



# Ohio Invasive Plants Council

## Newsletter • Fall 2020



### PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Fall is upon us and we are still adjusting to the COVID pandemic and its restrictions. Hopefully land managers are back in the field now and able to control invasive plants again, especially the woody species which are best treated with herbicide in the fall. We are all reluctantly getting used to communicating through virtual meetings and even participating in conferences virtually. It is certainly not the same nor as effective, but we are staying connected and making progress. OIPC is not yet sure of how we will handle our 2021 Annual Meeting but the Board will discuss it this fall.

The OIPC Board completed its revised 5-year strategic plan for 2020-2024 this summer and it is posted on the website. The revisions to the Assessment Protocol will be posted on the website soon, as well as the recently assessed plants from 2019. One of the species which was recently determined to be invasive is burning bush.

We are also working on a new section for our website which expands on our alternatives brochure by offering more suggestions for alternatives to invasives when replacing them in landscaping or habitat restoration projects. We hope to have this new page on our website in the next few months. We are still working on a new, up-to-date OIPC display to be used at events around the state, when we are able to safely attend them again.

If you are looking for opportunities to help control invasive plants in natural areas, one way is to participate in the Ohio Natural Areas & Preserves Association's Stewardship Projects. See the ONAPA

website at [www.onapa.org](http://www.onapa.org) for information on 2020 projects. The projects area limited to small groups of 10 people or less during the COVID pandemic. Many local metro parks and park districts, state and federal agencies, and other preserves around the state may also have opportunities for volunteers to help control invasive plants. In this newsletter, OIPC is highlighting some of the invasive control projects that are occurring across the state. Each of us can help to address invasive plant challenges on a local level, even during the COVID pandemic.

We had to eliminate our invasive plant workshops this year. I was able to present a virtual program about invasive plants and their alternatives for The Dawes Arboretum on September 24<sup>th</sup> as a part of their *Ohio Sustainable Landscape Series*. We hope to resume our workshops next year.

Help us spread the word about invasive plants and visit our website at [www.oipc.info](http://www.oipc.info) frequently! We are adding some new materials to the website, including a featured invasive plant, or potentially invasive plant, each month. If you need a plant identified or are looking for more information on invasive plants, contact us through our website and we will respond as soon as possible. If you would like to recommend a plant to be assessed for invasiveness by the OIPC Assessment Team, let us know and we can add it to the list for evaluation. Finally, if you would like to contribute an article to our newsletter about invasive plants, let us know as we are always looking for new material.

*Jennifer L. Windus, OIPC President*

## OIPC IS SEEKING APPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH GRANTS!

OIPC is soliciting applications for our Invasive Plants Research Grants. This grants program funds research projects on invasive plants in Ohio for amounts up to \$1,500. Projects initiated by graduate students, land managers, or amateur botanists are welcomed.

We will accept and review proposals that focus on basic biology, ecology, management, distribution, or horticultural aspects of invasive plants in Ohio. Our highest priority for funding is for proposals that address questions about potential invasive plants for which the lack of published data hinders their evaluation by the OIPC Assessment Team. In addition, we will also prioritize proposals that directly connect to management of invasives. When the grant evaluation team reviews grant proposals, extra points are given for proposals which address these priority areas. More details about this opportunity, including questions needed by the OIPC Assessment Team, can be found at [oipc.info](http://oipc.info).

**Applications are due no later than  
November 15, 2020.**

*Emily Rauschert, OIPC Research Chair,  
Cleveland State University,  
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## Water Lettuce: An Aquatic Invader

Recently owners of a private pond asked Ohio biologists for advice on an exotic plant. The pond owners were wondering if water lettuce, *Pistia stratiotes*, could spread from their water garden and harm the Mahoning River watershed and other wild places. Bravo to the pond owner who is curious and cares about the local waterway connection!

*Pistia stratiotes*, water lettuce, is a neat plant that has long fascinated humans. The plant is found in Egyptian hieroglyphics and Greek botanists described it floating in the Nile River over 2000 years ago! Fossil records date back at least 9,000 years (USGS, 2020). But under the showy, succulent leaves lurks the ability to spread and form dense mats that outcompete native wildlife.



