

Professional Invasive Plant Management Getting Underway

Weather permitting, the town's contractor for invasive plant management, [Ecological Land Management](#), will begin managing invasive plants on town owned land as soon as this weekend and work under this contract will continue through June 2024. This important work was funded at Spring 2023 town meeting and permitted by the West Newbury Conservation Commission, the state's Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program, and MA DEP over the summer. The work focuses on managing specific invasive plants at the following parcels of land:

Cherry Hill Conservation Land: These fields abutting the Cherry Hill / Indian Hill Reservoir are the former site of Cherry Hill Nursery. The fields contain a wide variety of native plants, including asters and goldenrod, benefitting an even wider variety of pollinators including native bees, butterflies, and beetles. Work has been underway over the last 2 years to manage woody invasives along the field edges however, a large stand of Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*), often called phragmites, is located in the lower field. Phragmites invades wetlands and fields and can quickly form thick, dense stands that displace other plant species and the wildlife that depend on them. Under this contract, this stand of phragmites will be treated with the intent to eradicate the stand and prevent it from taking over the wet meadow. Learn more about phragmites [here](#).



Above: The large stand of phragmites at the lower Cherry Hill Field along the mowed path. Phragmites is the tall, grass like plant in the center of the picture.

Field at the corner of Middle and Indian Hill Street: This field also contains a wide variety of native plants and, with the exception of a stand of phragmites which is smaller than the stand at Cherry Hill, is remarkably free of many of the invasive plants commonly found in West Newbury. Work under this contract will focus first on treating the stand of phragmites and, if time and remaining funding in the contract permits it, woody invasives along the field edges may also be managed here. Similar to Cherry Hill the goal at this site is to prevent the spread of phragmites and the loss of native plants in the field.

Riverbend and Tupelo

Trails: The Riverbend trail is a popular trail the runs along the Merrimack River connecting from River Road to Way To The River. The Tupelo Trail is a short loop trail off the Riverbend Trail through a grove of tupelo trees. Woody invasives along the trails include [privet](#) (*Ligustrum* spp.), [honeysuckle](#) (*Lonicera* spp.), [barberry](#) (*Berberis* spp.), and [multiflora rose](#) (*Rosa multiflora*). You can learn more about each of these invasive plants by clicking on their name



Above: A very large honeysuckle along the river side of the Riverbend Trail. The honeysuckle is the large plant in the right side of the picture.

which will take you to a new web site with more information. Freshwater floodplains like those found along the Merrimack River in West Newbury are a unique habitat that many native plants, including some rare plants, thrive in. Woody invasives along these trails threaten native plants by outcompeting them for light and space. Work under this contract will treat woody invasives along the trail.

While enjoying these places you may notice pink or orange flagging which will remain in place until at least next summer. We kindly ask that you leave these flags in place as they demarcate the work areas under the contract. Once work under the contract is completed, the flags will be removed.

When herbicide is used for treatment, it will be applied selectively to the targeted invasive plant species and only used in the areas listed above. Signs indicating when herbicide has been applied will be posted along trail edges and at each end of the Riverbend Trail. The signs will remain in place for at least 72 hours after application. We ask that you stay on the trails at these parcels to avoid contact with any treated plants.

Invasive plant management is a multi-year process that can only be successful when management efforts are consistent and when all available tools are used to achieve management goals. The professional invasive plant management contract this year compliments the hard work of seasonal interns and volunteers over the past two years. However, even with all of the hard work that's been done and is planned to be done, more work will be needed over

the following years. If you're interested in helping, stay tuned for upcoming volunteer invasive plant removal work days and opportunities to fund additional professional invasive plant management contracts.

If you'd like to learn more about managing invasive plants on your own land, Mass Audubon has a great guide to common invasive plants found in Massachusetts and the best ways to treat them which can be viewed [here](#). A wide variety of other resources are also available online, just be sure any information you obtain is from a trusted resource such as an agency, university, or non-profit that focuses on ecology, plants, the environment, and/or habitat restoration. Unfortunately, many invasive plants grow in and around wetlands disrupting these important resource areas. Most work in and around wetlands, including invasive plant management, is subject to the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act so please reach out to the Conservation Commission before beginning any control measures.

If you have questions, please contact Michelle Greene, Conservation Agent, at 978-363-1100 x126 or by email at conservation@wnewbury.org.



Above: This picture was taken across the mowed path from the phragmites at Cherry Hill. Multiple native plants including goldenrod and aster (center of the picture), blackberry (bottom), and sensitive fern (top) can be seen in just this small area. These plants are important food sources and habitat for native insects and wildlife.