

## Major IMA Goal Reached

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

We did it! Invasive Management Area (IMA) volunteers completed [English ivy](#) removal from the “primary patch” at Royal Lake Park. A little more than a year ago, Royal Lake’s first IMA workday began with English ivy eradication at this exact site. Since that time, volunteers doggedly attacked this epic project, with occasional workdays at other park locations for added interest. Even though we removed as much root as possible, some inevitably remain in the soil. Subsequent monitoring patrols will eradicate these remnants. Native plants—both introduced by IMA volunteers and through natural dispersal—will rightfully reclaim this parcel to provide a fantastic wildlife habitat.

With the extra time during our last workday, we paid a visit to the [Pachysandra](#) site that was cleared earlier this year. Sure enough, tiny Pachysandra sprouts dotted this plot. The key word is tiny because it demonstrates how much damage our first wave inflicted on this persistent weed. Instead of expanding its spread, all of the plants’ energy was diverted to survival. It needed to send green shoots, which photosynthesize sugars, to feed the roots and rhizome network. During this patrol, IMA volunteers removed all visible Pachysandra material, both above and below ground. Since more roots likely remain behind, future patrols will further clear this site. With each successive clearing, the Pachysandra becomes increasingly weak until either all root fragments are pulled or any weak, remaining roots die. This same eradication strategy applies to many perennial weeds, including English ivy.

After the Pachysandra clearing, we searched the trails for “targets of opportunity.” We eradicated one small pocket of mixed [multifloral rose](#), [Japanese stiltgrass](#), and [Japanese honeysuckle](#). The rose roots and honeysuckle were bagged for trash removal. The stiltgrass (an annual) has yet to seed this season, so uprooted grass was discarded where it was pulled and it will soon decompose. Once this grass goes to seed, it will be bagged in later pull sessions to prevent it from reseeding the forest. Volunteers pushed to a second site and pulled more of these same, prevalent weeds. To prevent erosion damage, activities were kept away from the streams. A nature walk completed this final workday, where we studied succession, recovery strategies, and fire adaptation at the arson site, followed by plant identification along a mature woodland trail.

A big “thank you” goes out once again to all IMA volunteers who have worked on this site and parkland neighbors here who support our efforts! The ivy originally covered over half an acre, yet we were able to conquer it. Some folks have mentioned that their yards are covered with ivy, they want to get rid of it, but are intimidated; this project motivates those people and proves that large ivy expanses can be cleared with a bit of determination.

The IMA program has had an incredibly successful year! Yet, the woodlands still have plenty of invasive species to remove. You can join the fun on October 25, 2008 (7:30-10:30AM), when Royal Lake will once again host an IMA workday through Volunteer Fairfax. Fairfax County Park Authority supervisors and I are still planning the details of that workday. If you are interested in participating in any future IMA events, please send an e-mail to me at [greg@grsykes.com](mailto:greg@grsykes.com).

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