

Partners in Parks program

Long-term park project - managing invasive plants

Long-term park project: Invasive plant species management

Interested in maintaining the biodiversity of natural areas? Neighbourhood groups can help manage the spread of invasive, non-native plant species in city parks in Waterloo.

Through our Partners in Parks program, participants remove invasive plant species listed below through mechanical control measures such as hand pulling, digging or cutting to ground level. Re-planting the area with native species may be considered. We follow [Ontario Invasive Plant Council](#) Best Management Practices for guidance on managing invasive plant species in Ontario.

Invasive plant species

Garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*) is a biennial herb that is especially troublesome in shaded habitats such as moist woodlands, waterways and disturbed areas along trails. It can out-compete native plants and the seeds remain viable in the soil for up to 10 years.

Common buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica* L.) is an invasive, non-native shrub that can invade a variety of habitats such as woodlands, hedgerows and open areas, where it often forms dense stands. Buckthorn produce berries that are eaten and spread widely by wildlife.



Community stewardship activity - Garlic mustard pull



Common buckthorn removal with extractigator

Time and place

- Natural areas within public parks in Waterloo (view City of Waterloo's [online map](#))
- Garlic mustard removal takes place early May to June for a minimum of 5 years; the initial workday is led by city staff who supplies hand tools and removes harvested plants.
- Common Buckthorn removal takes place May to October as a one-time stewardship activity led by city staff (weekdays 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., weekday evening from 4 to 6 p.m. or Saturdays) or as a long-term park project.

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The city staff liaison and project coordinator volunteers work together to determine the extent of the project, location, timing and method of removal.

During the initial workday, the city provides hand tools, participant gloves, instruction and a tool safety talk, and removes harvested plants from the site. City staff lead and monitor the activity to ensure tasks are completed safely and of the highest standard.



Group leader responsibilities

- Hand-deliver educational materials to homes adjacent to park prior to initial workday.
- Schedule and monitor community workdays using participants' tools.
- Engage community by involving group participants ages 14 and up, and those capable of moderate physical activity such as bending, walking on uneven terrain, digging and lifting up to 20 lbs.
- Ensure group participants wear personal protective equipment, have signed an Informed Consent Agreement and are directly supervised with suitable project tasks.
- Dispose of plant stems in provided yard waste bags or other suitable containers and remove from the site according to the Region of Waterloo's [household yard waste collection schedule](#) or contact your city staff liaison for large quantities.

Next steps

Follow the community action process outlined in the Partners in Parks program guide.

1. For a one-time community stewardship activity, the group leader submits the online application form to carry out a buckthorn pull event.
2. For long-term park projects, two project coordinators from separate households:
 - Review the volunteer position description for a PIP Community Group Representative and complete an online volunteer application form.
 - During a mandatory orientation session, the city staff liaison reviews the PIP safe-work guidelines with project coordinator volunteers, who then sign a Partners in Parks agreement confirming your commitment to the project.