Ohio Invasive Plants Council

Newsletter • Fall 2021

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Fall is here and it was a busy summer season! Fall can be the best season for controlling some woody invasive plants because they are actively moving resources downward to their roots. This is the best time to apply herbicides to woody plants, either by cut stem or basal bark applications. There are many woody invasive plants impacting our natural areas, such as glossy buckthorn, common buckthorn, Japanese barberry, winged burning-bush, autumn-olive, privet, tree-of-heaven, Callery pear, and Asian bush honeysuckles (to name a few), so now is the time to address them and restore native understory species.

We hope to have a new section on our website this fall which expands on our alternatives brochure by offering more suggestions for alternatives to invasives. Sometimes when you remove invasive species, native species will re-establish from suppressed dormant plants or the seedbank. If the invasives have been established for many years, you may have to re-plant the area using native plant or seed material. We are also very close to completing a new, up-to-date OIPC display to be used at events around the state, when we can safely attend them again.

Our virtual 2021 Annual Meeting is coming up on **October 15th,** 9am-noon via Zoom. The agenda will include presentations by Theresa Culley, Bethany Bradley, myself plus several Rapid Updates regarding invasive plant control efforts. Visit the OIPC website for the detailed agenda and registration. This is a free event. We hope you can join us!

As some of you may know, Yahoo discontinued their listserv service late last year. OIPC had an active listserv of over 300 participants, but we have recently set up another listserv with Google Groups, oipc@googlegroups.com. We welcome people to join this group and make it larger!

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 for information on 2021 fall and winter projects. Many local metro parks and park districts, state and federal agencies around the state may also have opportunities for volunteers to help control invasive plants. Each of us can help to address invasive plant challenges on a local level, even during the COVID pandemic.

Help us spread the word about invasive plants and visit our website at www.oipc.info frequently! We added some new materials to the website, including a featured invasive plant, or potentially invasive plant, every few months. If you need a plant identified or are looking for more information on invasive plants, please 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.

Applications are due no later than December 1, 2021.

Emily Rauschert, OIPC Research Chair, Cleveland State University, e.rauschert@csuohio.edu

PORCELAIN BERRY: AN INVASIVE VINE

Ampelopsis brevipendunculata has numerous common names; Porcelain Vine, Amur Pepper Vine, wild grape, Porcelain Ampelopsis and Porcelain Berry. No matter what you call it, the one key characteristic to identify the plant is the fruit, which is 1/4" to 1/3" diameter and can be a pearly combination of yellow, purple, pale blue and turquoise. The fruit clusters may have all of these colors at the same time from September to October. These colorful fruits make an attractive addition to a fall landscape. Porcelain Berry strongly resembles native grape vines and both are in the family *Vitis.* During the summer around July, the vine develops non-showy greenish-white blooms that form in the leaf axel. This umbrella-shaped panicle holds itself upward on the vine unlike the drooping panicles of native grapes. The leaves look similar to grape and can be highly variable with 3 or 5 lobes and the lobes can be either deep or shallow. The foliage is dark green with hairy petioles.

The speckled berries of Porcelain Berry are an attractive combination of blues, purples, yellows, and turquoise. These berries do not droop downward like the berries of native grapes. Photo by Leslie J. Mehrhoff, University of Connecticut, Bugwood.org.

Ampelopsis b. is native to Japan and northern China and was introduced to the United States in 1870 as a landscape plant, then escaped and quickly displayed its ability to take over everything. This aggressive vine attaches itself with tendrils making it able to attach itself to just about anything. It can be found from the east coast region throughout the great lakes to Iowa and as far south as Alabama. It is spread long distances by birds, small mammals and deer. *Ampelopsis b.* is very aggressive; it grows well in moist areas and likes full sun but can tolerate shade.

Porcelain Berry can grow in aggressive and dense mats. Because of its tendrils it can climb high into trees and shrubs. Photo by Leslie J. Mehrhoff, University of Connecticut, Bugwood.org.

It can be found on pond edges, stream banks and edges of woods. This vine can spread over the top of plants and shade out the native species.

