

EMBARRAS VOLUNTEER STEWARDS
CONSERVATION DAYS FOR FALL 2011

Our conservation days are on Saturdays from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. Everyone is welcome and no prior experience is necessary. We do not have formal membership or dues. Just come out as often as you like and help us do our small part to maintain the health of prairie remnants, prairie restorations and woodlands. Visit this page from time to time to check for updates. To get e-mail notifications of updates send your e-mail address to Larry at lhors@cmecwildblue.com with a request to be added to the list.

Schedule

September 10 – 9:00 a.m. – Removal of multiflora rose, bush honeysuckle and autumn olive at Woodyard Memorial Conservation Area, 1.8 miles south of Route 16 on Route 130.

September 17 – 9:00 a.m. – Bush honeysuckle removal at Douglas-Hart Nature Center, corner of Lerna Road and DeWitt Avenue in Mattoon.

September 24 – 9:00 a.m. – Bush honeysuckle removal at Lafferty Nature Center in Charleston. Take Reynolds Drive to Carl Sandberg School and park behind the school.

October 1 – 9:00 a.m. – Invasives removal at Warbler Woods. Take Route 130 south from Charleston 4 miles to Daileyville Road (CR 460N) and go ½ mile to the Warbler Woods entrance on the right.

October 8 – 9:00 a.m. – Little Embarras Valley for invasives removal. This is a new venue for us, near Embarras Bluffs. Take the Ashmore-Oakland road to CR 1470N, turn west and meet at the bridge over the Little Embarras River

October 15 – 9:00 a.m. – Grass seed collection at Coneflower Hill Prairie. Bring large paper bags. Take the Bruce-Findlay road 5 miles west from Coles Station, turn right at the electric sub-station, go 2 miles to the “T,” turn left and go one mile to the parking area.

October 22 – 9:00 a.m. – Douglas-Hart Nature Center

October 29 – 9:00 a.m. – Autumn olive removal at Lakeview Park in Charleston. Meet at the end of McKinley Avenue near the water works.

November 5 – 9:00 a.m. – Lafferty Nature Center

November 12 – 9:00 a.m. – Removal of woodies at Neoga RR Prairie. Take Route 45 one mile past the four-way stop in Neoga and turn right at the cemetery sign.

November 19 – 9:00 a.m. – Autumn olive removal at Hanley Prairie. Go south from Charleston to CR 300N, turn west and go to the end of the road. Park in the hunter parking lot.

December 3 – 9:00 a.m. – Multiflora rose removal at Walnut Point State Park. Meet at the Pleasant Grove picnic area.

INVASION BIOLOGY:

ALIENS AND NATIVE INVASIVES

We who are amateur conservationists often use the terms “alien” and “invasive” interchangeably, especially as much of our volunteer work involves combating these plant species in prairies and woodlands. A recent commentary in the prestigious journal *Nature* admonishes not only amateurs but scientists as well to recognize that not all alien species are harmful. (Mark Davis, et al., “Don’t Judge Species on Their Origins,” *Nature*, 474, 153-154, 9 June 2011)

An example is the tamarisk tree. Many consider it a pest because it consumes large amounts of water, but in the southwest United States it appears to be better-suited to helping water management than are the native cottonwoods and willows. Deciding that the tamarisk does not “belong” in that region because it is not native may be less important than evaluating its impact there.

Midwestern conservationist Stephen Packard, in a recent post to the VSN Stewards website, agrees with this notion, saying that it is counterproductive to regard aliens as our worst problem. Wild carrot and bluegrass, both aliens, provide better turf for seeding prairie species than do native ragweed, goldenrod or dogwood. Further, we sometimes remove the aliens and forget the depredation caused by native invasives. We remove alien buckthorn from oak woodlands because its spread discourages flora and fauna that are part of the balanced ecology there; but if we leave the native maple, ash, box elder and cherry the degradation of the oak forest will continue because of the shade from these species. The buckthorn should not be allowed to spread, but the root problem is not the alien buckthorn, but the absence of fire, to which oaks are resistant but thinner bark species are not.

We are admonished to “watch our language,” and be concerned more with the impact of a species than with its origin.