

FRIENDS OF THE WOODS

April 10, 2023 edition



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, 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

Garlic Mustard

By Sue Hagan

It's time for spring woodland wildflowers, and their habitat has been greatly improved over the past several years because invasive plants — that had been crowding them out — have been removed.

And the Friends of the Woods volunteer group is starting up that effort for a fourth season.

We began our work on a chilly late March day, taking to the trailside slopes at Wolf Run Regional Park to remove garlic mustard. Returning this week, we saw that native plants are starting to make their appearance, finding places come up between the thousands of young garlic mustard plants.

We spotted false mermaid, scarlet elf cup mushrooms, and ferns just starting to unfurl, and we know that many more native species are waiting to join them, if only there is space

Photo by Janet Chandler



Early spring is the perfect time to remove the pervasively invasive garlic mustard. Young plants are small this time of year, and easily uprooted from the moist soil. And getting a head start before they flower and go to seed is key to keeping them from coming back.

Garlic mustard is a biennial, showing itself as a small rosette close to the ground the first year. In year two, the plants shoot upward, producing white flowers with thousands of seeds. When the seeds drop to the ground, the cycle begins again with another generation of plants.

What's more, research has shown that garlic mustard changes the chemical nature of the soil, discouraging other plants from growing there.



Photo by Janet Chandler

Over the years, garlic mustard has spread rapidly in the Knox County Park District, taking over native plants. But, by pulling thousands and thousands of first- and second-year plants, volunteers have opened up acres of habitat in Wolf Run (especially in the Knox Woods State Nature Preserve), at Honey Run Waterfall, Honey Run Highlands, and Zuck Riparian Preserve.

Visitors have noticed and commented on how much more open the trails are, and woodland wildflowers, ferns, and other native plants have made a comeback! That's what it's all about, after all — to return our beautiful parks to the native state they enjoyed before opportunist invasive plants moved in.

The Friends of the Woods will tackle garlic mustard in various parks, in the few months before it goes to seed. Other plants we could go after this year are multiflora rose, barberry, teasel and Japanese knotweed.

The work is non-ending: there are many areas of the parks that have not yet been touched. More volunteers are needed and may contact the Park District at 740-392-7275 to be put in touch with a volunteer who coordinates the program. We meet Monday mornings, 9 a.m. (although the time can vary). Please consider joining us: our lovely native plants will thank you for it!