver-haired bat, and red bat are solitary species that migrate south for the winter. Others, including the northern long-eared bat, little brown bat, and big brown bat, live in colonies and hibernate in caves, mines, or hollow trees. All Michigan bats use echolocation to find their prey and navigate through dense forests. They emit very high-pitched sounds as they fly, which bounce off objects and “echo” back to the bat.



Little Brown Bats in a bat house. Photo by Phil Meyers, Museum of Zoology, U of M.

Have you noticed fewer bats flying around over the last 10-20 years? Many of Michigan's bat species have been devastated by a fungal pathogen known as white-nose syndrome, which was first discovered in Michigan in 2007. Bats infected with white-nose syndrome wake up during hibernation and exhaust their fat stores, starving to death before spring. Sadly, this has resulted in a 90% decline in Northern long-eared bats and little brown bats; both of these species are now classified as threatened, which is a species that is likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future.

Bats are well adapted to living in dark environments, and are negatively impacted by artificial light. Light pollution affects different species in different ways. Some bats can be disoriented by artificial light, and delay leaving their roosts to feed, thinking it is still daylight. Some will hunt insects that swarm under lights, while others like the little brown bat avoids artificial light entirely. Bats may abandon a roost entirely if there is artificial light nearby, and light pollution often changes insect behavior, which in turn disrupts feeding behavior of bats. To avoid negative impacts of outdoor lighting on bats, choose fixtures that shield the bulb, and target the light only where needed. Also, use warmer color (yellow) lights as opposed to cooler (blue-violet) lights.

Continued on page 2.

Otsego Conservation District's Native Plant Nursery

Opens Saturday, June 1st, 2024 ~ 9 am - 3 pm

Learn about the benefits of planting native Michigan perennials! The greenhouse is located at 459 Livingston Blvd., near the Alpine Center, within the Community Demonstration Garden.

We grow & sell over 50 varieties of Michigan native wildflowers & grasses. See insert for available species and event details.



SEEDLING SALE & SMALL FRUIT FUNDRAISER

May 3rd & 4th 2024; Preorders due March 22nd

See inside for a
pull-out booklet
and order form.

Michigan Bats (continued)

There are some other actions you can take to protect bats, and make your property or backyard more attractive to bats. Build or buy a bat house and install it in your yard to provide a roosting site. Retain standing dead trees and trees with loose, shaggy bark. If you don't live near a lake or stream, consider adding a water source, such as a small pond. Limit pesticide use—remember, bats eat insects! Plant native wildflowers, trees, and shrubs. Bats eat insects that are active at night, which are attracted to native plants. Native plants will attract pollinators like butterflies and bumblebees, too!

By Libby Benjamin

Sources: <https://www.michigan.gov/dnr/education/michigan-species/mammals/bats>; <https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/michigan-s-bats>; Bat Blitz Online Course, Association for Fish & Wildlife Agencies; "Mammals of Michigan Field Guide" by Stan Tekiela



Northern long-eared bat.
Photo by Karen Powers,
Radford University



American Tree Farm System

Community, Recognition, Legacy

American Tree Farm is a national program developed to promote the sustainable management of family forest land.

Properties with 10 to 10,000 acres of woodland are invited to apply. There is no fee to enter into or withdrawal from this program. Benefits of Tree Farm Certification include free on-site advice from professional foresters, invitation to Tree Farm Field Days and workshops, updates on the latest best practices and standards, and access to tools and information to keep your forest productive and healthy. Visit TreeFarmSystem.org/Michigan for more info.



Qualified Forest Program

The Qualified Forest Program (QFP) encourages landowners to actively manage their privately owned forests in exchange for a tax exemption from their local school operating millage. Enrollment Deadline is September 1st, 2024.

Why Enroll Your Property?

- Tax Exemption up to 16 mils on non-homestead properties
- Prevents "uncapping" of a property's taxable value
- Ensure your land is being managed sustainably
- Public access not required

Who's Qualified?