The nursery industry produces a wide variety of vining plants for fences, trellises, pergolas and other upright structures. Climbing Hydrangeas, Dutchman's Pipe, Hardy Passion Vine, native Virginia Creeper, native Honeysuckle Vine, Trumpet Vine, Clematis, and native Wisteria are a few of the recommended vines to consider. With all of the noninvasive vines available there is no reason to plant Porcelain Berry. If you have this plant in your landscape, consider replacing it with one of the equally attractive and more ecologically beneficial alternatives mentioned above.

Mark Shelton, OIPC Board & Willoway Nurseries, Inc.

VIRGINIA CREEPER: A NATIVE ALTERNATIVE FOR YOUR LANDSCAPE

If you've ever walked through a wooded area in Ohio, you have likely encountered Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*), a ubiquitous native woody vine in our area that occurs throughout the eastern half of North America. It is a fast-growing member of the grape family that spreads along the ground and upwards, hanging onto trees and other vertical structures with adhesive tips at the end of its

Virginia creeper leaves have 5 leaflets which turn a brilliant dark red in the fall. Photo by Joseph LaForest, University of Georgia, Bugwood.org.

many tendrils. It occupies similar habitats as poison ivy, but since most leaves have five leaflets, it can be distinguished easily. Virginia creeper leaves turn brilliant colors in the fall and then drop in the winter. Occasionally you will find these plants fruiting in mid-summer. The fruits are usually only produced when they have reached high into the treetops.

Virginia creeper berries are a nutritious food for birds and small mammals. The berry petioles turn a brilliant scarlet color and the berries a deep blue. Photo by James H. Miller, USDA Forest Service, Bugwood.org.

Virginia creeper is a shade-tolerant species that can be grown easily in the home landscape. Once established it simply needs to be pruned back occasionally to keep it from spreading to unwanted spaces. Care should be taken to ensure that plants don't grow up houses and other structures too much, because their substantial weight can lead to bent gutters and drooping tree branches!

Virginia creeper and other woody vines are technically known as lianas. Lianas are a critical component of tropical forests, but they appear to also be growing in ecological importance across temperate regions in recent decades. If so, we have climate change to thank – and for two different reasons. One is related to increasing temperatures, since a key limit to liana growth is their susceptibility to damage in water-conducting vessels when exposed to freeze-thaw action. The other reason is directly linked to CO_2 concentrations; as fast-growing species with the capacity to produce lots of biomass

quickly, lianas are thought to be particularly well-positioned to turn that additional carbon in the air into leaf and stem tissue. Whatever the mechanism, long-term surveys in Wisconsin have shown clear increases in liana abundance over time. Exactly what that means for our Ohio forests today remains to be seen, as pressures from invasive species, changing weather patterns and human-induced land-use change are also happening simultaneously across the state. But even so, it's a safe bet that Virginia creeper will continue "hanging on" as a ubiquitous component of our state's wooded areas for the foreseeable future.

Steve Hovick, OIPC Board & The Ohio State University

GROWING NATIVE: OUR FAMILY'S JOURNEY

My interest in plants began early. Although my mother reports that, as a baby, I would cry when placed barefoot in the grass, I think this was more about my disdain for monocultures than an aversion to plants. All kidding aside, I spent a lot of my childhood outdoors with my photosynthetic friends. Around the age of 9 or 10, I would often lie in the grass, sketching the flowers in my yard under the shade of a giant bur oak tree. Daffodils were a favorite subject, as were the grape hyacinths. At the time I did not know which plants were introduced, which were native, or what was invasive - it was all just nature to me. I would regularly explore the forests along the Alum Creek floodplain near our home, and generally felt most comfortable in these natural settings. I still feel this way - and I relish opportunities to share my love of plants.