*Pistia stratiotes*, water lettuce, with other aquatic invasive plants.

Water lettuce has been documented as an escapee into native habitats at least three times in Ohio. Two of the instances were around Cleveland as recently as 2017 and 2018. In both places the invasion of water lettuce was a small part of the existing plant community, but its prolific roots likely transported other non-native, nuisance plants found in the area such as *Salvinia minima* (water spangles). Cleveland Metroparks employees removed all the plants found to prevent the small populations of water lettuce from growing and spreading to new waterbodies.

Water lettuce multiplies rapidly through fragmentation of brittle stolons, or underwater runners found just below the water's surface. A vast,

floating mat of water lettuce may clog waterways, making swimming, boating, and fishing difficult, and could shade out native plants. Water lettuce also reproduces by seeds but the survival rate of seeds decreases when temperatures dip below 39 degrees F or 4 degrees C. Water lettuce grows best in USDA growing zones 8-11 where it is highly invasive. Mature plants are unable to survive in temperatures below 50 degrees F. Infestations that are found in natural waterbodies in Ohio are most likely annual escapes. In fact, I have not documented nor heard of a single instance where water lettuce has survived an Ohio winter.



Water lettuce with stolon or runner between two plants.

With predictions of warmer temperatures through climate change, water lettuce may soon be able to overwinter with seeds and return year after year to dominate lakes, ponds, and slow-moving rivers. Its future utility and risks to Ohio should be evaluated. It is not currently listed as an invasive in Ohio and can still be propagated and sold even though it is highly invasive in the southern U.S.

I would say a small population of water lettuce in a water garden poses little risk to Ohio waterbodies. A great blue heron may track seeds or plants from one waterbody to another, but the winter should stop water lettuce from returning next year. Also, water lettuce roots could transport unwanted hitchhikers from a pond supply store so its introduction should

be monitored for other non-native plants and animals.

Native alternatives that offer good cover for fish include fragrant white water lily (*Nymphaea odorata*) which can come in a pot with sediment, yellow lily (*Nuphar advena*) for bigger ponds, and if sediment exists I recommend native plants in the genus *Potamogeton*, which in Greek means “river neighbor”. Long-leaf Pondweed (*Potamogeton nodosus*) grows in a wide variety of habitats and may also work for a small water garden. The best part about these native plants is they are winter hardy and will return year after year.

Much of the background stats in this article are from the USGS Non-indigenous Aquatic Species Database and GLANSIS, two authoritative resources on aquatic invasive species.

Funding for Cleveland Metroparks aquatic invasive species detection and control program in Ohio’s Lake Erie Basin is provided jointly by Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Wildlife, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service via the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Program. We are available to help with aquatic invasive species and identifying unknown obligate aquatic plants. Reach me anytime at [mjw1@clevelandmetroparks.com](mailto:mjw1@clevelandmetroparks.com).

Mark Warmen, Cleveland Metroparks

## A Star Among Ohio’s Prairies

The blazing stars are some of the most striking late-summer plants of Ohio prairies, meadows, and grasslands. The brilliant pinkish-purple spikes of blazing star can be seen in upland and wet prairies across Ohio and many can be seen along Ohio’s roadways July through September. Blazing stars provide an important nectar source to pollinators including hummingbirds, butterflies, bees, and dozens of other insects. Blazing star seeds also provide a valuable food source to a variety of Ohio’s birds and other wildlife.

There are five species of *Liatris* that have their native range within Ohio. A sixth species, *Liatris pycnostachya*, is not native to Ohio, but has



naturalized in the state. They can be placed into two groups to simplify identification. Two species form dense clusters of flowers on a spike, while four species consist of flowers scattered upon the spike. The densely flowered species, Spiked Blazing Star (*Liatris spicata*) and Prairie Blazing Star (*Liatris pycnostachya*) can be difficult to tell apart, but differ mostly in habitat and morphological differences. The flowers on Prairie Blazing Star are usually more closely arranged on the stem than Spiked Blazing Star. The Spiked Blazing Star is found in wet prairie settings, while Prairie Blazing Star is found in drier prairie habitats. Thus, their habitats rarely overlap.



