Ohio Invasive Plants Council

Newsletter • Fall 2025

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

OIPC continues to assess suspected invasive plants and recommend more plants be added to the ODA invasive plant list, which removes them from sale and distribution in Ohio. We are pleased with the 65 species currently on the ODA list, but there are more that have been scored as invasive and are still on the market. Our Assessment Team will be reviewing more species this year. The OIPC Board intends to recommend more species for the ODA list yet this year as there are many more that should be removed from sale due to their invasiveness. Many of these are already well established in natural areas throughout the state such as burning-bush, Japanese barberry, and glossy buckthorn.

OIPC partnered with the Brown Family Environmental Center in Gambier on October 22nd to host an invasive plant workshop. Featured speakers covered the topics of invasive plants and their control, the conundrum of invasive crab apples, and controlling invasive plants in Knox County Park District.

Be sure to join our listserv with Google Groups, oipc@googlegroups.com, if you have not already. Joining this group is a great way to share information on invasive plants and upcoming events, ask questions, and help this group continue to grow and connect.

We encourage you to check out the new page on the OIPC website, *Invasive Alternatives*, found in its own tab on the main toolbar. We have information on 22 different invasive plants, with 3-10 suggested alternative species to replace the invasives. We include brief descriptions of the invasive plants and photographs of many of the alternative species we recommend. We hope this new information, which supplements our brochure on alternatives, will be useful to you.

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 2025 projects. Many local metro parks and park districts, state and federal agencies around the state also have opportunities for volunteers to help control invasive plants. Each of us can help to address invasive plant challenges on a local level.

Help us spread the word about invasive plants and visit our website at www.oipc.info frequently! 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 or an appropriate restoration project, let us know as we are always looking for new material.

- *Jennifer L. Windus, OIPC President*

OIPC 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, researchers, 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 research 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 research 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 15, 2025. Grants will be awarded in 2026.

Please direct any questions to:
Emily Rauschert, OIPC Research Chair and Board Member & Cleveland State University,
e.rauschert@csuohio.edu

Fighting Porcelainberry on the Doan Brook: Students, Science, and Stewardship

The Doan Brook runs through Cleveland and its eastern suburbs, and like so many streams across the Rust Belt, it's burdened by a long legacy of disturbance. Where industry and infrastructure carved into the land, opportunistic plants moved in. Among the most aggressive is porcelainberry (*Ampelopsis brevipedunculata*), a fast-growing woody vine that smothers trees and shrubs, blocking light and strangling regeneration.

Ampelopsis brevipedunculata growing in Southerly Park (Shaker Heights, OH) in July, 2022. Photo courtesy of N. Fletcher.

With support from the Ohio Invasive Plants Council, the Doan Brook Watershed Partnership (DBWP) and Hawken School launched a project this summer to test different management approaches for porcelainberry control. Together with Hawken faculty Nick Fletcher and Claudia Tausz, co-founders of the Hawken Native Plant Society, we set out to design a study that could be both rigorous and hands-on. What makes this project unique is not just the science, but who is carrying it out: students from Hawken School, working side by side with faculty mentors and with a little guidance from our watershed team. Our goal was two-fold: gather data useful for Ohio's invasive plant assessment process and create a meaningful research experience for young people ready to take on leadership roles in conservation.

The Work on the Ground

Our study plots are tucked into Southerly Park in Shaker Heights, an urban greenspace where porcelainberry has crept across clearings and wrapped itself through thickets of blackberry, false grape, and other shrubby invasives. Faculty and students established 15 test plots: five left as controls, five treated with herbicide, and five managed through manual removal. Over the course of the summer, they collected data on species

richness, porcelainberry percent cover, soil moisture, and growth stage. They also documented the sites with both aerial and ground photography.
The work is gritty. Shrubby tangles, muddy soils, and hot June days meant that progress came with scratches and sweat. But that's part of what makes the research stick. Students aren't just reading about invasive plants in a textbook. They're kneeling in the dirt, measuring change one square meter at a time.
The work is still in progress, but the repeated sampling across June, July, and August is already giving us a clearer picture of how porcelainberry behaves in our watershed. Treatments continued through September. Next spring, we hope to extend the study with another season of monitoring, building a longer record of which management methods are most effective in northeast Ohio.

Already, the students can see how different methods change the understory structure and open space for other species. Just as importantly, they've learned that managing invasives isn't about "one and done" solutions. Sustainable, ecological solutions are built on persistence, adaptation, and community.

