

Long-term park project: Managing invasive plants in parks

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

Through this program, group participants remove the invasive plant species listed below through mechanical control measures such as hand pulling, digging or cutting. 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 or European buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*) is an invasive, non-native shrub that can invade a variety of habitats such as woodlands, hedgerows and open areas, where it forms dense stands. Buckthorn produce berries that are eaten and spread widely by wildlife.



Time and place

- Natural areas such as woodlands or meadows within city-owned parks in Waterloo.
- The initial community workday is led by city staff who provides an orientation, hand tools and other supplies, and removes harvested plants from the park.
- Garlic mustard removal requires a minimum five-year commitment from May to June, with regular community workdays to hand pull or harvest the plant at ground level.
- Buckthorn removal requires a minimum one-year commitment from May to October or consider a one-time stewardship activity led by city staff. If using the critical cutting period method, a minimum two-year commitment is required, with an initial harvesting, followed by monthly visits during the growing season to trim any new shoots, depleting the plant of nutrients.

Park Project Community Lead Volunteer role:

- Hand-deliver educational materials to homes adjacent to park prior to initial workday.
- Schedule and monitor regular community workdays using participants' tools.
- Involve group participants ages 14 and up, capable of moderate physical exertion such as bending, walking on uneven terrain in natural areas, digging and lifting up to 20 lbs.
- Dispose of plant stems in provided yard waste bags or other suitable containers and remove them from the site according to the Region of Waterloo's yard waste collection schedule or contact your city staff liaison for large quantities.
- Provide an annual summary indicating the number of workdays / participants / groups involved and successes or challenges with this activity at your project location.

