

## VolunteerFest at Royal Lake

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

Reminder: on October 27, 2007, Fairfax County is celebrating VolunteerFest. One of the many volunteer projects offered during this event is native species planting and [English ivy](#) removal at Royal Lake. This workday falls under the VolunteerFest auspices, so the county will provide water, light refreshments, and T-shirts to mark the occasion. There are prizes to raffle—for winning eligibility, you need to be at the worksite for the full three hours. Canvas gloves are available for you to keep; you are welcomed to bring heavier gloves if you'd like. Healthy volunteers aged 15 years and older are welcomed; volunteers aged 11-14 must come with at least one parent.

With the added benefits, some of the rules are a little different from previous IMA (Invasive Management Area) sessions. Due to insurance reasons, all volunteers (including previous IMA veterans) must pre-register by going to [www.volunteerfairfax.org](http://www.volunteerfairfax.org). On the left side of this webpage, click on "VolunteerFest 2007." A big list of different activities for that day appears in alphabetical order. Scroll down to "Royal Lake" and sign up there. Also, all youths under 18 years must printout and complete the "Youth Volunteer Waiver" form. Be sure to register and, if applicable, complete the youth permission slip **before** coming to the worksite; we will get started quickly and need to minimize paperwork time. If you have any trouble with registration, contact Erin Caplin at [ECaplin@volunteerfest.org](mailto:ECaplin@volunteerfest.org) (phone: 703-246-3470) or me at [greg@grsykes.com](mailto:greg@grsykes.com).

Since daylight savings time now lasts into November, the work session will be pushed back by half an hour to 7:30a.m.-10:30a.m. It is rain or shine (canceled only by lightning). The workday will begin promptly at 7:30a.m. The raffle will be held at 10:30a.m. followed by a nature walk for anyone who is interested.

A team of Fairfax County biologists described the ivy removal work at the site as "awesome!" They figured that the area has a good seed base for groundcover and trees. They selected the following shrubs for our planting: *Vaccinium pallidum* (lowbush blueberry), *Vaccinium corymbosum* (highbush blueberry), *Viburnum dentatum* (arrowwood), and *Viburnum acerifolium* (mapleleaf viburnum). These bushes are already found at Royal Lake and are intended to bolster existing populations instead of planting a small, new native plant population that might struggle to become established. These are great choices, as they provide food for many different animals. The blueberries are wild versions of the cultivars we know from the grocery store and have fantastic scarlet autumn foliage. The mapleleaf superficially looks like a maple sapling, but at this time of year becomes loaded with black berries. Arrowwood got its name from its straight, lightweight branches, which were preferred by Native Americans to make arrow shafts.

These species make splendid additions to home gardens, too. Speaking of viburnums, another great native is *V. trilobum* (American woodland cranberry). This species has a few bright red berries in the winter. Before fresh vegetables became available year round, people made an herbal tea from the berries, which are high in vitamin C. *V. nudum* is another plant aflame with brilliant red fall foliage, with colors that last a month! Other fine viburnums include *V. prunifolium* (black haw), *V. lentago* (nannyberry), and *V. cassinoides* (withe-rod). Beware: viburnums are found globally and some have acquired the "invasive" label, including *V. dilatatum* (Linden), *V. setigerum* (tea viburnum), *V. sieboldii* (Siebold), and *V. opulus opulus* (European cranberry bush).

To learn more about native plants, get hands-on habit restoration experience, or have fun while helping your local environment, join us for VolunteerFest! See you at Royal Lake!

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