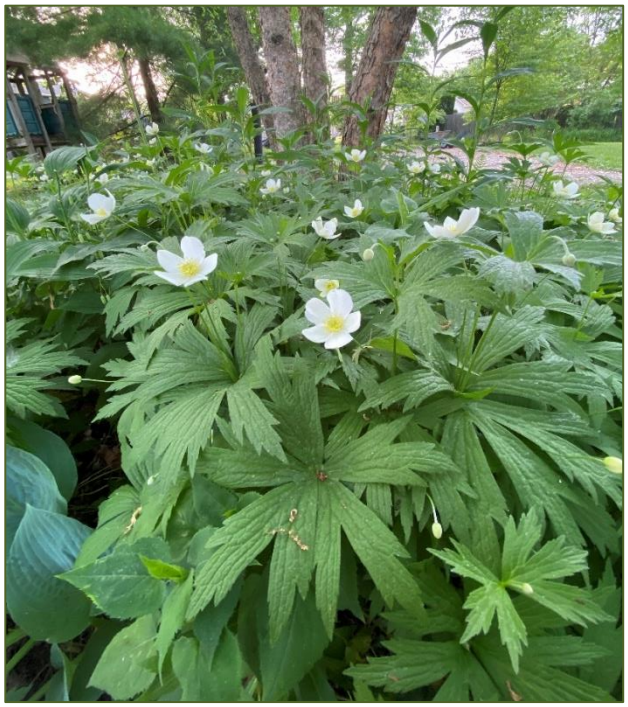
During college, I took an aquatic botany course taught by Dr. Ron Stuckey, which got me keenly interested in wetlands and wetland vegetation (this training has served me well in my wetland-focused career, culminating in my position as Chief Scientist and co-owner [with my CEO/MBA wife, Chris] of the ecological and wetland consulting firm MAD Scientist Associates in Westerville). I also volunteered to serve as a tour guide at the State Fair, where Division of Natural Areas and Preserves botanist Allison Cusick taught me the plants of the prairie. After completing my undergraduate degree, my appetite for plant knowledge continued to grow. I took continuing education courses at Otterbein University that covered local flora and dendrology (taught by exceptional Metro Parks of Columbus and Franklin County naturalist Jim Stahl). These classes got me hooked and more invested than ever.

When a friend told me that there was a woodlot full of native wildflowers just up the street from his home that was to be cleared for new development, we sprang into action with a plant rescue operation. We dug out chunks of rich woodland soil, filled with wild geranium, trout lilies, wild ginger, Virginia waterleaf, and Virginia bluebells, and loaded our adopted plants into cardboard box lids for transport. As we were loading the car, we noticed someone sitting across the street watching. He asked, "What are you doing?" We explained that we were going to relocate the plants, because we heard that there were plans to develop the lot - to which the man replied "I know. That's my lot!" We froze for a

Twice-rescued wild geraniums with ostrich ferns and redbud in the background. Photo by author.

second, feeling like two bandits caught red-handed with our greenery. Thankfully, he was fine with (and even encouraged) our salvage effort, noting that he would be building his house and seeding a lawn in this area. He was happy to see the plants go to a loving home, our home. And so began our family's first step toward growing native.

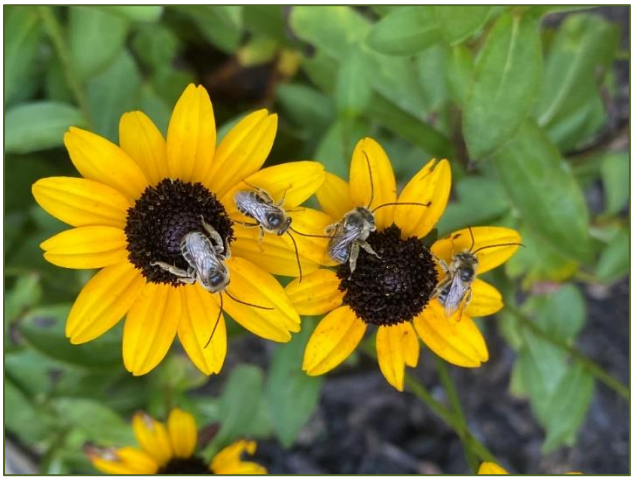
Several years passed, and when the buyers of our first home indicated that they were not interested in maintaining our native wildflower bed, these "rescue plants" were moved yet again! Many of those plants, particularly the wild geranium, have flourished around our patio and continue to provide us with spectacular seasonal color. We value the sense of



River birch and Canada anemone in one of the backyard beds. Photo by author.

connectedness these plants provide to the natural cycles that are occurring throughout the year: when our wild geraniums and bluebells are in bloom, we know that these and other spring ephemerals are taking advantage of the sunlight penetration to the forest floor and putting on a show to attract spring pollinators in the fully natural plant communities in our region.