The Partnership Model

This project is possible because of a strong partnership between a local nonprofit and a local school. DBWP brings watershed expertise, logistical support, and a platform for community impact. Hawken brings sharp, curious students and faculty leaders committed to hands-on science. Together, we create opportunities for students to step into real-world environmental leadership while producing data that matters for statewide decision-making. It's a model we believe can be replicated elsewhere: pair students with practicing conservationists, give them meaningful questions, and let them see their work contribute to something larger than themselves.

This fall, our student researchers will share their results at the Doan Brook Watershed Partnership annual meeting. They'll stand alongside city partners, community members, and other scientists as equal participants in the bigger conversation about land and water.

For DBWP, the fight against porcelainberry is one piece of a larger commitment. We're working on restoration throughout the watershed, monitoring water quality across 15 sites, and building climate

Student researchers, Alena Glenn and Loden Rorvig conducting field research in Southerly Park, Shaker Heights, Ohio. Photo Credit Claudia Tausz

resilience through rain gardens, tree plantings, and live stake installations. Tackling porcelainberry helps protect the ecological backbone of those efforts. To learn more visit www.dbwp.org

-Dr. Mo Drinkard, Executive Director, Doan Brook Watershed Partnership

Raising Awareness of Invasive Species in Toledo: From Pretty to Problematic

My name is Yutian Zhou, but I usually go by Yvonne. I'm a senior at Maumee Valley Country Day School in Toledo, Ohio. I'm originally from Beijing, China, and this is my fourth year living in the U.S. and my third year at Maumee Valley.

My Waldorf early education connected learning closely with nature which strongly impacted how I see the world and taught me to appreciate the environment deeply. When I entered high school, I carried that mindset into co-leading Team Eco, a student-led club dedicated to sustainability. In my sophomore year I join a field study in Xiamen, Fujian Province, China, which focused on *Spartina alterniflora*, an invasive grass that has been destroying coastal wetlands in southern China. It was my very first time hearing of invasive species, and I was surprised by how serious the issue was and how few people seemed to know about it. I started wondering why such an important environmental threat received so little public attention.

When I discovered that invasive species also threatened wetlands near my high school, in northwest Ohio, I decided to do something about it. I came up with the idea of doing an independent study focused on local invasive species during our senior year three-week "intensive term". My idea was approved by our Independent Study Committee and supported by my host mom and Maumee Valley's Director of Finance and Strategy, Amy Yustick. Sally Gladwell, The Mannik & Smith Group, helped by introducing me to videographer Nick Corbin and LaRae Sprow at Metroparks Toledo who became my sponsors and mentors throughout the project.

My project focused on the spread of winged burning bush (*Euonymus alatus*) — a plant that many people think looks beautiful in gardens and yards, but actually causes serious ecological problems in local forests and parks. I spent time in Metroparks Toledo parklands and the Maumee Valley campus collecting data using EDDMapS to document where burning bush populations have invaded natural areas. I documented the entire process through video, recording about 40 hours of footage which I later edited into a four-minute short film designed to raise awareness of invasive species and how individuals can help.

At the end of the three weeks, I presented my project at our Independent Study Fair to teachers, students, and community members. It was amazing to see how many people became interested — several even

downloaded the EDDMapS app that allows anyone to help track invasive species by submitting photos, location and population data. It felt rewarding to know my project inspired real action.

Through my project I learned that everyone can make a difference in protecting the environment. While scientists lead research and management efforts, everyday people can also help by simply noticing what's around them, taking a picture of an unfamiliar plant, learning its name, and sharing information on platforms like EDDMapS. Small actions like these can help scientists monitor invasive species more effectively. This project also helped me realize how powerful communication tools are at helping to turn complex ecological issues into stories that people can understand and care about and that can inspire real change. I had a lot of fun working on this project and learned so much from my mentors and the process itself. I hope to pursue a college major that combines environmental science and communication, and continue creating stories that turn awareness into responsibility and responsibility into change. To learn more about invasive plants and hopefully be inspired to take action, you can watch my video and experience my journey through the links below.

video: pretty to problematic
Blog: investigating local efforts and awareness

- *Yutian (Yvonne) Zhou, Senior at Maumee Valley Country Day School, Toledo OH*

Siberian Elm: An Invasive Tree

Siberian elm, *Ulmus pumila*, is an invasive deciduous tree native to Asia that was introduced in the U.S for use in windbreaks considering its fast growth and tolerance of poor and harsh growing conditions. It can grow to be 60-70 feet tall or in a more shrub-like in harsh dry conditions. Preferring sunny areas for establishment, it readily invades disturbed areas, meadows and prairies, right-of-ways and stream or ditch banks. It is rarely found in mature forests. Using the OIPC Invasive Plant Assessment protocol, Siberian elm has a score of 45 which puts it in the "Invasive" category. Siberian Elm germinates readily and grows rapidly so it can quickly outcompete desirable native plants. It is also tolerant of Dutch elm disease which is a nonnative fungus that our native elm trees are highly susceptible to.

