

Transformation Underway at Waterford Park

-Ginny Brace
Friends of Waterford
Park, President

The Friends of Waterford Park is working toward transforming Rock Creek and Waterford parks, 18.5 acres of City property between Baughman's Lane and Route 15 just south of Rosemont Avenue, into a welcoming environment for people and for wildlife. Our efforts are two-pronged: we are engaged in an ongoing effort to control the invasive exotic species that dominate some areas of the park, and we are planting areas of the parks with native plants to encourage wildlife.

Several invasives occur in large numbers in the parks. Japanese honeysuckle, bush honeysuckle, multiflora rose and garlic mustard thrive in the under story of the 10 wooded acres. Japanese hops and Japanese stilt grass occur along both Rock Creek and Carroll Creek. Ailanthus trees (also known as the tree-of-heaven) both large and small are found mainly along the field and woods edges. There are of course other non-native plants in the park, but these are the ones that, if left uncontrolled, would take over any unmowed areas.

Last fall, Phil Pannill of the MD DNR Forest Service gave interested members a tour of the park, pointing out the invasives and giving us the basic strategies for control. FWP members pulled huge numbers of hops last fall; since we didn't begin until fall, some of the vines were over 20 feet long. In three Saturday sessions, we got most of the large vines from the stream area.

This winter, the DNR Forest Service developed an invasives control plan for us and assisted us in obtaining close to \$5,000 in federal funds administered by the state for the project. One large accessible area near the paved walking path was chosen for control by use of herbicide; Frederick County Weed Control personnel sprayed the invasives in the under story and any ailanthus and Norway maple. They have also treated large ailanthus in other areas of the park. City of Frederick personnel will cut the treated trees after the chemicals have done their job.

FWP volunteers have been patrolling the stream on a monthly basis keeping the hops population down. This effort has been very successful. We have also removed Japanese stilt grass and mile-a-minute, both found in much smaller quantities than the hops. We spent hours pulling garlic mustard this spring. We purchased a weed-wrench with grant funds. This marvelous tool allows a medium-strength person to pull up 6-foot bush honeysuckle, roots and all; leverage is the key to this tool.

FWP volunteers are now working on removing the honeysuckle (and some creeping euonymous, commonly known as burning bush, that escaped many years ago into the

under story) from a small area of woods near the stream. As we remove the honeysuckle, which comprises almost the entire under story, and we see the stream, we know our efforts are worthwhile. Since no chemicals are being used in this area, FWP can purchase ferns and other part-shade and shade-loving herbaceous plants and shrubs this fall and next spring.

FWP volunteers also mulched a "reforested" area where about 35 trees were planted after a sewer-connection project last year. This area was rocky, impossible to mow, stripped of topsoil and was going to become a haven for invasives. We will add more mulch (donated by the City) that will rot and become topsoil. We will then under plant this area with natives.

The Waterford Park invasives control process has been going on for about 12-months. We have made great strides. We know that the seeds of some invasive plants live for years in the soil, and each time the creek rises, we are the beneficiaries of seeds from upstream. Our long-term goal is to keep a dozen or so committed volunteers involved in invasives control and replanting with natives for at least the next 5 years. If you are interested in joining us, we'd love to have your help. Contact Ginny Brace at 301-682-6135 or by email at ginny4ftp@aol.com.