- 20+ acre Properties
- No maximum acreage
- Meet productivity and stocking requirements
- Those who have/want a forest management plan

*Learn more at
Michigan.gov/QFP*

MAEAP Forest, Wetlands, Habitat A*Syst

Verification in the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) recognizes the sustainable management practices implemented by landowners on their property. Confidential, one-on-one guidance from a forester or technician can provide the following benefits to those interested in MAEAP:

- Provide Wildlife Habitat
- Confidential Review of Best Management Practices
- Ensure Protection of MI's Water & Soil
- Demonstrate Land is Managed by Written Plan
- Risk Assessment Tools and Resources

If you own land in Otsego, Crawford, or Roscommon counties and would like to schedule a free visit and are in need of forestry assistance or if you are interested in any of the programs above.

Please call Conservation District
Forester at (989)-732-4021

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Riparian Buffer Zones: What they are, why they work!

When you step into a cold, clear Michigan stream do you think about how it got that way? When you look at a river bank are you pondering the work being done underground to purify the water rushing around your ankles? Well, you should be!

The vegetation surrounding a body of water is called a riparian buffer zone. These plants filter out pollutants from runoff, control erosion, and create a habitat for countless creatures. They also help give a stream the appropriate amount of nutrients to support the fish and insects that live there.

All these things are what a undisturbed, healthy riparian buffer provide. Things like road development, construction, residential development can all cause a riparian buffers to narrow. Without a sufficient buffer sediment, pollutants, and an excess of nutrients make their way into the water whether through runoff or groundwater transport. Sediment can clog fish gills and harm spawn. It also reduces water clarity, having an affect not only on aquatic vegetation, but also the visual appeal of a stream. Chemicals, such as petroleum products, from road way run off, enter a stream with a weak riparian buffer, they cause water quality problems at the source traveling down stream.

What can we do to help give riparian buffers a fighting chance? Restoration can take many forms, like planting appropriate vegetation for the area, leaving snags in the water to act as habitat, and preventing livestock grazing too close to the area. These are just some of the main practices to implement a riparian buffer restoration.

Don't forget the next time you go for a dip, launch your kayak, or cast a fly to take a moment and appreciate all the work going on around you by Michigan's vegetation.

If you have any questions regarding riparian buffers please contact Kelly Draeger at (989)732-4021 or kdraeger@otsegocountymi.gov



Potential 2024 Events*

Fruit Tree Pruning - Learn how to care for your fruit trees and what it takes to grow them right.

BuzzBuzz: The ins and outs of Bee Keeping - If you have ever been curious about those busy pollinators be on the look out for a chance to learn from the pros.

Reintroducing the Grayling - Learn about the extortionary efforts being put forth to bring back the arctic grayling after nearly a century.

Is Your Septic System a Hazard?- Be in the "know" when it comes to maintaining an environmentally friendly, and healthy, septic system.

Riparian Buffers Are Cool - Discover the processes that keep our waters clean and clear.

*We are always adding and adjusting our calendar as the season progresses. Be on the lookout for event updates!

RSVP for 2024 Events

Contact Kelly at (989)732-4021 or kdraeger@otsegocountymi.gov for more information on how to RSVP or for suggestions for events you would like to see.

If you would like to be included in our email updates please email tjans@otsegocountymi.gov



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President/Sr. Project Engineer

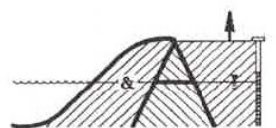
699 South Wisconsin Avenue

Gaylord, Michigan 49735

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989-732-5825 (Fax)

ksagasser@sagasser-associates.com



MAEAP Overview and Highlights for 2022-2023

This past year has been a very busy year for Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program, MAEAP, statewide and especially in the 4 counties that my program covers (Charlevoix, Cheboygan, Emmet and Otsego). The past pandemic had really slowed the program along with other things to a snail's pace. This year we finally are picking back up to a normal if not hectic pace. During the past few years, the amount of farms that needed to be reverified had piled up and in addition to adding new farms to the program. I focused on trying to get the lapsed verifications caught up. This was a daunting task to undertake since there are over 70 farm systems that were lapsed or up for reverification at the beginning of the fiscal year.

