

IMA Expansion

By Greg Sykes (greg@grsykes.com)

Volunteers with Fairfax County's Invasive Management Area (IMA) program took advantage of the winter months to attack some of Royal Lake Park's evergreen invasives. At the principal worksite, we continued our systematic advance on the primary nemesis—[English ivy](#). A great aspect about pulling English ivy during winter is that the green leaves stand out against last autumn's leaf debris. This contrast enabled volunteers to pull small ivy pockets that were missed during previous workdays. These monitoring surveys are crucial to prevent the weeds from retaking the area. Being able to work outside on those beautifully mild winter afternoons added to the volunteers' reward!

The native plants' winter dormancy enabled volunteers to easily find a new site plagued with another invasive evergreen: [Japanese pachysandra](#)! Pachysandra is a problem because it spreads aggressively and forms dense mats which block growth of native plants. While this species is not an IMA top 10 target, it is a newly added species on all of the County's IMA permits. Furthermore, this plot fell within my permit's newly expanded jurisdiction! Since this patch was fairly small and easier to remove than English ivy, the IMA volunteers enthusiastically eradicate it in only two hours! This case exemplifies the key strategy to invasive species management: eliminate a small hindrance before it digs in and explodes into a full-fledged problem. I will periodically monitor this site for reemerging shoots, but it is now considered completed.

The species expansion also included [multiflora rose](#). The few and brave managed thorns and tears to eradicate a rose patch which covered light English ivy growth. Besides hitting the invasive rose, this wave opened up the spot so that near-future volunteers have easy access to the ecologically more damaging English ivy. Again, this patch of invasives is small, but we need to exterminate them before they get out of control. Furthermore, several small mimosas, a.k.a. silk trees, documented last year (prior to the permit expansion) were pulled this year.

Would you like to join the fun? Your next opportunity will be on April 12, 2008, from 7:00AM-11:00AM (rain or shine) as Royal Lake Park will participate in Fairfax County's "Remove an Invasive Plant Day!" This time we'll stamp out another newly added species to the list: [Amur honeysuckle](#). It will be an exciting day as we will implement a new pull-and-plant strategy; once the overly prolific invasive bushes are pulled, we will follow up by immediately planting native shrubs and groundcover. NOTE: new meeting location for this project is the park easement off of Gainsborough Drive, next to where Claridge Court terminates at Gainsborough. To celebrate this day, there will be a raffle; you will need to work the full four hours to enter. If you can make it, please RSVP at greg@grsykes.com. Be sure to wear long sleeves, sturdy boots, and good leather gloves. All tools and plants will be provided by FCPA; water is courtesy of KPW Civic Association. I look forward to hearing from you!

To learn more about Japanese pachysandra, mimosa, Amur honeysuckle, and other problematic plants, check out these sites:

www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/resources/invasives.pdf

www.na.fs.fed.us/fhp/invasive_plants/weeds/index.shtm

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