Left: Spiked Blazing Star (*Liatris spicata*). Right: Prairie Blazing Star (*Liatris pycnostachys*). Photos by Gary Conley

Spiked blazing star (*Liatris spicata*), Ohio's most common and widespread blazing star, can be found scattered across Ohio often forming dense patches where they occur. It differs from all other *Liatris* species in Ohio by preferring wet prairie habitats versus the dry, or xeric, prairie habitats hosting all others, with minor exceptions. It is an excellent choice as an alternative to the highly invasive species purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*) that prefers similarly wet habitats. Prairie Blazing Star occurs much less frequently and is found in only a handful of Ohio's xeric prairie habitats.

Both plant species can produce an abundance of seed. The light, wind-blown seeds are easily harvested once they begin to dislodge from the spike and sail into the wind. When collecting seed from the wild it is important to follow a seed ethic to protect the integrity of wild populations and seed should never be collected without permission from a land

owner. Typically collection is forbidden without a permit from many public lands and collection of state-listed endangered and threatened plants (including seed) requires a written permit from ODNr Division of Natural Areas & Preserves and landowner permission. For perennial species that are not state-listed no more than 30% of the seed should be collected. For state-listed species no more than 10% of a secure population should be collected. Once collected, seed can be stored in a dry, cool location for several months until planting season arrives. Seed should be set out in mid- to late-winter to allow for at least 60 days of cool, moist stratification to facilitate germination. With proper handling, seed germination rates can be quite high, producing many miniature corms that are simple to transplant.

Blazing stars are a low maintenance native perennial adapted to poor soil conditions and offer drought and deer resistance. Spiked and Prairie Blazing Stars are the most commonly available *Liatris* species among Ohio's native plant nurseries as well as regional prairie seed catalogs/websites. The naturally occurring white form of Spiked Blazing Star, or 'Alba', has become popular in the nursery trade. Each of these species have a woody corm root that grows bigger each season. The corms can be divided after several years of growth, especially once the central corm begins to die out. The plants can be planted nearly anytime of the year but planting during dormancy reduces stress and yields healthy spring foliage. Garden plantings can produce large plants that tend to lean or fall over later in the season. Plants should be located near other rigid plant species or be provided some physical structure to prevent them from falling.

The other four *Liatris* species occur infrequently throughout Ohio and tend to be found in more southern Ohio counties. These species are much more difficult to identify to the species level but can be fairly common in the prairies where they do occur. Among these species, Rough Blazing Star (*Liatris aspera*), is likely the most common. It can be seen along roadside prairies in Athens County and are a stunning constituent to the dolomite prairies of Adams County. This species is also a common Blazing Star in the Oak Openings sand barrens of northwest Ohio. The other three species which are all state-



Left: Rough Blazing Star (*Liatris aspera*). Photo by Gary Conley.  
Right: Slender Blazing Star (*Liatris cylindracea*). Photo by Jason Brownknight

listed rare plants in Ohio, Slender Blazing Star (*Liatris cylindracea*), Northern Blazing Star (*Liatris scariosa*), and Scaly Blazing Star (*Liatris squarrosa*) often occur in association with Rough Blazing Star in southern Ohio, but can be found independently in the many scattered remnant prairies of Ohio. Scaly Blazing Star is also found in the sand barrens of the Oak Openings in northwest Ohio. Because many of these habitats have been altered or destroyed by agriculture, development, or pollution, and because of altered fire regimes, the habitat range of *Liatris* species has been severely restricted causing several of them to be listed on the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Rare Native Ohio Plants Status List. *Liatris cylindracea* and *Liatris scariosa* have a “threatened” status in Ohio and *Liatris squarrosa* is listed as “potentially threatened”.