As this year ended, I am able to report that statewide MAEAP is now at over 6,300 system verifications. In the 4-county area I cover, Charlevoix, Cheboygan, Emmet and Otsego, this year there has been 18 new systems verified on 6 different farms. Reverifications were completed in our 4-county area, totaling 29 reverifications on 10 different agricultural operations. There were new verifications and reverifications in all four of the systems: Farmstead, Cropping, Livestock, and Forest, Wetland, Habitat systems.

A new change that was implemented this year is that we now just do one farm assessment. If you have participated in the program in the past, you might be familiar with the *A*Systs that we have. For example Farm*A*Syst was the farmstead assessment, the Livestock*A*Syst was for livestock assessment, the Crop*A*Syst was for the cropping system assessment, and the The Forest, Wetlands, and Habitat*A*Syst (FWH*A*Syst) was the forest, wetland & habitat assessment system. Now we have one assessment for farming and one for the Forest, Wetland, and Habitat. It streamlines the number of questions that have to be answered and speeds up the first visit depending on what needs to be assessed for the property owner. This next year I will be working with more new farms and catching up with more of the farms that need to be reverified.

MAEAP is a confidential, voluntary, and free environmental verification program. There is no cost for a site visit. We cover agriculture of all sizes and all commodities. We even verify forest, wetlands, and habitat for landowners. If you have any questions or want to have me out to your farm or property please contact me, Chris Anderson, MAEAP Technician at (231) 582-6193.



Our very own MAEAP Technician

Chris Anderson, MAEAP Technician for Charlevoix, Cheboygan, Emmet and Otsego Counties has dedicated 25 years to Charlevoix Conservation District. Chris Anderson was hired as the Charlevoix Conservation District Forester in 1998. Due to changes in funding on the state level, the forestry program ended, and Chris started his career as a MAEAP Technician for Northern Michigan. In honor of Chris's hard work and dedication to



Chris in 1998 as Charlevoix District Forester



Chris receiving his Carhartt

the Charlevoix Conservation District, Chris received a Carhartt jacket with the Charlevoix District Logo on it from Tim Matchett, Chair Person of Charlevoix Conservation District Board, in 2023.

At the Annual Michigan Association of Conservation Districts Fall Conference, held in Bellaire, Chris was awarded the 2023 MAEAP Verification Award from the regional MAEAP Verifier, Erin Satchell.

Here at the Otsego Conservation District are privileged to be working with such a dedicated, professional as Chris Anderson. We extend a congratulatory acknowledgement that all his hard work has been recognized.



Chris receiving his award at the 2023 convention

Source: The Charlevoix Conservation District Quarterly Winter 2023 Report

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Otsego Conservation District Welcomes Kelly Draeger



Otsego Conservation District would like to introduce our new Environmental Education Specialist, Kelly Draeger. The district has had the pleasure of working with Kelly before and is very excited to have her back on our team. Kelly is looking forward to expanding the Conservation District's preexisting programs, and introducing new ones to serve the citizens of Otsego County.

As a life long resident of Northern Michigan Kelly developed a love for the Michigan wilderness at a young age. She enjoys spending her days

hiking, kayaking, gardening, and whatever else gets her outside. When not exploring the great outdoors she occupies her time baking, crocheting, or reading a good book with her black lab, Remington. In 2019 she graduated from Northwestern Michigan college in Traverse City where she then participated in an internship with the Great Lakes Fishery Commission before moving back North with her husband.

"I am thrilled to be back at the Conservation District where I can share my passion for conservation, and help teach others about the amazing state we live in." Kelly Draeger.

I Recycled, Now What?: Where Otsego County Recycling Ends Up

You've collected paper and plastics. You saved your glass bottles and piled up cardboard. You take it to the recycling site and add your material to the bins, but once you leave what actually happens to these materials?

