

Royal Lake Welcomes More IMA Site Leaders

By Greg Sykes (greg@grsykes.com)

The Invasive Management Area (IMA) program, supported by the Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA), recently gained two more volunteer site leaders to head non-native weed-clearing workdays in the Royal Lake parklands!

Angela Thornburgh participated in several habitat restoration events led by IMA site leaders Suzanne Doherty or me before taking the next step to run her own sessions. Angela moved to Glen Cove a year ago and cherishes the lake! During this short time, both she and her husband, Ashton, are already working on getting the HOA lands invasive-free, too (outside of the IMA program). As a Citizen Forester, Angela joins IMA having experience with other environmental programs. Her efforts with [Casey Trees](#) involved teaching people how to select the proper tree for a given urban location and encouraging biodiversity. She spent three years with the [Rock Creek Park Conservancy](#) pulling non-native invasive plants from D.C. parks. At Royal Lake Park, she will primarily be clearing multiflora rose (*Rosa multiflora*) and autumn olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*) between the dam and the area where Shanes Creek empties into the lake. While these weeds can give volunteers a healthy workout, Angela might have some Japanese stiltgrass removals, which is an easy-to-pull species ideal for getting youngsters involved with IMA. She has already led workdays pulling garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*) and multiflora rose.

"I love working to eradicate invasive species in particular because I have seen the difference it makes in local parks and wilderness areas," says Angela. "Plus, it's fun! After a workweek in front of a computer desk, I'm ready to get outside and do something physically constructive on the weekends."

Sarah Francia is a longtime KPW resident. Recently retired, she would like to help rehabilitate the local woodlands that she loves. Instead of leading advertised workdays with large volunteer groups, Sarah completed training and received permits to be an IMA Lite site leader. Through this program, she works on smaller parkland plots either solo or leads a small group of family and friends. Specifically, Sarah is eradicating weeds in Kings Park West Park across from the Commonwealth Swim Club and along the unnamed creek paralleling Pommeroy Drive. In the less than two months since Sarah received IMA permits, she eliminated an impressive 18 bags of garlic mustard! After garlic mustard season, Sarah will address other noxious weeds in this target-rich area, including multiflora rose, autumn olive, English ivy (*Hedera helix*), winged burning bush (*Euonymus alatus*), rose-of-Sharon (*Hibiscus syriacus*), Amur honeysuckle (*Lonicera maackii*), and periwinkle (*Vinca minor*). Volunteers are not allowed to hit the bamboo growing here since it requires removal methods outside of those granted through IMA. Sarah is also monitoring a healthy section of native forest, wiping out any emerging target species before they become established. In addition to her IMA involvement, Sarah helps some of her neighbors identify and remove invasive plants from their properties.

Angela and Sarah team up with Royal Lake's two veteran IMA site leaders, Suzanne Doherty and me. All of the site leaders' work complements the others. Habitat restoration is completely different from gardening. Every single one of us who have been through the training found it incredibly insightful and educational. Please do not work on parklands without written FCPA permission. Kindly leave your herbicides, leaf blowers, chainsaws, and weed whackers at home; using them on parkland without a contractor's permit is illegal and frequently causes more damage than benefit. To join us on a future workday, send an e-mail to these Royal Lake Park IMA Site Leaders onto whose volunteer list you would like to be added:

Angela Thornburgh – anthornburgh@gmail.com

Suzanne Doherty – jewelboxgardensbysuzanne@gmail.com

Greg Sykes – greg@grsykes.com

Hope you join our efforts!

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