

IMA's Habitat Restoration

By Greg Sykes (greg@grsykes.com)

The Invasive Management Area (IMA) program at Royal Lake joined forces with Earth Sangha on the October 17, 2009, workday. Over 50 volunteers came from as far away as Silver Spring to brave the cold drizzle and to participate! Earth Sangha is a nonprofit organization which actively promotes ecological restoration both in Northern Virginia and Hispaniola. They raise native plants from seed at a local nursery. The maturing specimens are sold to various regional organizations and municipalities (including Fairfax County) for native reforestation projects. Earth Sangha's president, Chris Bright, and executive director, Lisa Bright, are fellow KPW residents who wanted to contribute to IMA's Royal Lake Park efforts; they helped muster volunteers and donated all of the plants used for this workday! More on Earth Sangha may be found at <http://www.earthsangha.org/>.

The work site was formerly an English ivy-smothered plot in back of Claridge Court. Since the site resides within a riparian area and often has soggy soil (even has a moisture-loving skunk cabbage naturally occurring), IMA volunteers reintroduced species such as cutleaf toothwort (*Dentaria laciniata*) and young *Viburnum* shrubs late last year. This time, volunteers supplemented the existing stock with species to establish a sweetbay magnolia bog. Human activities have reduced the number of naturally occurring magnolia bogs, so this workday truly was a special session in restoring a lost habitat. Learn more about magnolia bogs at [www.nps.gov/nace/planyourvisit/upload/Magnolia 4-24 Lo-Res.pdf](http://www.nps.gov/nace/planyourvisit/upload/Magnolia+4-24+Lo-Res.pdf). The list of the species planted includes:

Common Name	Scientific Name
Allegheny Monkeyflower	<i>Mimulus ringens</i>
American Hazelnut	<i>Corylus americana</i>
Arrowwood <i>Viburnum</i>	<i>Viburnum dentatum</i>
Black Chokeberry	<i>Aronia melanocarpa</i>
Bladdernut	<i>Staphylea trifolia</i>
Cardinal Flower	<i>Lobelia cardinalis</i>
Golden Ragwort	<i>Senecio aureus</i>
Great Blue Lobelia	<i>Lobelia siphilitica</i>
Highbush Blueberry	<i>Vaccinium corymbosum</i>
Maple-Leaf <i>Viburnum</i>	<i>Viburnum acerifolium</i>

Common Name	Scientific Name
Misty Flower	<i>Conoclinium coelestinum</i>
Moonseed Vine	<i>Menispermum canadense</i>
Strawberry <i>Euonymus</i>	<i>Euonymus americanus</i>
Swamp Haw, Smooth Witherod	<i>Viburnum nudum</i>
Sweetbay Magnolia	<i>Magnolia virginiana</i>
Tall Meadow Rue	<i>Thalictrum polygamum</i>
Virginia Wildrye	<i>Elymus virginicus</i>
Winged Sumac	<i>Rhus copallinum</i>
Winterberry	<i>Ilex verticillata</i>

Afterwards, we returned to the site and pulled invasive plant species, such as [autumn olive](#), [winter-creeper](#), [Amur honeysuckle](#), [Japanese honeysuckle](#), [multiflora rose](#), [rose-of-Sharon](#), and [Bradford pear trees](#). The volunteer force became students as we studied how encroaching neighbors and illegally dumping yard debris spreads invasive species onto the parklands: clusters of Bradford pear saplings sprouted right next to the huge, unsightly piles of pear limbs. The students also learned about the health hazards behind large debris piles (see "[Lyme Disease and Other Health Threats](#)," Sept. 2009). The ultimate irony is that the source trees grow by the street, where one would have an easy time wrapping the branches for either curbside pick-up or hauling them to the dump. Fortunately, many more residents—including those who neighbor parks—either mulch lawn clippings and leaves into garden compost on their own property or dispose of brush refuse via curbside pick-up, and a big "Thank You" goes to them!

On the November 14th workday, most of the participants were students eager to earn credits while bettering the local environment. During this session, volunteers continued removing the previously mentioned invasives and attacked more of the [English ivy](#) at the "Battery Site." Since that ivy was near a storm sewer discharge point, annual rye and native wildflower seeds were sown so the resulting plants will help prevent erosion. We have one additional workday this year on December 12th from 1:00-4:00pm; contact me (greg@grsykes.com) if you are interested in participating or let me know if you want to be updated on future workdays not posted in the *Herald*.

A second big "Thank You" goes to all of the residents who expressed support for the IMA program. I am always happy to hear stories of how people eradicated the English ivy and other non-native invasives from their yards. Furthermore, our ecologically responsible approaches help train children how to become the future's conscientious land stewards. Keep up the great work!

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