

IMA's First Year at Royal Lake Park

By Greg Sykes (greg@grsykes.com)

Faaaaan-tastic!!! That's the best word I can think to summarize the progress of the Invasive Management Area (IMA) program at Royal Lake Park! Hard to believe one year has already passed, especially when we look back at the volunteers' accomplishments:

- Cut [English ivy](#) windows into affected trees between the park entrance at Dundalk Street up to Royal Lake (KPW side of Shanes Creek)
- Controlled the perimeter of English ivy plots within the management zone, thereby preventing further spread
- Cleared out most of the English ivy groundcover from a large primary plot
- Completely eradicated two small plots of English ivy and one plot of [Pachysandra](#)
- Removed other invasive plant species, such as [Japanese barberry](#), [Japanese honeysuckle](#), [bush honeysuckle](#), mimosa, and [Japanese holly](#) to name a few, from various points along park entrances and trails
- Replanted cleared zones with native plants (representing 13 species)

...And that's just the physical work! Through the IMA program, our residents have learned about a previously unknown invasive plant problem and the impacts on native ecosystems. A great analogy is comparing invasive plants to using tobacco (ironically, an American species). Hundreds of years ago, American Indians introduced tobacco to the Europeans. Over time, romantic imagery—from colonial gentlemen puffing pipes to the cool tough guy in the smoky bar—graced tobacco usage. Only in later years did scientists link smoking to cancer and, today, the educated public knows all about those notorious health hazards.

Many invasive plants, such as English ivy, also have romantic imagery—of the ivy-covered manor, Old World charm and so forth. Now, we are learning how the creeping vines can damage the very masonry it is supposed to beautify, how English ivy's tumor-like growth kills valuable shade trees in the yard, and more relevant to IMA, how invasive plants are like a cancer spreading through the woodlands. Word is getting out about this invasive threat: throughout the county, nation, and world. People are learning to "quit" planting invasive plants and instead choosing well-behaved exotics or, better yet, native species. Upon acknowledging the threat, the "cures" may be administered: habitat restoration, banning future invasive plant sales, and proper yard debris disposal.

Within KPW, the IMA program has brought neighbors together. People are discussing the problem; others now actively promote the IMA concepts! Many residents have been inspired to eradicate some species from their yards and replace them with benevolent plants. As a site leader, I now have a network of people outside KPW who share invasive plant concerns and are learning how to best eradicate the pesky plants. Some have even asked for back issues of my 'Herald' articles. If you are new to the neighborhood, missed some articles, or would like to share them with others, please let me know. Thank you to everyone who has contributed in any way to invasive species removal and repairing the native ecosystem.

If you would like to join the IMA fun, our next big workday at Royal Lake Park on Monday, June 23, 2008, where we will be helped by a group of summer interns working with FCPA (sorry for the short notice, I got confirmation shortly after the last 'Herald' edition's deadline). Volunteers must be in good health and at least 11 years old. The workday will be from 7:30AM - 2:30PM with a 1 hour lunch break on your time. Water will be provided. It will be held rain or shine, but we have contingency plans for lightning or poor air quality. If you cannot work the full day, feel free to put in whatever time you can, just please be sure to RSVP for any time you can commit. If you are new to working at Royal Lake's IMA site, please be sure to arrive by 7:30AM for the introduction and training. For further details or RSVPs, please contact me at greg@grsykes.com. Please note that this Monday date is an exception; future workdays will revert back to Saturdays and typically last three hours (exact dates TBA).

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