

## Invasive Management Area (IMA) Update

By Greg Sykes ([greg@grsykes.com](mailto:greg@grsykes.com))

Applause to all of the volunteers who have helped remove [English ivy](#) from the IMA site at Royal Lake! So far this year, over 50 bags of ivy were removed and countless native trees were saved! The next public workday is on October 27, 2007, which corresponds to Fairfax County's VolunteerFest. During this session, we will begin planting species native to Fairfax County around the cleared perimeter and remove more ivy from the central patch. For these activities, healthy volunteers aged 15 years and over are welcomed to participate or children aged 11-14 years may come accompanied by a parent. For more information or if you would like to sign up for this work day, please send an e-mail to me at [greg@grsykes.com](mailto:greg@grsykes.com). Also, if you have a group of at least ten people who would like to work before October 27<sup>th</sup>, please let me know and we can arrange a special workday. IMA is a fully recognized county program and a fantastic way to earn hours for scouts, school requirements, etc.

Thank you to all who have responded to the "[Invasive Plant Removal Program](#)" article (August 2007) in the previous *Herald* edition! In addition to gaining more volunteers, people are motivated enough to rip out the English ivy, Japanese barberry, and other invasives from their yards! I've also fielded a few questions asking if other plants are OK which are not on the IMA list. The ten IMA target species detailed in <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/resources/ima/> were selected because they are both major weeds and easily controlled by volunteers. Other plants commonly sold and planted in our community that are on the woodlands' "invasive radar" include [Nandina \(heavenly bamboo\)](#), [Bradford pear](#), [Liriope](#), [Japanese Pachysandra](#), [periwinkle](#), [rose-of-Sharon](#), [privet](#), Norway maple, mimosa, [Japanese honeysuckle](#), and [Asian wisteria](#) species.

With Virginia's status as one of the most botanically diverse states in the country, who needs mundane invasives when so many fantastic natives are available? We have bluebells gracing streambeds, prickly pear cacti dotting sand dunes, cypresses emerging from swamps, *Trillium* sprouting on mountainsides, and perhaps you've noticed scarlet blossoms around Royal Lake this time of year from cardinal flowers. What to plant depends on the area and effect you wish to achieve. Most of the questions I get concern erosion control. My favorite soil retention plants are ferns, especially Christmas and ostrich ferns. Both are excellent low growers for shade or partially sunny slopes with moist soil. If you like Japanese *Pachysandra* but not its rampant growth, consider Allegheny spurge. Full sun dry patches are perfect for switch grass or wildflowers, such as butterfly weed, phlox, and asters. For sunny, waterlogged soil, try turtleheads or buttonbush. Great erosion controlling bushes include *Viburnum* sp., mountain laurel, blueberries, spicebush, and osier dogwoods. If you want a bush draping with ruby-red berries over the winter, winterberry will put *Nandina* to shame! Remember, female winterberries need a nearby male plant for pollination.

If you would like to see different planting ideas in action, visit Green Springs Garden on 4601 Green Spring Road in Alexandria. The free-admission demonstration gardens (under the Fairfax County Park Authority) will give you ideas on handling different planting scenarios including rock gardens, forests, food gardens, orchards, ponds, and formal settings. Best of all, park management is eradicating IMA target species from their grounds!

The following is a list of excellent books designed to promote environmentally friendly yards. I have shared these books with the IMA volunteers during the introductory talk. Join us for an IMA workday!

Audubon Society of Northern Virginia. 2005. *The Nature of Change—Preserving the Natural Heritage of a Dynamic Region: Audubon at Home in Northern Virginia*. National Audubon Society, Inc. pp.79.  
Boring, John Kadel et al. 1995. *A Nature Company Guide: Natural Gardening*. Time-Life Books pp. 288.  
Burrell, C. Colston. 2006. *Native Alternatives to Invasive Plants*. Brooklyn Botanic Garden, Inc. pp. 239.

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