This question has been an ever present inquiry when speaking with our local community recyclers. Many residents have asked if our recyclables are going to the landfills or showing up in the ocean, instead of being recycled. These are valid concerns for those hoping to make even a small difference in how our waste materials are handled.

Here in Otsego County recycled material is handled in a number of ways. Firstly, corrugated cardboard goes to Graphic Packaging International (Kalamazoo, MI), Packaging Corporation of America (PCA) (Manistee, MI), and USG Otsego Paper Inc. (Otsego, MI). Materials are used to make things such as folding takeout containers. Paper products are sent to White Pigeon Mills LLC (White Pigeon Township, MI) as well. This is just the beginning of the circular effect that Otsego County recyclables are a part of in Michigan.

You might ask what is meant by the term circular effect. It means that products are consumed, recycled, and consumed again, then recycled again and it keeps circling within the same area. The

circular effect for GFL Environmental when it comes to Otsego County recyclables is around 99.99%, meaning almost all of recycled goods stay within Michigan to be recycled or repurposed.

Another example would be recycled metals such as steel, tin and aluminum. When metal is recycled it is purchased by companies like A&L (Gaylord, MI), PADNOS (Traverse City, MI) and Fair

Salvage Company (Clare, MI) where the metal is then sold to a refining company to be melted down. Once melted down a number of different companies can repurpose the material.

Plastics get recycled and repurposed by number. Plastic #1 PET, and #2 HDPE go to a company called Clean Tech, in Dundee to get recycled into containers such as milk and water jugs or soap and laundry soap containers. Other plastics like #4 LDPE, #5 PP, #6 PS, and #7 get processed and refined to build different types of pre-engineered fuel or blended fuel. This happens at GFL Environmental facility where they blend the plastics in the desired formula for the consumer. Pre-engineered fuels or blended fuels are growing in popularity and are helping to reduce plastics in landfills.

Styrofoam or Polystyrene is a type of plastic. It also is repurposed as a blended pre-engineered fuel. And of course there is glass. The best way GFL Environmental has found for repurposing the glass that Otsego County recycles is to break it down for use in their aggregated landfill roads. This repurposing adds function and cost effectiveness. Once the glass is broken down and refined it becomes the final layer of the base course of their roads. Many base courses use a combination of dried aggregates such as gravel, glass, and silica sand. The road surface chosen is then laid on top of this. Recycled/repurposed glass has been used in highway construction as an aggregate substitute in asphalt paving. Throughout the US, communities have incorporated glass into their roadway specifications, which could help to encourage greater repurposing of the material.

When it comes to recycling every little piece counts. Whether you're a hard core material sorter, or you simply do what you can from home, every effort towards environmentally friendly practices is important. Otsego County's recycling program helps provide an accessible option for residents to dispose of recyclables and rest assured they are being used in a conscientious way.

If you have questions regarding the recycling program please contact the Otsego Conservation District and would be happy to address them.

Please contact Tara at (989)732-4021 or tjans@otsegocountymi.gov

Information sourced directly from GFL Environmental.



Ronald C. Brand, P.S.
ronbrand@brandlandsurveying.com
989-732-8077 office



**Shawn E. Huston
& Wendy L. Huston**

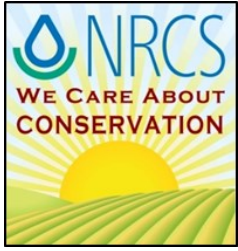
Shawn Cell: 989-390-6213
Wendy Cell: 989-390-2101

Shawn@HustonRealEstate.com
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Office: 989-786-2240



Natural Resources Conservation Service



Free technical and financial assistance is available through the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service for landowners wishing to implement conservation practices on their land. Over the past year since I've come on board as the District Conservationist at the NRCS Gaylord Service Center covering Otsego, Crawford, and Roscommon counties.

