

This summer my focus and tasks were much the same as last summer; I focused on removal of invasive species, general park upkeep, and public relations. In addition to this, the garden was a special project, as was the clearing of the previously mowed area to the west of the parking lot.

Invasive Species

My primary species of focus was again garlic mustard, and I succeeded in pulling it from the entire park above the fence-line/bluff, and a few patches below the bluff. I was disappointed that I did not finish the entire park like I did last summer, but I attribute this to the huge amount of garlic mustard between the overlook and the parking lot between the path and the fence (along Regent St.). The first year rosettes that blanketed the entire stretch of the park along Regent St last year now made an almost continuous patch from the overlook back towards the parking lot, along both sides of the fence. This took the entire month of June and into July to pull all of it, and by mid-July, the seeds were starting to open. Unlike last year, I did not have time to go back and climb the fence to get the garlic mustard on the other side of the fence, so anyone that lives along that edge or knows people who do could kindly suggest that they help by removing the garlic mustard from their yard. One thing that is promising though, is that I observed significantly less first year garlic mustard in this area, as well as all other areas I pulled from (as it should be, since I pulled all the second year garlic mustard last year), so I am hopeful that next year will be manageable.

I also spent a significant amount of time pulling dames rocket from areas above the fence-line, and I was able to finish the park above the fence with the exception of three patches. These patches were the centers of much larger patches that I worked the perimeter of until the patch was much smaller and did not cover an entire area of woods. The remaining patches of dames rocket above the fence are: 1) To the right (when looking from the parking lot facing the bluff) of the

open/mowed area below the playground, 2) In the center of the wooded area to the left of the path going north down to the corner staircase, and 3) along the fence-line going towards the overlook. All but the third of these areas I pulled dames rocket in the entire surrounding area, in hopes to at least limit its spread, but unfortunately, I did notice a lot of first year dames rocket, especially in the areas west and north of the parking lot/play ground. I also pulled dames rocket from the back of the prairie, but only to the paths where the prairie ends, there is still a large amount down there surrounding the prairie. So even though dames rocket will continue to be a battle for years to come, it is good to know that I at least greatly reduced the seed bank and made a dent in future populations, and hopefully helped to contain it in the areas it has already invaded.

I also worked to remove buckthorn, honeysuckle, Norway maple, mulberry, and other non-native invaders from specifically chosen areas. Areas were selected by amount of previous removal effort; I worked in areas that had been worked on before in order to maintain and expand on previous work. I pulled buckthorn from the stretch along the fence roughly below the playground, before the steps down towards the valley with all the woodland poppies. I also removed buckthorn from the overlook area, with great assistance from highly productive, albeit small, workday groups (thanks to everyone who came!! Your hard work was very impressive!) I also removed buckthorn and other woodies from the small area below and slightly off to the right of the playground with the patch of mayapples, right next to the trail to Roy's. I also spent a significant amount of July and August removing buckthorn and other non-native woodies, like green ash, mulberry, honeysuckle, black locust, and Norway maple, from the area directly west of the parking lot, some of which used to be low-mow. In an attempt to keep this area looking like a native Wisconsin forest, I removed these non-native and invasive woody plants in hopes to maintain and possibly restore the diversity of forest floor herbaceous natives. I cleared the area of woods to the left of the path that heads directly west out of the parking lot, between that path and the path that parallels Regent St, and made a noticeable difference in the appearance of this woods. I would definitely suggest that this area continue to be maintained and expanded.

Since it is such a highly visible section of the park, people then have the chance to see a wooded area should look like, as compared to one that is overtaken by buckthorn/honeysuckle. This can hopefully serve to educate park-goers about what effects invasive species can have on diversity of native plants. I think if this area is to be maintained it would be great to have an interpretive trail sign here explaining what I stated above.

In addition to these, I also removed every patch of Japanese hedge parsley that I was able to find, although I did not ever search the park below the bluff, so only patches that I found were removed. The upper area had been searched while pulling garlic mustard, so I am confident that the park above the bluff is free of Japanese hedge parsley, except for the first year plants, of which a few small patches remain. One is in the area west of the parking lot, to the left of where the path going west from the parking lot splits, and the other is to the right of the path leading to the prairie from the Cinderella staircase, right before you reach the prairie. (There was a large patch of second year plants there also.)

I also treated all of the Asian bittersweet, an invasive vine which is just starting to become established. I found only one fairly large vine, the rest were small, and all of them were treated with Garlon and killed. We are lucky to have caught these new invasive plants early on, as the patches were contained and easily taken care of. Anyone who has been to the arboretum can attest to how badly the Asian bittersweet can take over an area.

I also took the tops of the reed canary grass off as it seeded, but I'm pretty sure some seeds still managed to reach the ground. This is a terrible and highly aggressive invasive to have near the prairie, and should be carefully monitored, because especially once it leaves the shady perimeter of the prairie, it can really aggressively compete with native plants when it is in full sun. Because of this, it is also important that the trees that shade the area of reed canary grass not be removed, because shade is one thing that is able to inhibit the growth and spread of this invasive.