Having become familiar with and enamored of prairie plants through my State Fair experience, we decided to plant an entire bed along one side of the house with rosinweed, tall coreopsis, spotted joe-pye-weed, false oxeye, purple coneflower, wild bergamot, butterfly weed, and royal catchfly. We call this now densely-vegetated bed our "Little Prairie on the House ™." As we got increasingly settled into our new location in Westerville (with a fairly large lot of nearly 0.4 acres), we started looking for new projects and ways to enhance the ecological value and aesthetics of our property.



Native long-horned bees (*Melissodes* spp.) on orange coneflower. Photo by author.

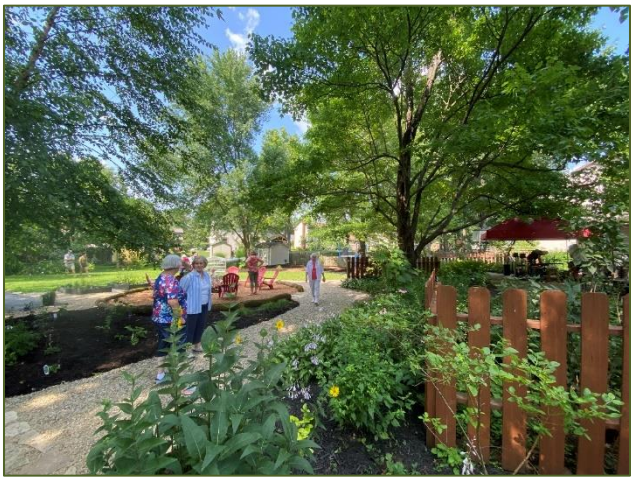
Our next project addressed a wetness problem in the back part of our lot that we noticed would hold water after every storm. Being a wetland scientist, it seemed logical to work with the hydrology and establish a wetland garden in this location. I dug a slightly deeper depression in which we planted pussy willow, soft rush, swamp rose mallow, obedient plant, and other wetland species. I was amused when, after the next rain, I looked out our back window while pouring my morning coffee and witnessed a male and female mallard duck drop and land directly on this hundred square foot puddle in our yard! They no longer visit because, although it still fills with water, the entire depression is now filled with vegetation. We recently expanded this "lowered bed" garden, and have added cardinal flower, swamp milkweed (a monarch favorite!), Muskingum sedge, buttonbush, queen of the prairie, flat-topped aster, and royal fern.

As we have learned more about introduced and invasive plants and the damage they cause, we have become increasingly dedicated to systematically eradicating introduced species around our property and replacing them with more ecologically valuable and appropriate native species. Our burning bush shrubs have been replaced with common nine bark and arrowwood viburnum. I took out an overgrown forsythia bush and planted wild hydrangea in its place. Fragrant sumac has been substituted for Japanese barberry and boxwood. A swamp white oak now grows in the front yard, replacing a flowering crabapple – but at a more suitable and safe distance from the house. We plan to soon replace our Chinese silver grass with switch grass or sea oats - it's a process!

Our latest efforts in this journey to a natives-dominated landscape have been catalyzed by two key circumstances: 1) Becoming part owners of a (predominantly) native plant nursery, Scioto Gardens, in Delaware, Ohio; and 2) Participation in the Westerflora residential garden tour in July, which led to an adrenaline-fueled frenzy of landscape improvements, planting bed expansion, and LOADS of new native plants from Scioto Gardens.

Our preparations for Westerflora resulted in the addition of over 30 new species to our yard, including hoptree, winged sumac, black and red chokeberry, spicebush, Virginia sweetspire, yarrow, turtlehead, maidenhair fern, interrupted fern, shrubby St. John's wort, Carolina wild petunia, lyre-leaved sage, downy skullcap, blue-stemmed goldenrod, anise hyssop, Virginia wild strawberry, tall larkspur, foam flower, pearly everlasting, orange coneflower, gray beardtongue, purple-headed sneezeweed, hoary mountain mint, Appalachian sedge, scarlet beebalm, dense blazing star, whorled milkweed, wild quinine, flowering raspberry (can't wait to see/smell these plants bloom!), mistflower, and wild stonecrop.

