

## Weed Out! Racine 2025 Report.

*We want you to know about the great stuff we're doing in our Colonial Park!*

Our overall objective is to rebuild a functioning ecosystem after losing our ash trees to the emerald ash borer. That means adding native plants and removing non-native invasive ones.

Focus Area: rebuilding the ecosystem by adding native plants.

Wild Ones gave us about 60 natives, which we planted in hoop cages to protect them from cottontails and deer. A grant from our local Sierra Club enabled us to purchase supplies for the cages, and Ace Kortendick's Hardware gave us a generous discount.



Lynda plants orange milkweed near the bridge to Lincoln Park.



Johnson Financial Group folk plant natives near the pine grove.



mistflower blooms!



This false blue indigo was a rescue; (left) it had very deep roots!

The swamp milkweeds were a gift from Monarch Watch. (right)

We also scattered acorns, walnuts, silver maple seeds, and milkweed.



## Focus Area: rebuilding the ecosystem by removing invasive plants.

With 40% of the canopy gone, many invasive plant species took advantage of the extra sunlight and water to grow exponentially.

We target-sprayed lesser celandine, and pulled or dug not only the usual garlic mustard and dame's rocket, but also motherwort, catchweed bedstraw, bitter dock, burdock and thistles.



Weed Out! Racine volunteers logged over 500 hours planting natives and pulling invasives. To the left is one pile of dame's rocket waiting for PRCS staff to pick it up and take it away. Racine Parks staff picks up and disposes of our brush all season long. It's a big commitment; we couldn't do this work without them; we have no place to put the vegetation, and no means to get it there.



Rose has found another stalk of purple loosestrife. Third time we have a single stalk. First find of creeping bellflower; could become a big problem. Controlling Canada thistle is a top priority for 2026.

### **The Phragmites research project continues...**

We are concerned about the Phrag growing on the riverbanks. Left unchecked, it will make an impenetrable barrier to fishermen and others who want river access. The results of this study may help us make a plan.



AJ measures Phrag in one of our three study areas.



Reed canary grass (RCG) is another story. Because of its dense root system, storm water is not absorbed into the ground, but runs directly into the river, carrying sediment and pollutants with it. The roots also prevent native plants from growing, thus reducing ecosystem diversity. Digging and pulling grasses is not effective; they must be treated with herbicide. . We have contracted with Marek Landscaping to control our RCG population; they have the equipment and expertise to do this job. We could do this because of a grant from WI chapter of Sierra Club and individual donations to Weed Out! Racine. A challenge for 2026 and forward is to have the funds to complete the process. We have applied for grants from the DNR, but we won't know the results until March.



We also build suppression plots to create competition for RCG this technique is useful where the RCG is not yet dominant.



Phil wrangles the cardboard; Becky, Josef and Charity insert dormant shrub cuttings into the ground through the cardboard! Finally, mulch provided by PRCS is added over all...the shrubs will sprout and then Eureka! a shrub thicket – and it's free!



Here are a few critters that like what we're doing... the ground hog is climbing cow parsnip!



## Focus Area: Enhancing the Park for the Humans that Use it!

Parks, Root River Council and we have added more benches, one in the pine grove area, and another on the outer path, near a tree where owls have been spotted.



The pine grove on the middle path is now a pleasant place to rest and enjoy nature.

Using Merlin app, we ID'd over 90 bird species in lower Colonial this spring.



Small check dams have rerouted the water flow. This area is much drier, while other parts are wetter. The pathway did not wash out this summer

We opened the viewshed at this bench near the West High Street bridge. It's fun to watch the fishing below.



If we aim to keep the river accessible for fishermen, we must control Phragmites and reed canary grass.

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