



FOCUS ON:

Management of Invasive & Noxious Plants

April 1, 2015

Invasive plant species pose a significant challenge to Ohio's natural environments. Characteristics of invasive plants enable them to reproduce rapidly, outcompete native vegetation for resources, and thrive in almost any condition. Successful control of invasive plants requires not only effort to remove existing plants, but measures to prevent regrowth and establishment of new populations.

Why are invasive plants a problem?

Invasive species threaten the survival of native plants and greatly diminish the quality of Ohio's natural areas. When invasives "take over" they become a monoculture, taking resources like sunlight and water away from native plants. As the vegetative habitat changes and the diversity of native and natural plants is reduced, the habitat becomes less supportive of beneficial insects and wildlife.

Where did invasive plants come from?

Many invasives like bush honeysuckle, were once sold in garden centers and planted throughout Ohio. Wind and wildlife spread seeds from neighboring infested areas. Once an invasive plant takes root, its aggressive growth can quickly make it the dominant species.



Tree-of-heaven, one of Ohio's top 10 invasive plant species, can grow up to 80 feet tall. Photo credit: USDA/NRCS

How is the city addressing invasive plants?

For many years the city has been targeting efforts to remove bush honeysuckle, one of the most common invasives to affect city parkland. Successful control of invasive plants requires a multi-level effort aimed at removal and prevention. As long as a seed source exists, so will the potential for regrowth.

In the summer of 2014, the city initiated a pilot project to remove large areas of invasive plants along sections of reservoir shorelines. This pilot project will serve to study the effectiveness and logistics of removing honeysuckle and other problematic invasive plants.

What can be done to limit the spread?

Invasive plants will continue to thrive and spread unless significant efforts are made to prevent new growth and remove existing populations. Landowners should pay attention to plants taking root, seek to improve their knowledge of plant identification and minimize disturbances to native habitats. Invasives and weeds are often the first to sprout in disturbed soil, especially if seed sources are present nearby.

For landowners living adjacent to Hoover, Griggs, and O'Shaughnessy Reservoirs, opportunities exist to target invasives threatening these riparian areas. (over)

Options For Removing Invasive Plants Along City Reservoirs

Residents living around the city's reservoirs have expressed interest in removing invasive plants from city-owned land. To address this request, the city has established an option under the existing land stewardship program. The following guidelines describe the program details. For more information or to sign up, please contact the Columbus Watershed Management office at (614) 645-1721.

Step One - Assess the Landscape

Understanding the nature and scale of an invasive plant removal project begins with an assessment of the affected property. Landowners can contact the Watershed Management office for assistance in identifying invasive plants. Pictures can help identify which species are present, and a site visit to the property can provide perspective to the recommended project approach.

Step Two - Develop a Stewardship Plan

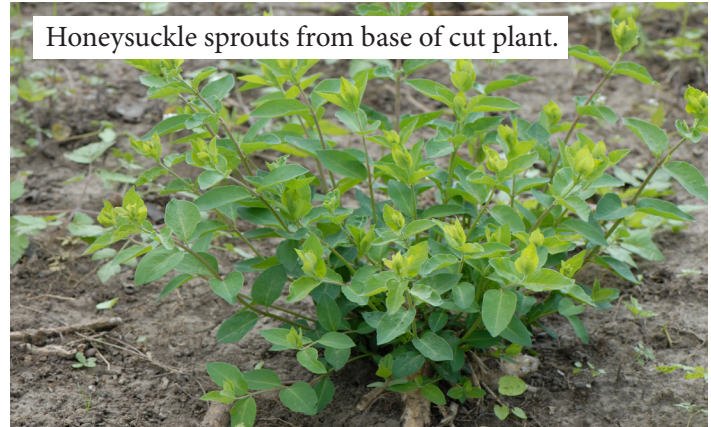
Watershed Management staff will help a contiguous landowner to develop a new or amended land stewardship plan detailing the planned landscape modification. Land stewardship plans are property-specific and may also include elements such as an access path to the water or a view corridor. Once a plan is approved, the landowner will sign a land stewardship agreement (LSA). Work may begin as soon as the LSA is submitted and approved.

Which plants are eligible for removal?

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources maintains a list of approximately 60 invasive plant species which are prevalent and problematic in Ohio. This list, entitled "Invasive Plants in Ohio," can be found at <http://ohiodnr.gov/invasiveplants/publications>

All plant species listed in the publication cited above are eligible for removal. Limited removal of noxious plants such as poison ivy may be authorized in order to reduce exposure along a permitted access path.

Landowners can be selective in choosing to target particular invasive species in order to achieve the desired outcome. ODNR, OSU Extension and local soil and water conservation offices offer many resources to help identify and learn about native and invasive plants.



Honeysuckle sprouts from base of cut plant.

Photo credit: Kathy Smith, OSU Extension

Requirements For Those Performing Invasive Removal:

Tree trimming and other vegetation removal must be conducted by qualified landscape professionals who will perform the work at the contiguous landowner's expense. No plant removal, trimming or other modification of city-owned property may occur unless specified by an approved land stewardship agreement.

Those performing the work must have specific and valid qualifications and experience according to the type of work planned. A commercial pesticide applicator's license, certified arborist designation, and demonstrated knowledge of plant identification are among the qualifications which may be required.

As pesticide use can be deemed a critical means to prevent plant regrowth, a list of pesticides approved for use near water will be provided to the selected contractor and only pesticides on that list may be used.

Limitations and restrictions on vegetation removal are designed to protect the quality of the water supply reservoirs and encourage a healthy riparian buffer. Prospective contractors and contiguous landowners may contact the Watershed Management office in advance of any work plan for more detail.