Here's a few Gaylord Field Office numbers for 2023:
Total contract dollars obligated in 2023: \$289,608.82
Total contract dollars paid for 2023: \$319,842.78
Total acres currently enrolled in NRCS programs: 4,078.1 ac

Here's some examples of common practices we can assist landowners with:

- Forest Stand Improvement practices
- Tree Plantings for Reforestation & Wildlife Habitat
- Wildflower Seedlings for Pollinator Habitat
- Cover Crops on Cropland for Soil Health
- Hoops Houses for Crop Season Extension
- Forest Management Plans
- On-Farm Energy Audits
- Fencing & Watering Systems for Prescribed Grazing
- Pasture Seedings
- Invasive Species Removal

If you are interested in any of the above practices, please call my office at (989) 732-6526 x111 and schedule a free site visit. Technical assistance is available to all private landowners, however, to be eligible for financial assistance programs you must meet certain eligibility requirements. More detail on our USDA eligibility can be found at <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/conservation-basics/conservation-by-state/michigan#assistance>.

Ryan Wysocki, District Conservationist
Gaylord Field Office-- Otsego, Crawford, and Roscommon Counties
Email: Ryan.Wysocki@usda.gov Office Phone: (989)-732-6526 ext. 111
Work Cell Phone: (989) 318-4020
FAX: 855-701-4367
USDA- Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
810 S. Otsego Road, Suite 121, Gaylord, MI 49735

The USDA is an equal opportunity employer, provider, and lender.



*Planning today...
for a better tomorrow.*

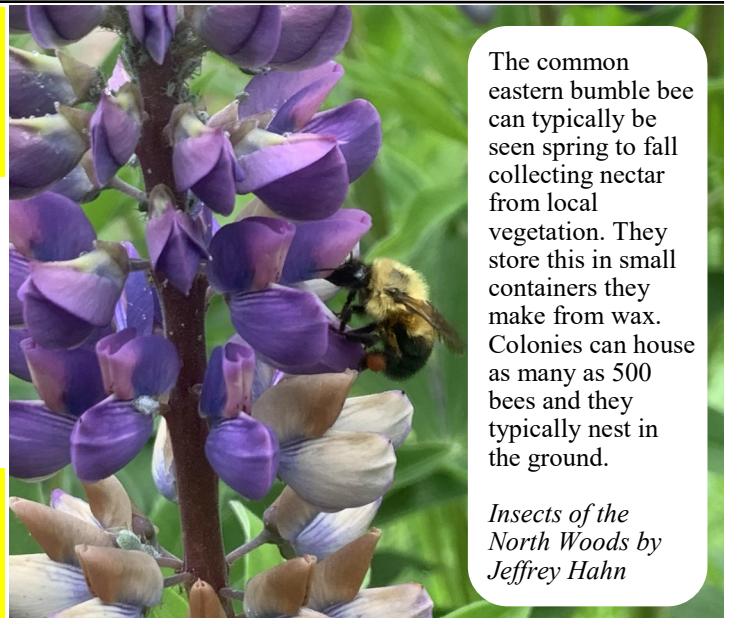
OTSEGO COUNTY HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE DISPOSAL DAY

**Saturday, July 13, 2024
9AM-2PM**

**Otsego County
Road Commission
669 W. McCoy Rd.
Gaylord, Michigan**



*For information:
Otsego Conservation District
(989) 732-4021 or otsegoacd.org*



The common eastern bumble bee can typically be seen spring to fall collecting nectar from local vegetation. They store this in small containers they make from wax. Colonies can house as many as 500 bees and they typically nest in the ground.

*Insects of the
North Woods by
Jeffrey Hahn*



**OTSEGO COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION**

Give a gift that keeps giving.

The Otsego Conservation District has an endowment fund through the Otsego County Community Foundation so we may continue to offer educational opportunities to our residents for years to come. If you would like to give a gift that keeps on giving please call the Community Foundation at 989-731-0597 for details.