I also treated two shrubs of Japanese barberry, and sprayed and later removed the black locusts that were invading the area by the upper shelter where the oaks were planted.

General Upkeep

Picking up trash from the parking lot/upper shelter area was one thing I did every day; I feel that a clean park helps to discourage littering. I also picked up trash from other areas like Roy's shelter and the overlook about twice a week. One slightly amazing thing that happened was after I went to clean up the party area behind the prairie, and there was a disgusting and ridiculous amount of trash, so instead of cleaning up after them I brought down a trash bag and left a note saying something to the effect of 'have some respect for places that you enjoy.' A week or so later I went back, and I was amazed! Someone had actually cleaned up the area and put the trash in the bag!

The trails are another thing in need of continued maintenance. I trimmed the trails, maintained rain bars, and shoveled soil, roots, and leaves off of the paved trail down to the prairie. I did these tasks as needed, so either after a rain, or about every two weeks.

I also kept up the shelters and picnic tables by removing graffiti as often as it appeared, which added up to about 12-15 picnic tables that got new coats of paint throughout the summer. Also, while I had the brown paint down at Roy's shelter, I figured I would repaint the vertical wood beams in the shelter, which were badly chipped and covered in webs and bugs. The city also had to remove some graffiti on the stonework at Roy's and the restroom building. I also removed graffiti from three of the interpretive trail signs, the one on top of the corner staircase I had to use a scraper and the sign still doesn't look fabulous, but at least it is now legible.

I also pulled the poison ivy from the small area west of the parking lot near the fireplace and picnic tables, because it was so close to the path in a very open area, so there was a danger of kids (or adults) walking through it.

Public Relations & Projects

Most of my interaction with the public this summer was telling people to keep their dogs on leashes, or telling them that sorry, but there is no biking allowed in Hoyt, try Quarry Park for that. As always, some people listen, and some don't, and there are definitely a few chronic offenders of the leash rule. I think one way to help this is to explain to people that I use an herbicide in the woods after stumps are cut, and you wouldn't want your dog getting sick because of accidentally stepping on any that may have dripped. Unfortunately, I did not get to tell anyone this, because whenever I was in the woods applying herbicide and a dog ran by, I had no idea where the owner was.

The garden was a major project this year. We ordered four plants for it: elf-leaf goldenrod, columbine, jacob's ladder, and sky blue aster. The elf-leaf goldenrod, jacob's ladder, and columbine were used to fill in and expand existing patches, while the sky blue aster was a new addition. Later on, Galen provided me with some three-lobed coneflower (*Rudbeckia triloba*), and shorts aster (*Aster shortii*). I had help planting and weeding the garden from Nancy, Nancy and Janice, much thanks! I also finally drew up the garden master plan. (Side note: I accidentally switched the locations of sky blue, and shorts aster, so in the final plan which is copied, the blank space is short's aster, and where "shorts aster" is written is actually sky blue aster. I can fix that and make new copies though.) While there is much work to still be done in the garden, I think we made significant improvement in it this summer.

Another minor project was making a tool that is supposed to be useful in fighting buckthorn-invaded areas. It is a sponge attached to the end of a long-handled grabber, which, when dipped in Garlon, is supposed to deliver the correct amount of Garlon to the base of the stem. As a basal bark treatment, it will take several weeks or more for the buckthorn to die, at which point it can be easily cut and removed. I tried this tool in one area of buckthorn and taped it off so that next summer we can see the results of this tool. The area is directly west of the parking lot, following the path that goes west out of the parking lot until it splits off, the patch is on the left side of this path, as it turns left.

I truly enjoyed another opportunity to work in this beautiful park over the summer again, I feel lucky to have had such a great summer job! Although next summer I will likely move on to other things, I will always remember Hoyt Park fondly, and visit as often as I can! Thank you to the board and all the Friends for such a great opportunity.

Other things to note/suggestions

- I asked Russ about how best to deal with the Quaking Aspens at the overlook, and he said that it is best to girdle them in May, when the inner and outer bark can easily be separated. The bark later grows together.
- I think larger and more visible “no bikes” signs might be a benefit. The existing signs are so small that most people do not even realize that biking is not allowed in the park. Most of the people I told this to were not aware that biking wasn’t allowed.
- The shed below the bathroom is in need of: 1. a good clippers/loppers- they all seemed to disappear at the workdays. 2. a saw- the curved one I used last summer I did not see at all this summer. 3. More signs to mark areas of pesticide application- a few were ruined by rain this summer. 4. More orange tape- I used it up over the past two summers. This way the next ranger can know to go get these things.
- Also- I don’t know if the September workday was still planning on doing plantings at the overlook, but according to Russ, September is still too early to seed native plants, they will germinate and die over winter. Native plants should be seeded in October.