Seeking out any *Liatris* species can be a rewarding and adventurous field outing. During the search, you may find yourself in some of Ohio’s most unique and botanically rich habitats. Including *Liatris* in pollinator gardens and restoration habitats is valuable to pollinators, birds, wildlife, and onlookers. Seek out and propagate locally sourced seed and plant stock to ensure the greatest ecological benefit as well as to protect our important native genotypes.

Gary Conley, OIPC Vice-President

## A Pandemic Won’t Stop Us From Connecting With The Land!

Even with the challenges presented by COVID, there are amazing invasive control projects happening across Ohio on private and public lands. OIPC asked you to share some of those projects so that we can celebrate the great people working aggressively to combat invasives to protect and improve our native habitats and the species that thrive in them.

## Volunteer Team Spends A Day At Richfield Heritage Preserve

Friends of Crowell Hilaka (FoCH) is a nonprofit advocacy group partnering with the Richfield Joint Recreation District (RJRD) to preserve, protect, enhance, and promote Richfield Heritage Preserve (RHP), a 336-acre public park located in Richfield, Ohio. With help from its partners, Ohio Invasive Plant Council (OIPC) and the Ohio Natural Areas and Preserves Association (ONAPA), FoCH adopted and developed an invasive species management plan (ISMP) for Richfield Heritage Preserve, with the RJRD board’s approval. The park’s high-quality areas were identified and invasive species removal was prioritized from those areas.

On July 28, a volunteer team, observing pandemic and all other necessary safety protocols, focused their efforts on Lake Jinelle, also known as the lower lake. They had a great day and accomplished a significant amount of invasive plant removal and control. Extensive progress was made with assistance from OIPC president, Jennifer Windus, an Ohio Natural Areas and Preserves Association Stewardship Assistant, three interns from the Knox County Park District and our dedicated RHP ISMP team! The crew focused on manually removing yellow iris and purple loosestrife from the lower lakebed, as well as treating narrow-leaved cattail and glossy buckthorn.

When it came time to remove the large number of glossy buckthorns that lined the lake edge near the main road, the interns and FoCH volunteers kicked into high gear. They created a buckthorn alley filled



with so many shrubs that the main road was impassable. They also took out some other woody invasives such as black locust, privet, and Asian bush honeysuckle. The volunteers loaded two trailer loads of the invasive species to deposit at a dedicated dump site. Jeff DeLuca, the RJRD board member in charge of park operations, swung by with his backhoe that same week and moved the remaining load to the dump site.



Volunteers at Richfield Heritage Preserve next to a wagon filled with invasive woodies removed from the preserve.

Some of the trained volunteers and interns learned how to identify and treat cattails in the mostly dry lakebed using a method called wicking which involved a spray bottle of Round-Up and a rubber



glove with a cloth glove placed over it. The RHP ISMP team is always learning something new which helps us move forward in our efforts to control invasive species in the park's highest quality areas.

All worked extremely hard that day and hopefully no one got poison ivy! Nature has a way of bouncing back quickly. Many summer wildflowers were spotted down by the lower lake this season. The RHP ISMP team will now have to monitor the area and follow up with a fall clean up to treat and remove the woody species that we missed. Through important partnerships and trained volunteers, overwhelming tasks are made doable. We are stewards of this land who are making valuable contributions to its conservation. To find out more about Richfield Heritage Preserve and Friends of Crowell Hilaka for RHP you can visit their websites. <https://www.richfieldheritagepreserve.com/> <http://www.friendsofcrowellhilaka.org>

*Beth Sanderson, Friends of Crowell Hilaka, Vice-President*

## Phragmites Stomping At Mentor Marsh!



Photo by Becky Donaldson

Mentor Marsh State Nature Preserve is one of the largest natural marshes remaining along the Lake Erie shoreline and it became Ohio's first state nature preserve in 1971. The stewardship team had a productive summer at Mentor Marsh and are pictured here stomping back *Phragmites* at the preserve. The restoration efforts of this marsh are an inspiring and interesting success story. To learn



