Restoring a Native Landscape & Managing Invasive Plants at Goodrich Park

York Parks and Recreation Department, in partnership with the York Conservation Commission, have been working together to begin the implementation of recommendations outlined in the Invasive Plants Control Practice Plan. This plan was developed in 2024 with assistance from the Maine Forest Service for the combined 28.5 acres on Town owned property at Goodrich Park.

Funding support from the York River Stewardship Committee's Watershed Grants Program was secured earlier this year for part of this project. The York River Watershed Grants Program is funded through the National Park Service Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers Program.

Using a phased approach, the initial focus will be on the 5-acre area surrounding the Grant House. The key recommendation in the plan includes an integrated management strategy. This combines mechanical and manual removal methods (utilizing forestry mulching equipment and hand cutting/pulling), monitoring and follow up with a targeted and timed herbicide application by a licensed resource professional as needed for the most efficient approach to be successful in the suppression of 12 invasive plant species found here. If and where appropriate, select native seeds and plants will be purchased and installed to support initial habitat restoration.

The long-term goal is to not only restore ecological balance in the park but also use it as a demonstration site to raise public awareness about effective invasive plant management and environmental stewardship. This project will help achieve the objectives in the York River Watershed Stewardship Plan to protect, restore, and foster stewardship of the river and watershed resources for the benefit of current and future generations.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the most common invasive plant species found at Goodrich Park?

A 2024 survey of Goodrich Park found 12 common invasive species:

1. Glossy buckthorn
2. Common buckthorn
3. Japanese barberry
4. Multiflora rose
5. Shrubby honeysuckles
6. Asiatic bittersweet
7. Japanese knotweed
8. Norway maple
9. Black locust
10. Autumn olive
11. Privet
12. Burning bush

These invasive species have the potential to suppress tree recruitment and growth in forests, crowd out beneficial native plants, reduce wildlife habitat quality, and are generally a nuisance when maintaining a property.

Why are there so many invasive plants at Goodrich Park?

Invasive plants have become pervasive in southern Maine, especially in "natural" areas, that is, areas that have been left in an essentially undisturbed state, either post construction/enhancement or in perpetuity. Certain invasive plants have been introduced as ornamentals (Norway maple, Barberry, Honeysuckle, Burning Bush, Multiflora rose). Others have been 'transplanted" by wildlife as seeds are spread thru the digestive tract of birds and other wildlife. Construction debris, especially the disturbance of soil and introduction of fill can introduce new invaders (Japanese Knotweed).

What is the problem with invasive plants?

There are many downsides to invasive plants. For one, they have generally evolved in another part of the world. The normal insects and other species which would control the spread of these plants in their native habitat are not present here, thereby allowing an often unchecked spread. Often these plants bloom earlier than our native species, and stay green longer into the fall, outcompeting the natives. In addition, several invasive plants are allelopathic, that is, they produce substances that slow or prevent other plants from growing in that area, giving them a competitive advantage.

I see the birds feeding on the berries of some invasive plants, like bittersweet and honeysuckle, why is that a problem?

Berries of invasive plants tend to have higher levels of sugars and lower levels of fats than native berries. Birds that migrate rely on stored fat reserves to carry them on that migration, for instance, across the Gulf of Mexico. The burst of sugar would not allow such a trip. An example is the fat content of fruit from an Oriental Bittersweet (2.6%) vs a Virginia Creeper (23.6%), Gray Dogwood (34.9%) or Northern Bayberry (50.3%)

Furthermore, invasive plants do not support the native insect populations compared to native plants. This is important as the protein found in larval insects (caterpillars and the like) are the primary source of nutrition for baby birds. (It takes 3000 caterpillars to raise a chickadee.).

How are you planning to remove the invasive plant species?

The Town of York follows Integrated Pest Management (IPM) procedures. There will be some initial removal and mulching by machinery, which will initially result in a more open look to the park. Some of the plants will be removed by hand, often by volunteers. The Town has employed the services of a Maine Licensed Pesticide applicator who, when appropriate, will apply the appropriate herbicides, at appropriate doses and timing, in compliance with state and federal

regulations in accordance with IPM. The trails at Goodrich Park may be closed to visitors for a few days during and after this procedure.

Will my dogs be harmed by herbicide treatments?

The Town of York will be following IPM practices outlined in the Invasive Plants Control Practice Plan. The standard herbicides for invasive plant management are considered to be relatively non-toxic to dogs and other domestic animals once they are dry. It is important to keep dogs off the treated area until the application has completely dried. The Maine Licensed Pesticide applicator will post the area closed when needed, up to 48 hours after application. For more information about herbicides that are recommended for invasive plant management, contact Maine Board of Pesticides Control.

Where, when will this work occur and will the park be closed?

Phase 1 focus area shown in the polygon outlined in blue on map to the right (approx. 5 acres)-

Mechanical mulching is expected to take place early December for the first phase of the project. Hand cutting and pulling will be scheduled as early as June in this area. Targeted follow-up treatment in the mulched areas is expected to take place sometime in August. The trails at Goodrich Park may be closed to visitors for a few days during mechanical mulching and during follow-up targeted herbicide treatment.

Future Phases include additional areas in the polygon outlined in red (approx. 23 acres)- TBD

How can I learn more?

A slide presentation can be found on York Parks & Recreation Department's website. A live presentation to the York Selectboard can also be found on Town Hall Streams (Nov. 10 meeting; 40m:40s into meeting). These slides provide information about why native landscapes matter, the problem with invasive plants, share examples and case studies from nearby communities, and inform the Board and the public about the work that will be undertaken in Goodrich Park.

A great resource for additional information about invasive plant species in Maine can be found at Maine Natural Areas Program.

You can also report invasive plants you find on iMapInvasives.