Between these plantings, naturally-occurring natives, and my routine transplantation of trees "gifted" to us by squirrels (such as bitternut and shagbark hickory, tulip tree, and red oak) that get moved out into open areas of the yard a safe distance from the house, I would put our native species list at greater than 100. And I still think there's room for more!



Westerflora garden tour at the Dilley house. Photo by author.

We have put in a great deal of effort to establish our landscape as one that is wildlife friendly. Nature rewards us daily with an abundance of pollinators (native bees, moths and butterflies abound!), toads, the occasional frog, birds, and mammals. I love seeing the monarchs and swallowtails in the summer and goldfinches pulling seeds from our purple coneflower in fall. I am confident that our wetland garden deserves much of the credit for sustaining our neighborhood firefly population – providing enjoyment for us and our three (now adult) sons over the years. I hope that our future grandchildren will delight in the small miracles that unfold regularly through our efforts to work with nature – and that someday, we will see one of our grandkids planted in our yard, sketching some flowers and growing native.

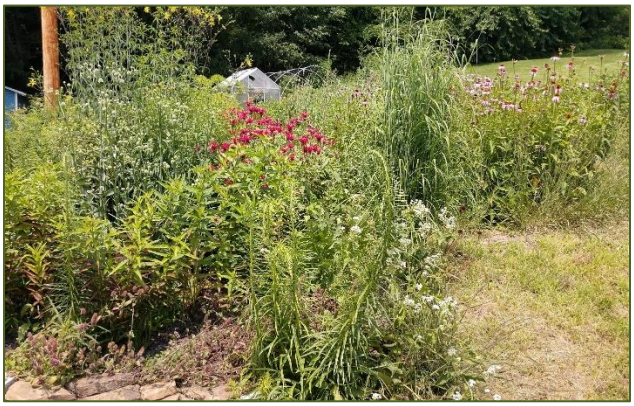
Mark Dilley, MAD Scientist Associates

LANDSCAPING WITH NATIVES: THE WILD PATCHING PERSPECTIVE

As more Ohioans become aware of the importance of native plants, many are choosing to incorporate them into the landscapes surrounding their homes, farms, communities, and businesses. While most of the commercially available plants we

have traditionally purchased from nurseries and garden centers are specifically selected to thrive in our well-maintained landscaped spaces, native plants may present some unexpected challenges. Among the concerns commonly expressed are that native plants often grow quite large causing them to lean on other plants, droop outside of maintained spaces, or fall over entirely. Other concerns uttered about landscaping with native plants include that they attract too many stinging insects, they spread to other maintained spaces, or that they can look shabby after they finish blooming. These concerns warrant some rational consideration and discussion about their use.

As a licensed nurseryman, I have faced all these issues in my small Athens County nursery. With limited space to propagate a couple of hundred native species, creative solutions were inevitable. Through years of trial and error, I realized the solutions resided with my own perspective of the space as well as my expectations of landscaping. Early propagation beds were rigidly constructed wooden beds filled with carefully composed soils. The resulting explosion is seedlings from these beds surpassed all expectations leading to an overabundance of plant stock. However, discarding

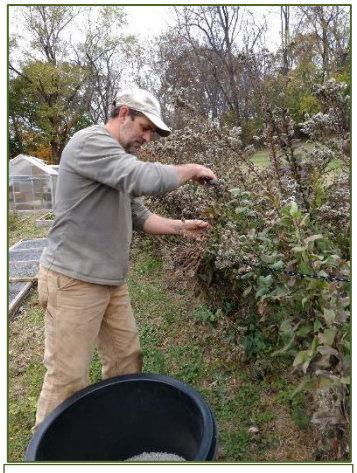


A “wild patch” at the GreenReach Native Plant and Seed Nursery. Photo by author.

any of my babies was never going to be an option. Rather, dozens of species were granted space in the corner of the property, only after clearing a dense cover of Japanese honeysuckle. Plants were installed in native soils with no fertilizer, little mulch, and seldom watered. Each plant struggled to secure space within the patch, competing with every other plant for nutrients and water. With taller species residing in the rear and shorter species towards the front, the patch grew into a striking arrangement of naturalized habitat, which I refer to as my “wild patch”.

