



River Raisin

WATERSHED COUNCIL

Partner · Protect · Preserve

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MISSION

To inspire behaviors that promote stewardship, improve water quality, and encourage public participation to protect, preserve, and enhance the River Raisin Watershed



Gleditsia triacanthos L. (Honey Locust) by Ivy McClelland

One of the native hardwood species in the southernmost part of Michigan is the *Gleditsia triacanthos* L., more commonly known as the honey locust (The Morton Arboretum, 2024). In its original and less common form, this tree can easily be recognized by the 2-3" thorns that cover its trunk and branches; however, there is a cultivated variety (*Gleditsia triacanthos* f. *inermis*) that is thornless and more frequently planted. Alternatively, honey locust trees can be identified by their 4-8" compound leaves that contain leaflets roughly 1" in length and their large dark purplish-brown seed pods that can be up to 18" long (Missouri Botanical Garden, 2022).

Through years of research, we have collected an abundance of information about the reproduction, growth, range, and climatic preferences of the world's trees. Russell Burns and Barbara Honkala (1990) published a book compiling this type of information on many of the trees found in North America, including the honey locust. Under natural conditions, most of the

successfully germinated honey locust seeds are partially digested by birds and mammals. This event helps break down the impermeable coat that surrounds the seeds and allows

for the seedlings to sprout. After reaching maturity, at about ten years of age, honey locusts begin bearing seeds and the cycle of reproduction recommences.

For honey locusts, their native range covers the East-Central part of the United States reaching as far north as Iowa and parts of Michigan (Russell & Honkala, 1990). Consequently, this hardwood has a decent tolerance to low temperatures, though, it thrives better in the warmer southern areas such as Texas and Louisiana. Furthermore, honey locust trees are typically found in areas where the parent material of the soil primarily consists of limestone and the topsoil contains low percentages of gravel and clay. They also require consistent moisture and sunlight access to grow sufficiently. Nevertheless, this tree species has been found to be unusually sturdy, able to tolerate acidic, alkaline, saline, and drought conditions. For this reason, it is often planted within shelter-belts and windbreaks for erosion control.

Presently, the biggest threats to the honey locust population are insects. Many of these insects feed on or damage the leaves of the tree, and

(continued on the next page)

**RRWC seeks
volunteers
and members
to achieve our
mission!**

Please contact us to find out how you can help with or participate in the various activities outlined in these pages.

Our success in improving water quality in the River Raisin Watershed depends on you!

Contact us by phone:
(517) 662-8755

Contact us by email:
admin@riverraisin.org

Gleditsia triacanthos L. (Honey Locust) by Ivy McClelland (cont.)

although they rarely inflict fatal damage, they largely impact the plants' growth. W.S. Cranshaw (n.d.), in collaboration with the Colorado State University Extension and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, gives some suggestions on how to manage these bugs. They advise that insecticides and miticides, which are full of chemicals that could potentially harm the tree worse than the pests themselves, be administered only as necessary. Rather, water sprays or spray oils can be an effective alternative. Overall, it is important to take both the climatic requirements and the potential pest risks into consideration when caring for honey locust trees of all varieties. Providing these needs are accounted for and managed, a honey locust tree should survive, thrive, and contribute to the environment for 125-150 years.



References

- Burns, R.M., & Honkala, B.H. (1990). *Silvics of North America: Volume 2, hardwoods*. Forest Service, Agriculture Handbook 654.
- Cranshaw, W.S. (n.d.). *Insect and mite pests of honeylocust* – 5.571. Colorado State University Extension. <https://extension.colostate.edu/docs/pubs/insect/05571.pdf>
- Missouri Botanical Garden. (2022). *Plant finder: Gleditsia triacanthos*. <https://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/PlantFinder/PlantFinderDetails.aspx?taxonid=280280&isprofile=1&basic=honey%20locust>



From the Executive Director's Desk with Stephen May



RRWC celebrates another great year in 2024. We celebrated fifty years as a non-profit organization with many changes and challenges, staff changes and new partners.

