

Spot and Pull Those Invasive Seedlings!

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Invasive weeds enter natural areas through different routes. These images focus on one method, via birds. Some birds eat the alien fruits and berries even though they lack the same nutritional value as native food sources. The seeds passing through the birds are deposited in the droppings. Usually, the birds drop the seeds close to the parent plant. By definition, residential birds remain in the area. Migratory birds may stick around for several days to rest and fill energy reserves before moving on. These long-distance travelers carrying some seeds on their journey and drop them far away but many seeds are voided during their waystation stops. Since birds prefer resting (and therefore pooping) on shrubs and small trees, especially on woodland edges, significant amounts of these weeds germinate beneath these perches. The immediate plot surrounding the forest floor in Figure A is devoid of any mature invasive plants. Birds brought here 1) [wax-leaf privet](#) (*Ligustrum japonicum*), 2) [English ivy](#) (*Hedera helix*), and 3) [porcelain-berry](#) (*Ampelopsis brevipedunculata*). The parent plants—the seed sources—were most likely growing on neighboring properties like residential lots, HOA land, and public VDOT stretches. These source plants reached maturity through deliberate cultivation or neglected landscape maintenance, such as an earlier bird dropping invasive plant seeds there and nobody doing anything about the growing weeds.

In a recent Friends of Royal Lake survey, 96% of the participants who answered the question about native plants in the park supported having more natives for ecological improvement¹. Folks say they want to see a healthy landscape; let's put those words into action! First, learn to identify invasive species at all life stages including the newly germinated English ivy (B) that is found more frequently than ever before. Pulling the seedlings and young plants seen here is much easier than wrestling with developed infestations! Since English ivy only produces berries on climbing vines, simply cutting the ivy at tree, fence and wall base helps curtail its spread through seeds. By checking around the home for any invasive plants and removing them, you will do a huge favor for your own property, especially since unchecked species like English ivy and porcelain-berry can take over the yard and smother other plants to death. In fact, porcelain-berry infestation is a major reason why Lakeside Park's junipers were removed. Preventing the spread will help the neighboring properties and natural areas. Volunteering for invasive management workdays is a way to directly help the parks. A calendar for future workdays is at <https://www.fairfax-county.gov/parks/invasive-management-area>.

Eco-Articles on the plant species featured here are:

Wax-leaf privet: http://www.grsykes.com/pdf/eco-articles/74_2017-04.pdf

English ivy: http://www.grsykes.com/pdf/eco-articles/97_2020-03.pdf

Porcelain-berry: http://www.grsykes.com/pdf/eco-articles/69_2016-09.pdf

¹ Friends of Royal Lake (FORL) <https://www.friendsofroyallake.org/>, Spring 2022 Community Survey Report.

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