This medium sized tree forms an open crown of upward growing branches and many brittle branchlets that easily break off making it a messy urban tree. It has alternate, leaves that are 0.5 – 2.5 inches long. The simple leaves have serrated margins and the top of the leaf is a deep green while the underside of the leaf is paler with hairs along the vein axils. The leaves typically turn yellow in autumn. The inconspicuous flowers are without petals and they grow in clusters before leaf development in the spring. Flowers have both genders and can self-pollinate. The tree can also cross pollinate with native elms. Reproduction is primarily via seed production. Seeds, which are formed April-May, are circular samara fruits with wings and a single seed in the center. Seeds are spread primarily through wind although water, animals, and vehicles can spread seed long distances.

Siberian elm branchlet showing the alternate leaf arrangement and serrated leaf margins. Photo Steve Dewey, Utah State University, Bugwood.org

Siberian elm can be controlled using various methods. It is difficult to control once the trees are mature because of the high cost of large tree removal, however removing mature trees is important to reduce seed production. The seeds have a very high germination rate but fortunately lose viability quickly. In areas where a few mature

trees can be allowed to safely stand dead, girdling or basal bark treatments can be used effectively. In locations where the trees are smaller and highly selective treatments are desired, basal bark treatments or cut stump treatments can be used. If foliar chemical application of herbicide is an option, triclopyr can be used at 1.5%.

Siberian elm produces seeds with high germination rates that primarily disperse in the wind. Photo by Tom DeGomez, University of Arizona, Bugwood.org.

In areas where the trees are not yet mature, mowing can be an effective control option however it typically won't kill the tree. It will however keep it from going to seed and spreading. Mowing can also be used to knock the trees down to a more manageable size and then re-sprouts can be chemically treated with a foliar application.

To help protect our natural heritage, it is worth your time to remove this tree. In the urban landscape there are many beautiful native trees that can be planted to replace mature Siberian elm. Oak trees, hackberry, and basswood are only a few.

-LaRae Sprow, OIPC Board & Metroparks Toledo

American Hornbeam: An Underutilized Understory Underdog

American hornbeam*, Carpinus caroliniana* is a small but mighty native understory tree of Eastern North America's woodlands that is an undervalued and underutilized specimen with lots of opportunity in our suburban and urban landscapes. This species is known by many names, and shares common names with other species, distracting from its distinctive appearance and adaptability. Although one of its many names is Blue Beech, it is actually part of the birch family. It is also known as ironwood, as is *Ostyra viginiana*. *Ostrya virginiana* is also confusingly known as American Hophornbeam. Perhaps most appropriately, *Carpinus caroliniana* is known as musclewood, because of the smooth, undulating bark and fluted trunk shape, which gives the impression of a flexed muscle. This name is also appropriate, as this slow growing tree is quite durable and strong. In its strength, it boasts a lifespan of 80-150 years, a long life for a short tree.

The deep orange and scarlet leaves of American hornbeam in the fall are a sure showstopper. Photo by Mike Masiuk, Penn State.

As an understory tree, American Hornbeam is an extremely adaptable tree, usually grows 20-30 ft. tall and 20-30 ft. wide. It can tolerate both full sun and full shade, making it an excellent option for yards and natural areas with heavy overstory. It can also tolerate dry conditions and even standing water, making it optimal for our ever-unpredictable seasonal precipitation. It is also not particular to soil type or pH, making it an excellent candidate for planting in urban, suburban, and restoration sites

with highly modified and compacted soils. While somewhat tolerant to urban pollution and poor air quality, it is worth noting it is not tolerant to salt, whatsoever. So do not plant it near heavily trafficked roadways or walkways that are treated with salt in the winter.

The "flexed muscle" structure of the trunk and branches of American hornbeam is one of its unique visual characteristics. Photo: Jenkins Arboretum and Gardens, jenkinsarboretum.org.

Ornamental values are experienced year-round with this beauty. Early in the spring, this monoecious species shows off male and female parts, with 1-2" long catkins that lend to additional texture in the form of autumn nutlets. A full spectrum of color can be seen throughout the year, beginning with reddish-purplish leaves at spring emergence, to a dark green by summer, and yellow to orange and red during the final transformation in the fall. Throughout the year, but most notable during the dormant season, the distinctive silvery-blue smooth bark with a fluted muscular form is sure to catch attention.

