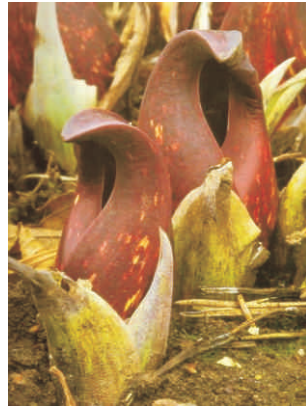


LOOKING FORWARD TO SPRING

There are few times other than spring that we have the great desire to get outside and enjoy the weather. The snow has melted and we are starting to see the first signs of life re-appear! Over the next several months, many of our native wild flowers will be showing themselves. Many of these beautiful plants and their flowers are only visible for a short time in the spring. As the trees leaf out, many become dormant and are not seen for the rest of the year.

The next couple of months will be a great time to get out to one of our many parks and reserves to take some time to see some of these native beauties! Some great places to see them include [Bruckner Nature Center](#) outside of Troy, [Cox Arboretum and the other Five Rivers MetroParks](#) facilities and many of the other state parks in our great state of Ohio.

Some interesting natives to look for include Skunk Cabbage (Pictured Above), a very early spring native that will be found blooming now, many times still with snow surrounding the strange looking (and foul smelling) flowers.



Later in the spring, plan to look for one of the 40 native orchids that grow here in Ohio. These are generally found in a bit more remote locations, but several can be found fairly close. The more showy of the group include the Cypripediums or commonly know as the pink and yellow

lady slippers. One interesting aspect of these plants is that they require a very specialized fungus in the soil to survive. If these plants are dug up and attempted to be planted in your own yard, they will likely not survive. Several organizations are producing them in order to provide plants that will more likely survive in a landscape environment. These exotic flowers are always a show stopper.

Other more common Spring wild flowers include May Apple, Jack in the Pulpit and Trillium.

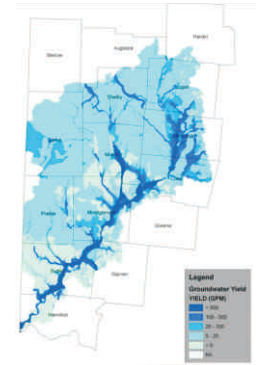


TOMORROW'S SOLUTIONS TODAY.

GOING GREEN IN OUR HOMES AND BUSINESSES

As many of us are trying to weather the downturn in the economy, we look for ways to save money. We are also constantly being bombarded with messages of going green and protecting the environment. Our question is- Why not do both??

One easy way to accomplish this is to install a rain barrel at our home or office. This simple, and in most cases inexpensive, device can save money while protecting the natural environment. According to the [Miami Conservancy District](#), here in the Miami Valley of Southwestern Ohio, we are blessed with the Buried Valley Aquifer which has a storage capacity of 1.5 trillion gallons of fresh water that supplies about 1.6 million people. This natural resource is critical to the survival and economic well being of this part of the country.



When we allow the rainwater that hits our roofs and enter into a storm drain without giving the water an opportunity to infiltrate back into the ground, we ultimately risk damaging the buried aquifer. Not collecting this storm water also puts heavier loads on our municipal storm systems which require constant maintenance and improvements, which ultimately costs us all more in taxes.

Rain Barrels can be simply installed by disconnecting an existing down spout and directing the water into a water storage tank that allows for the water to be used later for watering or washing our cars. This allows the water to ultimately come in contact with the ground providing the opportunity to infiltrate back into the ground and recharging the buried aquifer. This also holds storm water and decreases the peak demands on our public storm systems. Rain Barrels can take many forms, are readily available from local garden center and on line. Those that are handy can also build their own from tight containers. Five Rivers MetroParks offer a step by step set of directions to build you own rain barrel at:

http://www.metroparks.org/GetGreen/documents/Rain_Barrel_How_To.pdf

Simply, this is using an old technology of cisterns in a new way to helps save water and protects the environment!

