

IMA's Progress

By Greg Sykes (greg@grsykes.com)

The Royal Lake Park Invasive Management Area (IMA) site was extremely active over the past month and a half. Members from Fairfax County Park Authority's (FCPA) Invasive Control Corps (ICC) teamed together with local IMA volunteers and spent a day eradicating [English ivy](#) from parklands. The ICC consists of interns who, over the summer months, travel to various county parks to help control non-native, invasive plants and restore the native ecology. Whereas some of these folks are local, others come as far away as Michigan and Florida to help us!

ICC emphasizes an educational component, so they toured the IMA work areas, examining the native vegetation, identifying the non-native invasive plants, and observing the unique characteristics of each site (e.g., evaluate erosion potential, invasive impact on surrounding ecology, removal strategies). Sadly, the group encountered further evidence of illegally dumped yard debris (more on this problem in another article). After the introduction to Royal Lake/Pohick Stream Valley Park, this group promptly removed newly emerging English ivy patch that just started creeping into the forests from a residential property. Working from the fence line, the group pulled the ivy, which had expanded several yards into the park. Fortunately, this area was spotted and contained before the vines became firmly entrenched. Some winter creeper was also pulled as it began spreading through the woods.

Following a few hours of work, this site is now considered completed. Like all IMA sites, volunteers will check on this area to clear any missed vines or root fragments attempting to regenerate. Since the neighbors still have the English ivy, volunteers will be sure to cut any more vines as they creep across the property line. If you have English ivy, [Japanese honeysuckle](#), bamboo, [wintercreeper](#), or other plants on the invasive list (<https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural-heritage/invspinfo>), the decision whether or not to keep them is up to you, but kindly be a good neighbor and restrict them to only your property.

Continued English ivy eradication at the large, primary IMA site completed this full day's work! A total of 16.5 bags were removed, mostly of English ivy. All said and done, this work day was a fine blend of refined education and a brute force workout!

During the past few weeks, FCPA acquired a number of native plants for the Royal Lake IMA sites. These species included bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*), native azaleas, wild blueberry bushes, arrowwood and blackhaw viburnums (*V. dentatum* and *V. prunifolium*), ferns (New York, lady's and Christmas), wild yams (*Dioscorea villosa*), and cut-leaf toothwort (*Cardamine concatenata*), to name a few. Volunteers planted these specimens, mostly around the primary work site and along the side entrance near Claridge Court. As planting is usually reserved for the autumn and spring, this rainy late spring/early summer gave the plants an added edge towards survival.

IMA workdays are excellent ways to get hands-on training for removing certain problem plants and study the local ecology. While many volunteers throughout Fairfax prefer working on IMA sites close to home, feel free to encourage out-of-town family and friends to join an IMA session (preferably at Royal Lake, of course)! As the ICC interns traveled far for a learning experience, your long-distance visitors will gain eco-knowledge that can be applied back at their home.

The primary patch's ivy coverage is now reduced to a modest parcel. I plan to eliminate what remains of it on August 16, 2008. I encourage you to bring family and friends, as I've got a prize for the person who can bring the most people with him/her. If we complete this task early, we will go on a "search and destroy" patrol. Those surveys are lots of fun, where we walk through the permit area looking for invasive plants, such as honeysuckle, [Japanese stiltgrass](#), and [multiflora rose](#), to pull. This patrol comes with all of the educational and physical benefits of the typical IMA workday, but with the added change in scenery. The workday will be from 7:00AM–10:00AM—rain or shine—with an optional nature walk or farmer's market visit at the end. Volunteers must be healthy and at least 11 years old. Sturdy boots with long pants and sleeves are required. Water will be provided. For further details or RSVPs, please contact me at greg@grsykes.com. Hope to see you on August 16th!

* * * * *