The American hornbeam is an excellent candidate for those looking to provide benefits to wildlife and pollinators. The nutlets are a known source of food for small mammals and birds. The spring and summer catkins attract a variety of pollinators. It is also a larval host for several moths and butterflies including the Io moth, Eastern Tiger Swallowtail, Striped Hairstreak, Red-spotted Purple, and White Admirals. In addition to providing nutrition to wildlife, the form and structure work well to provide shelter for small mammals, birds, and insects.

American hornbeam provides many wildlife benefits. The small nutlets are a food source for birds and small mammals. Photo by David Lee, Bugwood.org.

Examples of some invasive and potentially invasive species it can replace are callery pear, glossy and common buckthorn, Japanese lilac, Golden raintree, crabapple hybrids, and Amur maple. It does have a popular, non-native (although, not invasive) counterpart, the European hornbeam, *Carpinus betulus*. While having many of the same benefits, it does lack the ecosystem and wildlife support that our North American species, *Carpinus caroliniana*, provides.

As a native species this is an obvious excellent choice for filling in shaded understory natural areas. Unlike many native understory trees, *Carpinus caroliniana,* doesn't require a niche, making it an excellent option for use as a landscape small to medium size tree specimen in residential and urban areas alike. While many suburban and urbanites tend to want to stay away from "messy" trees, an easy compromise can be made with this species as the catkins and nutlets are small and not heavily produced. This species is not generally considered a messy tree and is not known to have any significant pest or pathogen problems. This is species can be found grown from

seed at many native nurseries and is also available commercially in several cultivated varieties. Commercial, cultivated varieties give homeowners choices of form, color, and size specifications. It can be planted almost anywhere (that doesn't see winter road salt)!

- *Adrien Lowien-Kirian, OIPC Board & City of Bowling Green, OH, Urban Forester*

Extended Phenological Periods of Invasive Plants

One of the key characteristics of many invasive plants, especially invasive shrubs, is their ability to emerge early in the spring before most other plants and then remain growing into late fall and early winter. This time of the year this becomes especially apparent because most native plants are dormant and leafless while still dotted through a natural area you can observe plants with green foliage. Many invasive nonnative species, such as honeysuckles, English ivy, and purple wintercreeper, maintain their leaves through the winter. Often, if it is still green in December and January, it is most likely an invasive. Because of this long growing season for invasive plants, late fall and early winter are great times to learn to identify them. On your next walk or drive take a moment to observe a natural area and notice how pronounced and pervasive these plants are in our natural areas.

Citizen science initiatives from the USA National Phenology Network (usanpn.org) have helped document how big of a gap in the growing season there can be between invasive and native shrubs. For example, Maynard-Bean and colleagues used citizen science data gathered through NPN's *Nature's Notebook* to determine that invasive shrubs in eastern forests may have as many as 77 more days with leaves than native shrubs, giving them much more time to grow and likely gain a big competitive advantage.

There may be aspects of this difference that we can use to help with management. This 'evergreen' characteristic for many invasives lends itself for easy identification allowing for accurate winter removal. According to Caplan and colleagues, the fact that they are still green later than other species can sometimes allow for a late season foliar herbicide application that may impact natives less since they likely no longer have leaves.

Glossy buckthorn shrubs can easily be identified in this natural area in November since most of the native plants have already gone dormant and lost their leaves. Photo by Alex Roth, Friends of the Mississippi River.

As with all things there are exceptions; some native shrubs exhibit similar evergreen attributes as invasives such as bayberry (*Myrica penslyvanica / Morella pensylvanica)*, inkberry holly (*Ilex glabra*), and Alleghany spurge (*Pachysandra procumbens*), to name a few common natives. However, evergreen invasives are far more prevalent in our natural areas than our few evergreen natives.

-David Listerman, OIPC Board & Listerman and Associates, Inc.

-Emily Rauchert, OIPC Board & Cleveland State University

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#23916 Cincinnati Region (includes Dayton and Lima)
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OIPC Thanks You for Your Support!

Are You Removing Invasive Plants and Replacing Them with Natives?

OIPC is looking for articles to add to our newsletters about your experience. Sharing your story can help inspire others to redesign their landscape or remove invasives from surrounding natural areas so they can also experience the value of native landscapes and plant communities. Please contact us through our website if you have a story to share.

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.

OIPC Board of Directors