

FRIENDS OF THE WOODS



September 16, 2021 edition



Multiflora Rose , a common Invasive Plant

Invasive Species

The purpose of this newsletter is to raise awareness of invasive species and the harm they can do to an environment, including making it very difficult for native plants to flourish. The “Friends of the Woods” volunteer group has been removing invasive plant species such as garlic mustard, multiflora rose, poison hemlock and barberry throughout the Knox County Parks. They also have begun to make improvements to the Honey Run Waterfall area by implementing a restoration area within the park, and hope to inaugurate similar projects in other parks.

Native Plants Emerge in Honey Run Waterfall Restoration Area

By: Sue Hagan

Plants, like living creatures everywhere, do what they can to live, propagate and ensure the survival of their species. This becomes abundantly clear when new spaces open up and plants jockey for position on the bare soil.

At Honey Run Waterfall, the volunteer Friends of the Woods group is in the early stages of an experiment to see what happens when a large invasive species specimen is removed leaving soil ripe for repopulation. Last year, the group removed a large multiflora rose plant, cordoned off the area, and waited to see what would happen. The hope was that native plants would reassert themselves now that this large invader was gone. So what happened? As expected, small sprouts from the multiflora rose started popping up at the site this spring, along with other invasive plants, including muscadine (a type of grapevine), garlic mustard and bindweed. All of these plants are opportunistic, and make themselves at home in disturbed soil.

But — and here is the good news — we also saw that native plants were emerging as well, so we pulled the invaders to give the natives some space. As the seasons progressed, these native plants popped up in the restoration area: Squirrel corn, Dutchman’s breeches, Clayton’s bedstraw, anise root, jewelweed, Canada violet, mayapple, wing stem, wood nettle, broadleaf enchanted nightshade, and white snakeroot. We



Jewelweed is a native plant to Ohio

also have noticed a false Solomon’s seal just outside the perimeter. Allowing the native plants to rule will take some work. We’ll need to cut back the multiflora rose again; it clearly wants to stay in this space! And other invasives will reemerge, underlining this fundamental truth in the effort to remove them: *They want to be here, they have found a niche and they are hard to get rid of.*

And that truth goes back to the “Why” behind this restoration project. The bigger picture is that invasive plants are everywhere in Knox County, and are encroaching deeper and deeper into the Knox County Park District. These plants tend to grow quickly, out competing native vegetation for nutrients, while wildlife lose habitat. The roots from invasive plants also disrupt soil stability and damage the systems that ensure water and essential nutrients are maintained in the forest.

Incidentally, multiflora rose was introduced from Japan, Korea and eastern China in 1866 as a rootstock for ornamental roses. In the 1930s, it was widely promoted as a “living fence” to confine livestock and was planted for soil conservation and wildlife programs. The soil organizations during that time period actually thought they were being environmentally responsible by pushing this non-native, invasive plant species. Those soil scientists would surely be amazed at the spread of multiflora rose and the millions of dollars spent to control it today.

The Friends of the Woods, by removing invasive plants, have made a dent and opened up the best habitat in the parks — especially in the woodland areas. But the work is never ending. It’s hard to get rid of multiflora rose completely, for example. Large plants are cut, and we can work to dig up the remaining roots, but it doesn’t take much for a remnant to send up shoots the following year.

The same goes for other invasive plants the volunteers have been removing, including garlic mustard, barberry and others. Seeds can stay viable for years, and again, shoots will rise up from plants that are not completely removed.

But it’s all worth it if, ultimately, native plants dominate in areas where they were losing ground.

We continue to imagine woodlands where the lovely spring wildflowers blanket a healthy forest floor and a walk through the woods doesn’t include wading through the chest-high foliage and briars of invasive plants.

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Removing Invasive Teasel Adds to Health of the Park District Prairies

By: Sue Hagan

Teasel is one of those plants with which we have a love/hate relationship. On the one hand, this tall plant can be quite majestic. Rising above prairie plants, it casts long shadows from the rising or setting sun, and its magnificent seed head has been the subject of more than one dramatic nature photo.

On the other hand, it rapidly crowds out the prairie plants that should be the true objects of our love: big bluestem grasses, coneflowers, false sunflower, partridge pea and so many others.

Common teasel was introduced to the United States in the 1700s. Like its close relative, cutleaf teasel, it was used in the textile industry to raise the nap on woolen cloth and as an ornamental in gardens and floral arrangements. It escaped cultivation and has since spread throughout the United States.

Like other invasive plants, teasel does not contribute positively to Ohio's natural environment. It steals nutrients and space from the plants that are necessary to the survival of Ohio wildlife, and creates thick stands of spiky-topped plants that wildlife will not eat.



Volunteer, Marcia Crim pulls Teasel from Marshall Meadows.

It's true that bees are attracted to the flowers and that birds like the seeds (there's that love/hate thing again), but plenty of other, more beneficial, prairie plants fill those needs.

The Friends of the Woods volunteer group, working within the Knox County Park District, added teasel to the list of invasive plants to tackle this year. Teasel is present in several of the county parks; at Wolf Run Regional Park — where the volunteers concentrated their efforts — it had begun to spread along the edges of the Marshall Meadow prairie and in the prairies near the park's eastern boundary.

The tactic was to dig as many plants as possible early in the season, and then to clip seed head off before the seeds could drop. Each teasel plant can produce about 3,000 seeds, which can remain viable in the soil for three to five years.

The volunteers will monitor the prairie areas again next year, removing younger teasel plants that escaped notice and new ones just creating a toehold.

This time of year, the prairies are true jewels in the Park District, treating us to flowers resplendent in purple, yellow and white. Removing teasel now, before it spreads further, will ensure that those flowers will delight us for many years to come.