

## **PARTNERSHIP FIGHTS INVASIVE PLANT SPECIES**

### ***What is an invasive plant species?***

In the brochure "*Invasive Plants in Pennsylvania*," the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation & Natural Resources (PADCNR) defines an invasive plant species as, "a species that has become a weed pest, a plant which grows aggressively, spreads and displaces other plants." "Invasive plants tend to appear on disturbed ground, and the most aggressive can actually invade existing ecosystems. Invasive plants are generally undesirable because they are difficult to control, can escape from cultivation, and can dominate whole areas." PADCNR goes on to tell us that "most invasive plants arrived from other continents and are often referred to as "exotic," "alien," "introduced," or "non-native." These plants become problem species because once they end up out of their original or native environment; they are often free of their natural control mechanisms such as pests and diseases.

### ***Why are invasive plant species a problem?***

Invasive plant species are a problem because they directly threaten our native environments. When plants like Multiflora Rose, Japanese Honeysuckle, Japanese Knotweed and Burning Bush (just to name a few) are planted, they frequently escape from the area they were intended to stay (cultivated area) and spread rapidly to surrounding areas. Unchecked, invasive plant species displace our native plants and degrade habitat for native animals and insects. Many of Pennsylvania's rare, endangered and threatened native species are at direct risk of elimination from invasives. There are many invasive plant species currently found in Pennsylvania.

A listing of invasive plant species can be found at: [www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/wildplant/invasivelist.aspx](http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/wildplant/invasivelist.aspx)

### ***What can I do to help?***

The first step to help eliminate invasive species is to refrain from planting them. So, avoid using plants you know or suspect are invasive and start educating others about the threats of invasive plants. You should also survey your property regularly for invasive plants, remove them properly before they spread and replace them with native plants. For more information on identifying and removing invasive plant species, please search the following web-site: [www.naturalbiodiversity.org/invasives.shtml](http://www.naturalbiodiversity.org/invasives.shtml). For a list of Pennsylvania native plants, please search the following web-site: [www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/wildplant/native.aspx](http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/wildplant/native.aspx)

Also, please consider becoming a member of a group which combats invasive species and volunteer your time for eradication and control efforts. One such local group working to control invasive species is the **Southern Laurel Highlands Plant Management Partnership (SLHPMP)**.

In 2007, an association of local, state and federal agencies as well as non-profits, private groups and individuals joined together to form SLHPMP. The SLHPMP strives to increase awareness of the impact of invasive plant species and promote their replacement with native plant species in the Southern Laurel Highlands.

At the heart of the SLHPMP is a commitment to protect our native species by advocating invasive species control through education and outreach as well as project implementation. The group plans to accomplish these objectives by initially focusing their efforts within several of Fayette County's most notable natural areas: Western Pennsylvania Conservancy's Bear Run Nature Reserve and Fallingwater®, Fort Necessity National Battlefield & Friendship Hill National Historic Site, Ohiopyle State Park and Forbes Forest. SLHPMP is striving to control existing invasive species at each site and to limit the spread of invasive species from one natural area to the next. SLHPMP is also reaching-out to adjacent landowners as well as **anyone** interested in helping to control invasive plant species.

SLHPMP offers a volunteer based program known as Go Native! Project Weed Whack. Project Weed Whack is an annual series of hands-on field identification and eradication events that target a wide variety of invasive plant species threatening our native plants. The events often include free field guides and other hand-outs, free talks on interesting topics like the history of forests, free tours of local landmarks (Washington Tavern) and other fun elements like boat trips and potluck meals. For more information about joining SLHPMP and/or participating in a Project Weed Whack volunteer day, please contact **Connie Ranson** of the **National Park Service** by phone at **724.329.5818** or by e-mail at **connie\_ranson@nps.gov**.