

Hammond Acres Watershed Committee NEWSLETTER

Fall 2023

As this summer draws to an end, HAWC wants to take this opportunity to highlight our success and explain what's next.

This summer HAWC trained, mentored and worked alongside our teen workforce in a three month long invasive plant removal project which we jokingly named, **Mission Impossible**. The main goal of Mission Impossible was to mechanically remove invasive plants around the perimeter of the golf course adjacent to the marshland and the forest and also to remove the phragmites in the pond.



Together with a small cadre of youth leaders, both paid and volunteer, this team worked diligently to mechanically remove thousands of invasive plants on the land and in the water. Non-native bittersweet easily took the lead for the most roots removed as well as hours and energy spent. However, one of our beloved ornamentals, burning bush, which is now illegal to sell or trade in MA, was also quite menacing with over 500 mature plants removed. In the last two weeks, poison ivy became a major challenge to our removal efforts. Our solution was to resort to the use of black plastic to suffocate the poison ivy and the invasive plants. We fully intended to leave these areas in a more beautiful natural state (without black plastic), however we did have to pivot from these goals when the extent of the poison ivy became more apparent.

Take a walk around the perimeter of the golf course that for years has been surrounded by a thick green wall of invasive shrubs and vines (we Fenway fans called it the Green Monster). It is now mostly cleared with viewing alleys of the marshlands, labels on the keystone trees and lots of other fun facts. You can feel the woodland breathing easier and observe some returning native species.



Winter burn pile of removed invasives



Area of intensive removal of porcelain berry. Georgia McCarthy is thrilled to see the golf course now.



Bluebird fledgling from the bird box enjoying chokecherry snack



So What's Next?

Two of HAWC's youth leaders will continue to remove the one remaining invasive plant, goutweed, found in several locations at the golf course as well as invasive plants along the roadside.

Then, we wait for spring to assess the effectiveness of this tremendous effort. While multiple experts advised us about the tenacity of the invasive plants at Hammond, HAWC developed a mechanical removal model, training and working with youth which we believe had worthwhile impact without the use of the expert recommended herbicides.

Plans for Fall 2023, Spring and Summer 2024

Our plans for next year hinge upon the outcome of this year's campaign. Best case scenario is that we severely hinder the growth of the majority of the invasive plants and HAWC's resources are able to manage the new growth of seedlings or missed roots with 1-2 hours of weekly surveillance and removal. Following this optimistic outlook, our main initiative will be to restore the understory (shrub layer and herbaceous layer) at the forest's edge along the perimeter of the golf course. The native understory plants will add to the natural beauty and will provide food and habitat to support birds, native bees, butterflies and other wildlife. We look forward to experiencing what will be a visible change in the ecosystem services.

In order to accomplish our ambitious agenda, HAWC will continue to seek partnerships networking with community groups, including land trusts such as our new neighbor Orenda, local environmental clubs and classes at local schools, master gardener groups, colleges, and Americorp. HAWC will also continue to maintain previously established relationships with local botanists, ecology professors, teachers, and MA state resources including the state's restoration ecologist and state botanist who have provided significant guidance to our current initiatives.

How to Become Involved with Restoring the Native Food Web for Pollinators, Birds and Other Wildlife?

Hammond Acres members are encouraged to join HAWC. We will work and plan through the fall and winter, meeting approximately every month. If that's too ambitious for you at this time, please consider supporting one or more of the following initiatives;

1. **Native Plant Restoration Project** - Restore the understory (shrub and herbaceous layers -food web), where the invasive plants grew. To make this a success, in the spring, we will need 5-7 volunteers for a total of three days. Please join us. **SIGN UP NOW***
2. **Bird Nest Watch** - Provide habitat for a variety of cavity nesting birds by sponsoring the purchase of a Bird Box for Hammond's common land and/or on your property. This fundraising initiative will be launched late winter so we can be ready to put up the boxes prior to the nesting season. **SIGN UP NOW***
3. **Neighborhood invasive plant surveillance** - HAWC will train members to identify the most common invasive plants on roadsides, common lands and private property. We are actively recruiting and need more volunteers for this effort. **SIGN UP NOW***

4. **Removal of featured invasive plants on private property.** This year's featured invasive plant is **Burning Bush**. To encourage, guide, and support Hammond members to remove this large ornamental bush HAWC offers;
 - Tool lending program (clippers, mattock. weed wrench)
 - Native plant alternative to burning bush which can be ordered through HAWC in the winter for spring planting
 - a short video series (less than 4 minutes, step 1- 4) about how to remove burning bush developed by our youth leaders

[Burning Bush Removal Step 1 Clippers Foliage](#)

[Burning Bush Removal Step 2 Mattock Roots](#)

[Burning Bush Removal Step 3 Clippers Roots](#)

[Burning Bush Removal step 4 Weed Wrench Uproot](#)

5. **Books available in the library** include topics such as gardening with native plants.
6. **Educational Map and Tool** developed by Margaret Minor Wood

As we close out the summer of 2023, we encourage you to watch the three short video clips highlighting Aidan Galt, one of our youth leaders who talks about his experience this summer while participating in the first phase of the ecological restoration. (All three videos are less than 4 minutes total).

[Ecological Restoration Youth Leader Experience](#)

[Ecological Restoration Youth Leader Experience part 2](#)

[How Experience Relates to Environmental Studies](#)

If you wish to learn more about HAWC's approach, tune in to **Desiree Narango, 2020-2022 David H. Smith Conservation Research Fellow; Postdoctoral Researcher, University of Massachusetts, Amherst**

[Cultivating Wildlife Conservation with Native Plants](#) (48 minutes)

***for more info and/or to sign up contact:**

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Margaret Minor Wood

HAWC is committed to educating the community about pond ecology and the importance of terrestrial native plants to feed food webs. By increasing awareness, we hope to inspire others to use native plants in their own yards as well as around Hammond Acres so we become a part of the solution connecting native plant corridors and contributing to a more resilient environment