

## Do Not Disturb or Remove Plants Within Fairfax Parks!

By MaryAnne Boyer

It is against park rules and laws to disturb or remove plants unless authorized to do so by the park management.

As a volunteer Fairfax County Invasive Management (IMA) site leader, I am gratified to clear invasive plants from Royal Lake Park. When these invasive weeds are removed, we can replant with native species. IMA, which has a very limited budget, buys plants in spring and fall from Earth Sangha, a nonprofit. Earth Sangha grows regional plants from seed and sells them to the public. Sometimes, I buy the plants from them myself—a good way to donate to the park, and Earth Sangha also donates additional plants. This work has many benefits, including providing resources for wildlife, improving water quality, and stemming erosion.

IMA volunteers spend hours clearing invasive plants including forbs, vines, shrubs and trees. Only then can we reforest with native plants. We have to keep new plants watered during the summer using buckets from the lake. After all this hard work, we are happy to see a crop of beautiful native plants that hikers and others who pass by can enjoy. We were devastated recently to see that a cardinal flower (pictured here) that we cared for and that others



photographed was dug up and stolen. Equally saddening is when neighbors, who knew the property lines and were aware of the habitat restoration that involved an Eagle Scout project, deliberately encroached this spring and summer and repeatedly mowed over the new plantings.

Recently, I found someone in the park cutting Christmas fern fronds for her church altar. Ferns and other plants should not be cut or taken from the park. Plants are there for everyone, including the wildlife, to enjoy. Please help us keep the parks beautiful. Thank you!

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