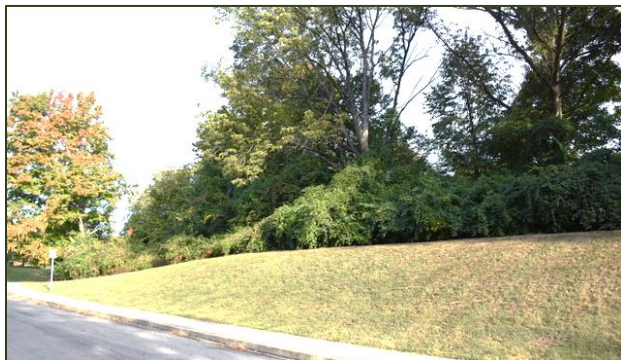
more about the history and amazing progress, visit [cmnh.org/mentor-marsh](http://cmnh.org/mentor-marsh).

*Renee Boronka, Associate Director, Natural Areas Division, Cleveland Museum of Natural History*

### Volunteers Tackle Invasive Shrubs At Burnet Woods, Cincinnati



Preserve Burnet Woods is a non-profit group that formed in response to a threat of development in Burnet Woods which is one of Cincinnati's oldest parks. Their mission is to "...protect, promote,



Above photo is before invasive removal and below photo is after removal in one of the many areas of Burnet Woods where invasive removal projects are occurring. Photo by Steve Slack



celebrate and sustain Burnet Woods as a community-supported greenspace and urban oasis."

One of their initiatives as park stewards is to tackle the invasive plants. They have gotten permission from Cincinnati Parks to use herbicide and have been tackling nonnative bush honeysuckles, nonnative buckthorns, porcelain berry, Norway maple and hedge maple. As the photos show, the current pandemic has not stopped them from showing love for the natural resources in their park.

To learn more about Preserve Burnet Woods visit [preserveburnetwoods.org](http://preserveburnetwoods.org).

*Steve Slack, Preserve Burnet Woods*

### Invasive Workday At Calamus Swamp

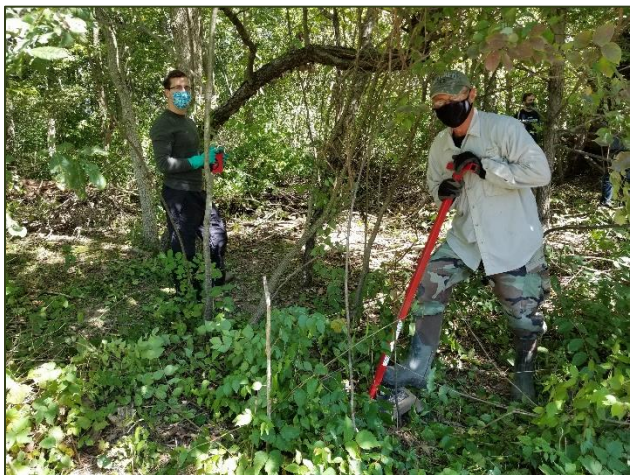
Calamus Swamp, located 1.5 miles west of Circleville, Ohio, is a beautiful, diverse and rare wetland that was dedicated as a Columbus Audubon Preserve in 2000. It is a 19-acre swamp that offers a unique glimpse into the glacial past that shaped



Ohio's landscape. It is home to several distinct plant communities and numerous breeding birds, and is an appealing resting spot for birds migrating through the Scioto River corridor. Calamus Swamp is a kettle hole, formed at the end of the last Ice Age when a chunk of ice separated from the glacial front and slowly melted. Most of Ohio's kettle holes have disappeared from the landscape, due to ecological succession or drainage for development, especially agriculture and peat harvesting.



Columbus Audubon hosts work days at Calamus Swamp several times a year, and the task list always includes removal of invasive plants. On the most recent work day in September, we had 17



enthusiastic volunteers show up to help us cut back, remove, and treat (where possible) Amur honeysuckle (*Lonicera maackii*), Japanese honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica*), and Japanese Euonymus or wintercreeper (*Euonymus fortunei*).

We have another fall workday is scheduled at Calmus Swamp on November 14<sup>th</sup>. To learn more about Calamus Swamp visit [columbusaudubon.org](http://columbusaudubon.org).