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tjans@otsegocountymi.gov



2024 CALENDAR OF EVENTS & VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Office Hours: Mon - Fri 8am - 4:30pm **Phone:** (989)732-4021 **Website:** www.otsegocd.org

We're always adding to our calendar; visit our website or 'Like' our Facebook page for updates throughout the year

February

27th-28th 9AM-4PM Greenhouse Planting - Nursery*

May

1st-2nd 9AM-4PM Tree Packing - Nature Center*
3rd-4th 8:30AM-5PM **Spring Tree Sale - Nature Center***
21st-23rd 9AM-4PM Spring Clean-up - Garden*

March

22nd **Tree Sale Order Deadline**

June

April
9th-11th 9AM-4PM Greenhouse Transplanting - Nursery*
23rd-25th 9AM-4PM Tree Packing - Nature Center*
29th-30th 9AM-4PM Tree Packing - Nature Center*

1st 9AM-3PM Native Plant Nursery Opening
18th, 20th 9AM-4PM Work Bee - Garden*
25th, 28th 9AM-4PM Work Bee - Garden*
29th 10AM-5PM Art in the Garden Festival*

**indicates volunteer opportunity*

Visit www.otsegocd.org for updates

July

13th 9AM-2PM Household Hazardous Waste Day*

**OCD board meetings are open to the public and held on the second Thursday of the month at 9AM
in the Multi-Purpose Room, Alpine Center, 800 Livingston Blvd., Gaylord, MI 49735**

*All programs and services of the Conservation District and NRCS prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color,
national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital or familial status.*



12th Annual Art in the Garden Festival

Saturday, June 29, 2024

Live Music • Art Displays • Local Eats
Outdoor Workshops • Silent Auction • Art Fair

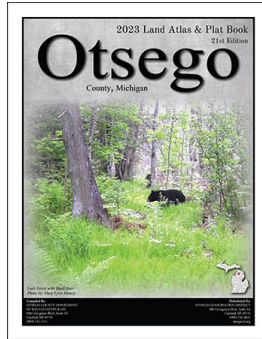
If you are a artist and would like to participate by selling and/or displaying you work give us a call.

For information or to register as an art vendor, contact Tara Jans at the Otsego Conservation District at 989-732-4021 ext. 2 or tjans@otsegoctymmi.gov

2023 Plat Book

The 2023 Otsego County Plat Book is available for \$30 or \$38.28 shipped (tax included) at the Otsego Conservation District.

Plat books may also be purchased at Gaylord Chamber of Commerce.



Green Valley Kennels



Greenvalliekennels.net

Elaine Green

Emgjoburg@gmail.com

6709 M-32E, Johannesburg, MI. 49751

Owner

(989) 732-3465



NuEnergy Operating, Inc.

Oil and Gas Exploration and Production

JEFFREY A. SMETZER

President

P.O. Box 1122

Gaylord, MI 49734-1122

jsmetzer@nuenergyop.com

989 -731-0590

989-732-5239 fax

989-370-9903 cell

Garden Bed Rentals!

\$25 per bed

Join the family garden program and grow some flowers, veggies, or fruit. Beds are located in the Demonstration Gardens at 459 Livingston Blvd and are accessible throughout the year.

Call 989-732-4021 to rent



Checkout our Recycling Locations

Five drop-off sites located throughout the county are open 24/7 for everyone's convenience:

- 931 S. Otsego Avenue, Gaylord, near Jay's Sporting Goods
- 71 Hayes Tower Road, Gaylord, 550 feet south of M-32
- 621 Garfield Street, Vanderbilt near H&H Tube
- 247 Old State Road across from the Otsego Lake Cemetery, near Waters
- 2932 Rock Road, Johannesburg at the Transfer Station

There is information at each site on what can be recycled and how to use the bins. Recycling guides are also available at each site just look for green kiosk.

Otsego Conservation District Gift Certificates available for Native Plants!

Plugs \$3.00 each Quarts \$5.00 each
36 Plugs (mixed species) - \$85.00
or 16 Quarts (mixed species) - \$75.00
Full Tray (5 or more trays of one species per tray) - \$65.00

For additional details & to order,
call 989-732-4021 or check out
www.otsegocd.org/our-native-plant-catalog