What a privilege to be part of a legacy that has grown from its humble beginnings in 1974 to a thriving and engaging organization that has brought awareness of our watershed and the responsibility we all have to partner, protect and preserve. We will leave our fingerprints on our watershed that will be passed to future generations with determination and dedication. We should all be proud of our staff that gives so much and at times sacrifices many hours for our outreach efforts, engagement and

educations of our future water quality stewards. RRWC staff estimated that over a thousand face-to-face contacts were made with events and workshops throughout the watershed – Great work staff!

RRWC would like to recognize the funding and program support from our local municipalities, donors, volunteers and the additional financial support from the Erb Family Foundation, EGLE, MDNR, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the other partners that help fund our organization.

RRWC is looking forward to 2025 – it will certainly be a new chapter in our history – on to the next fifty years of water stewardship and conservation!

Become a Master Rain Gardener! – Winter & Spring 2025 Classes



MASTER RAIN GARDENER

The Master Rain Gardener Program empowers individuals to create and maintain rain gardens, natural depressions that filter storm-water runoff. Through this comprehensive training, participants gain the knowledge and skills to design, install, and care for these vital landscape features.

As certified Master Rain Gardeners, participants contribute to the protection of local waterways by sharing their expertise and implementing rain gardens in their communities. These gardens not only improve water quality but also enhance the beauty and sustainability of our landscapes.

The River Raisin Watershed Council is excited to announce the expansion of this program, thanks to a grant from EGLE. We'll be offering five training courses, including virtual workshops and in-person sessions with students from the Lenawee Intermediate School District's Natural Resources program.

To make our program even more inclusive, we're updating our resources to incorporate environmental justice principles, offer guidance for renters and community gardeners, and provide cost-saving tips.



Are you ready to become a Master Rain Gardener? Join us for one of our upcoming training opportunities!

Become a Master Rain Gardener – In-Person!

Location: Manchester District Library

912 City Rd, Manchester, MI 48158

Dates: On Fridays, starting April 4 to May 2

Time: 1:00 pm - 3:30 pm

Cost: \$89

Become a Master Rain Gardener – Live Online!

(Live Virtual Classroom with In-Person Tours)

Dates: On Thursdays, starting Jan 30 to Feb 27

Time: 10 am - 12 pm

Cost: \$89 early bird rate (\$150 after Jan. 15)



To stay up to date with this program, follow our social media or visit www.riverraisin.org/upcoming-events. Lydia Lopez is the program coordinator for these classes. Contact her at: waterstewardship@riverraisin.org.

Leaf It Alone: 10 Ways to Leave Leaves for the Earth



As autumn paints the landscape in vibrant hues, many of us feel the urge to clean up our yards and rake away fallen leaves. While a tidy lawn may be aesthetically pleasing, leaving those leaves where they fall can actually be beneficial for the environment.



Here are 10 ways you can help out:

- 1 Embrace the Natural Mulch:** Let fallen leaves decompose on your lawn, providing a protective layer for the soil and releasing essential nutrients.
- 2 Support Wildlife:** Leaves create habitats for beneficial insects and small creatures, contributing to a healthy ecosystem.
- 3 Reduce Waste:** Composting leaves on-site helps to minimize organic waste in landfills.
- 4 Improve Water Quality:** Leaves can help to reduce storm water runoff and improve water quality.
- 5 Save Time & Effort:** By leaving leaves where they are, you can avoid the time-consuming task of raking and disposing of them.
- 6 Enhance Soil Fertility:** As leaves decompose, they release nutrients that nourish plants and improve soil fertility.
- 7 Reduce the Need for Artificial Fertilizers:** Leaving leaves can help to reduce your reliance on artificial fertilizers, promoting a more sustainable gardening practice.
- 8 Promote Biodiversity:** By leaving leaves where they are, you can help to create a more diverse and resilient ecosystem in your yard.
- 9 Regulate Soil Temperature:** A layer of leaves can help to insulate the soil, protecting plant roots from extreme temperatures.
- 10 Conserve Moisture:** Fallen leaves can help to retain moisture in the soil, reducing the need for frequent watering.

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