



ADOPT-A-PRAIRIE

Volunteer Guidelines

What is my objective? The main objective for having this program is to eradicate invasive plants from the prairies. After keeping up with the removal for a few years usually the prairie will take care of itself. This will promote the desirable plants to grow and fill in the spaces left by the plants that are pulled.

Invasive plants need to be pulled down to the root in order to remove them permanently. Some invasive like Canadian Thistle and Bush Honeysuckle make even this method difficult since their roots send out runners. But because we want to maintain all the other plants in the prairie, spraying an herbicide is not an approved method. Therefore, hand pulling the invasive at different stages of their life works the best. Bag all plants you pull and leave the bags next to a trash receptacle. Preferably not in the playground area. If you know when you will be in the park we can notify the work crew to be looking for extra trash bags that needs to be picked up.

There are four plants we are looking at having removed from the prairie at Freedom Trail Park: Bush Honeysuckle, Canadian Thistle, Garlic Mustard and Queen Anne's Lace. Although Queen Anne's Lace is not really considered an invasive it has over taken some areas at Freedom Trail so we want to reduce its impact on the area.

We have provided photos in this document of the plants at each stage so you will know what to look for.

When is the best time to do a cleanup? We are asking the volunteers to perform a cleanup of their section of the prairie three times a year: Spring, summer and early fall. Please reference photos at the end to see what to look for each season.

- ✓ In the early spring (late April to mid-May) when the new plants are first appearing is the best time to pull the plants. At this time the plants are young and have not establish a big root system. The ground is usually soft too. Sometimes it is hard to spot the young plants and so they get missed.
- ✓ By summer (late June to late July) the plants that did not get pulled in the spring are now flourishing. By pulling them at this stage of growth you have caught them when they are more visible but have not yet gotten too big. The ground becomes harder with less rain so you should use a trowel or shovel to get all of the root system.
- ✓ Any plant that has been missed by fall (late August to mid-September) will be maturing. At this phase they are starting to go to seed. This we don't want to happen as the cycle will start all over again but it is hard to get everything at one time. When you find the plants going to seed it is best to bag the flowers to avoid spreading the seeds as you are working on removing the entire plants. Generally, by fall the ground is hard and so you will need to use tools to remove them.

What do I need to bring? Tools you will need: Garden gloves, small hand trowel, shovel, garbage bags. Please dress accordingly. We would also recommend to bring drinking water.

Now that the cleanup is finished, what comes next? Not only are we striving to create a wonderful prairie experience for all the people who visit Freedom Trail Park, but we hope to also establish a habitat for birds and insects. One insect who is losing their habitat across Indiana and the entire mid-west is Monarch Butterflies. For that reason we are also asking the volunteers who adopt a prairie section to help us establish Milkweed at Freedom Trail Park. **If you are interested in planting Milkweed seed in the prairie, please let us know.** We will provide the seed to you for fall planting. By doing this we will be able to help promote the continued success of pollinators in the Westfield community.



Invasive Species Key

1. Bush Honeysuckle

Spring Plant



Summer Flowering Plant



2. Canadian Thistle



Canada thistle differs from similar species in several respects. One difference is life cycle. Canada thistle is a perennial, whereas most other thistles (e.g., bull and Russian) are biennials. Canada thistle is also distinguished by its almost spineless flower heads and by its green, wingless, slender, spineless stems. In addition, the male and female flowers of Canada thistle are found on separate plants, while those of other thistles are on the same plant.

Seedling Description

The hypocotyl (stem below the seed leaves) of Canada thistle is pale green. Seed leaves are dull green, elliptical, thick, and $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{3}{8}$ inch (0.6 to 1 cm) long. They come together at the base to form a shallow cup.

The first true leaves—from seed or established root systems—are thick and covered with short, bristly hairs. Margins are wavy and irregularly lobed. Each lobe ends in a sharp prickle.



Canada thistle is a perennial broadleaved weed with creeping roots that extend up to 17 feet (5 m) horizontally and 20 feet (6 m) deep. Plants grow 2 to 5 feet (0.6 to 1.5 m) high. The stem is slightly hairy when young and grows hairier with age. Leaves are alternate and oblong. They have irregularly lobed margins with spiny crinkled edges terminating in a spine. The upper side of the leaf is dark green; the lower side is light green and slightly hairy. Some plants have leaves that are smooth on both sides. Canada thistle leaves are stalkless. The base of each leaf surrounds the stem, giving the impression that the stem is also spiny.



3. Garlic Mustard



4. Queen Anne's Lace

Spring Plant



Summer Before Flowering



Mature Flowering Plant



Questions? Contact:

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