

General planning:

Step one: Determine your mission. It is recommended that you limit your focus to one or two main offenders in your area that are easier to remove to help with group weeding efforts (i.e.: garlic mustard). By educating people about one plant, you educate them about the overall problem of invasive plants and the importance of native plants.

Mission example: *Try to contain the spread of invasive plants in Massachusetts to encourage the re-introduction of native plants.*

Step two: Get the word out about the problem.

- Create a Facebook page for your group (if budget allows, you can pay to boost your initial post on your FB page-- for about \$20 you can reach out to specific groups in your area, i.e. bird lovers or gardeners or those interested in native plants)
- If budget allows, create a website for your group (cost = about \$10/year to register a domain name, and about \$100/year to have the website through a service like godaddy).
Note: Wild Cohasset will do a free website design for you if needed!
- Submit a press release with a photo to your local newspaper, see attached for recommendation and/or tailoring for use with your group

Step three: Recruit volunteers.

- Get a list of local churches/synagogues etc. in your area, and call, email or write to them so they can insert info into their newsletters.
- If there are local garden clubs in your town or neighboring towns, try to find who is the current officer in charge of conservation, or the current president of the club.

Send information, or offer to give a free presentation to the group about what you are doing. Even if you are not comfortable with public speaking, you can go to a meeting to meet the members and pass out a sign-up sheet for volunteers. Even better if you can bring an invasive plant with you, like a stalk of garlic mustard.

- Contact your local boy/girl scout troops. Tell them you have an environmental project for a group event (we've used boy scout groups to weed roadsides next to conservation land, parks and playing fields).
- Post flyers in local coffee shops and town bulletin boards.
Wild Cohasset will create/tailor a flyer for your group if desired.

Holding group weeding events:

Step one: Plan the date for your first (annual) weeding event

A garlic mustard weeding event is best in spring when plants are flowering

*note, right around Earth Day is a great time for this if it works with your region's weather

A black swallow wort weeding event is best in mid-summer when pods are present but not yet open.

Step two: Get the word out:

- 8 – 6 weeks prior: Ask your town to help spread the word (all town governments are different but you may try your town's conservation agent or green committee, open space committee, mayor's office)
- 6 weeks prior: Put up flyers around town
- 6 weeks prior: Call local radio station to see if they will do a free PSA
- 6 weeks prior: Contact local middle & high schools to see if there are 'green' or 'environmental' clubs who can participate
- 6 weeks prior: See if the local boy/girl scouts will participate
- 4 weeks prior: Send a press release to local papers
- 3 weeks prior: Advertise the event via your FB page (boost for \$20)
- 2 weeks prior: Ask the local garden club to send an email to all their members about it
- 2 weeks prior: Ask local churches/synagogues to post about it on their sites and in their Sunday newsletters
- 1 week prior: Post about it on town FB pages
- 1 week prior: Post about it on local gardening, bird lovers or organic/native plant FB pages

1. Specific planning for the weeding event, i.e. garlic mustard pull.

First, choose if you want to have a group weeding event in one spot OR if you want to assign folks small individual pockets. A large event is ideal for volunteers who have no experience, as you can teach and guide them. Smaller events are excellent at tackling the problem on a larger scale, but require more advance training of volunteers if they are not familiar with the targeted plant.

Large group event: For a large group event, the best spots are where a group can gather (i.e. conservation land, park, an area surrounding ball fields, etc.) and where there is parking. In this case, we ask people to meet at a specific time (bringing a large hefty style trash bag and gardening gloves with them).

If you choose a large group event, you should contact your town's DPW about how to dispose of the bags of weeds. If your town has a 'pay as you go' garbage system (i.e. special trash bags) you can attempt to get permission from the local DPW to use regular trash bags for this specific purpose. Otherwise, it is suggested that you ask participants to bring the appropriate trash bag instead of a generic hefty bag. [Wild Cohasset can advise how this has been arranged in different towns.](#)

Smaller events on people's own time: You may choose to scout small pockets of weeds and assign people/families a spot that they can tackle on their own time during on a specific date.

This takes more work in the planning stages, but can do a great deal at limiting the spread of invasives since the most efficient way to tackle invasive plants is to always to first limit the spread and you may be able to completely eliminate potential problem spots before they get out of hand. This also means individuals are responsible for disposing of their own trash bags, so is simpler.

Our group handles this as follows: in the weeks prior to the event, someone drives around and writes down where there are small areas of garlic mustard growing. When people sign up, we assign them a specific spot (for example: "tiny pocket of plants near the mailboxes across from 243 Main Street"). We send them an email with a photo of the spot.

Getting info to volunteers: In advance, we provide them with:

- links to videos to teach them how to weed:

Garlic mustard id and removal: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l3WznIDFcNg>

Black swallow wort identification: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nC4D-dy2PKE>

- A phone number where they can text that day with photos if they are confused or having issues identifying plants

- A PDF that details best practices

Garlic mustard: <https://wildcohasset.org/garlic-mustard-resources>

Black swallow wort: <https://wildcohasset.org/black-swallow-wort-id>

Education

One of the best ways to advocate for native plants and invasive plant control is through education. Always provide a place for people to get more info (website or Facebook page).
Suggestions:

- **Newspaper articles:** offer to write a free local column in your hometown newspaper detailing issues about wildlife/nature in your region. Suggested topics: birds, butterflies, local wildflowers, etc. [Wild Cohasset can provide you with sample articles and help come up with subject matter for your region.](#)
- **Lectures:** local libraries, garden clubs, Rotary and Lions clubs, etc. are often looking for speakers. Wild Cohasset can provide you with Power Point lectures on the following subjects: a. removal of invasive plants, b. creating a wildlife sanctuary in your yard, c. attracting more birds to your yard, and d. the connection between native plants and wildlife.
- **Radio:** Local talk radio stations are often in search of guests to discuss local initiatives. Earth Day (end of April) is a great time for this as the stations are often looking for topical environmental-related issues to feature.

House calls

Our group offers house calls free of charge. Many who take advantage later become volunteers, alert their neighbors to problem plants or donate.

We mention this on our website and in any published information.

The primary purpose is to help them identify problem invasive plants and give them concrete tips and materials on how to remove them.

We also try to research issues for people (for example, giving suggestions of good native plants for their needs, or finding where they can purchase a particular plant).