This somewhat neglected patch has revealed important clues to using natives in our landscapes. Firstly, native plants require some competition to prevent growing abnormally large. Secondly, fertilizing and regular watering may also contribute to excess growth and reduced competition. Thirdly, many plants will lean upon one another for support and thus prevent drooping or falling over. Lastly, a combination of species will contribute to healthy competition and structural integrity.

As a landscape ecologist, I see the landscape as a complex patchwork mosaic, a collection of heterogeneous patches of natural habitats interrupted by maintained human constructs and open spaces often with abrupt boundaries and edges. This fragmentation of our natural system has resulted in greatly reduced natural processes such as the movement of wildlife, dispersal of seeds, and changes in the flow of nutrients and water. Patches of natural habitat have demonstrated declines in biodiversity, reduced resilience, depleted seed banks, lower productivity, increased susceptibility to invasive species, among others. Therefore, when we incorporate native plants into our maintained space, it should be viewed as an extension or even a connection to the patchwork mosaic that exists around us. Each restored patch will be sought out by wildlife for food sources, shelter, and contribute to successful breeding. Native spaces that exemplify the characteristics of a functional habitat provide critical resources and pathways for the movement of wildlife across our landscape.



The author harvesting seed from a tied-back stiff goldenrod.

With all that said, perhaps we can begin to adjust our expectations of native plants and propose some guiding principles to develop an appropriate perspective of our landscapes. Some have proposed the term “wildscaping” to describe a more natural approach to landscaping, although this term still implies a significant amount of human construct. The term “rewilding” has been used to describe a technique of letting nature restore itself with little human interaction. While these terms have their relevance in crafting our perspective, I tend to prefer an approach that falls somewhere between these concepts that I refer to as “wild patching”. This term imparts a broader perspective relating to the creation of a native wild patch but also reflects the

Overgrown purple Echinacea leaning on one another and teeming with bees. Photo by author.

patching or healing of restored connections to existing patches of habitat. Wild patching allows native plants more autonomy to fulfill their ecological niches and reduces some of the concerns encountered when using them in landscaping. There are some drawbacks to this approach as some gardening may be necessary throughout the season. Plants may die out entirely or simply reappear another season, much as they do in the wild. Prolific seed producers may begin to populate areas outside of the patch requiring some maintenance unless you choose to simply let nature reign.

Regardless how you decide to incorporate native plants, I offer some guiding principles I have learned from years working in the field, but particularly from my wild patching experiment. Hopefully these suggestions can enrich your experience as well as maximize the ecological benefits of your efforts.

- Select a wide variety of native species including native grasses.
- Select straight native species and avoid “nativar” nursery stock.
- Limit the use of fertilizer, compost, and regular watering.
- Mulch with leaf litter or other appropriate yard waste at the end of the growing season.
- Provide structural features for support, such as wooden posts, rocks, and logs. Tie plants using coated wire or plant ties.
- Deadhead plants that have finished blooming to reduce unwanted seed spread
- Allow plant stems to remain. Many insects are using them. Lay the stems flat on the ground mid-to-late winter.
- Remove stems before new growth appears in the spring.
- Burn the wild patch or use a weed torch to scorch early weeds before natives emerge.

Gary Conley, OIPC Board Vice-President & GreenReach Native Plant and Seed Nursery

ARE YOU REMOVING INVASIVE PLANTS AND REPLACING THEM WITH NATIVES?

If so, OIPC is looking for short articles to add to our newsletter about your experience. We want to share your story to help inspire others to redesign their landscape or remove invasives from their surrounding natural area so that they can also experience the value of removing invasives and replacing them with natives. Please contact us through our website if you are interested.

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OIPC Thanks You for Your Support!

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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