Allison Boehler, Columbus Audubon Conservation Committee Chair, Board Member

### Japanese Knotweed Control On Private Lands Near Mohican Memorial State Forest

I have been working on a massive Japanese knotweed infestation in an inholding in Mohican Memorial State Forest. The eradication efforts began in 2016 and at that point there was nearly an acre of infestation on the old barnyard and farmyard and the plant was spreading across the road, driveway and into the woods around the periphery. Through multiple control techniques, I have been able to reduce the footprint to about an eighth if not a tenth of what it was.

The method that I am currently using is cutting the Japanese knotweed down a couple times in the summer and then using herbicides late in the season



This is a before photo showing density of the Japanese knotweed. Photo by Irv Oslin

to weaken the infestation even further. The amount of herbicide that has been used over the years has decreased significantly with the reduction in the population. In the early going, I had hoped to dig out all of the roots but this proved too daunting because the roots were simply too robust and deep.



After trying to dig up a few plants, it became immediately obvious that with the deep and robust taproots, digging was not a viable option. Photo by Irv Oslin.

In some places, grass has reestablished on its own and a few other areas required planting grass seed. In those areas, knotweed sprouts persist, but in decreasing numbers. When mowing those areas, I



use a bagger-mower and dump the clippings on a burn pile so that the cut vegetative stems cannot re-sprout. In some of the lawn areas I can even just pull the re-sprouts after a good rain.

In other areas on the property native vegetation is bouncing back! I have noticed stinging nettles and snakeroot taking over after a few years of treatment. With surgical herbicide treatments, the native plants have been spared and have even thrived.

*Irv Oslin, land steward*

## A Backyard Forest Restoration

My wife, Camille and I have a home with about three acres of undisturbed forest in Sharon Township, just outside of Columbus. I neglected the woods for about fifteen years, during which time invasive shrub honeysuckles and wild grape took over both the forest floor and canopy. Five years ago,



Chris McNeil next to a spicebush that is thriving after removal of honeysuckle from the understory of his 3 acre woodland near Columbus.

I started removing these two woody plants that had taken over our forest. For the last two years, I covered the cleared areas with black plastic to act as a thermal mulch to kill any regrowth of the plants that I removed and also to suppress the germination of invasives in the seedbank. I removed the plastic 18 months ago and initially used buckwheat as green mulch.

The cleared area was ready for landscaping this spring, just before the COVID-19 shut down in Ohio.

Left unattended for the summer, by July prickly lettuce dominated the cleared area. Landscaper Amy Dutt, Urban Wild Ltd., removed the prickly lettuce and then used a no-mow grass seed mix as ground cover for the fall, supplementing spice bushes and buckeye trees that were planted in the spring. With the grape vines gone, sunlight is once again making its way through the canopy, and with the honeysuckle largely under control, we're seeing new redbud, oak, and maple tree seedlings coming up from the once suppressed seedbank.

*Chris McNeil, land owner and steward*

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OIPC is an eligible non-profit in the charitable program AmazonSmile! Amazon's foundation donates 0.5% of qualifying purchases to an organization you select. Use this address to go directly to the page that benefits OIPC; [smile.amazon.com/OIPC](https://smile.amazon.com/OIPC) or start at [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com) and you will be prompted to select a charity. There is no cost to you since Amazon makes the donation on your behalf. Save the link and use it every time you shop with Amazon!



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Use your Kroger Plus card to help OIPC grow. For your continued support you must enroll annually so be sure to check if your enrollment has expired.

Visit: [KrogerCommunityRewards.com](https://KrogerCommunityRewards.com) sign in or create a new account. Select OIPC and click on "enroll." The codes for OIPC are:  
#23916 Cincinnati Region (includes Dayton and Lima)  
#47319 Great Lakes / Columbus region (rest of Ohio)

***The Ohio Invasive Plants Council coordinates statewide efforts and direction to address the threats of invasive species to Ohio's ecosystems and economy by providing leadership and promoting stewardship, education, research, and information exchange.***

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