

At the Conservation Commission (CC) October monthly meeting, the Commission discussed the role it should take in addressing invasive plants in Wilton on public property and open spaces.

Two areas were identified by the Commission.

1. *Education for the general public on the impact of invasive plants on habitat, the identification and eradication of invasive species, and the restoration of cleared habitats.*
2. *Formation of a Wilton invasive plant committee made up of representatives of Wilton organizations that steward land and open spaces. This committee would develop methods to consistently collect and track invasive species in Wilton as well as methods to eradicate invasive plants and restore habitats.*

Below are key areas of invasive plants management that the CC would focus its education for the general public (in bold type).

1. Education of the public of the threat invasive plants impose on the environment

Education of the public about the threat of invasive plants to the environment is currently demonstrated by a few community organizations. The Pollinator Pathway and its members educate through their web site, as well as by engaging their partner organizations in projects that eradicate invasive plants, replant natives and restore healthy habitats for pollinators. The Pollinator Pathway partner organizations include Wilton Land Conservation Trust, the Wilton Garden Club, Woodcock Nature Center, and the Norwalk River Water Association. Other environmentally conscious groups include Trout Unlimited and Wilton Go Green.

The voice of the Conservation Commission (CC) will be a necessary amplification and reinforcement of the work being done by these organizations. The CC will direct its education to the general public for use in neighborhoods and backyards using the CC website and the E-newsletter. Under the title *Important Invasive Information* “i3” information will be shared on invasives including identification, impact on habitat, environmentally responsive eradication, careful habitat restoration, and advocacy of environmentally conscious organizations’ projects. We plan to feature two invasive species in each E-newsletter. The CC needs to actively expand the E-newsletter’s reach to *all Wilton residents* (by pushing the messages to them in addition to the passive means of posting them on the Town website) to be effective .

2. Formation of a Wilton invasive plant committee to focus on Identification and assessment of invasive plants in Wilton

Currently none of the organizations in Town are documenting invasive plant management in any organized way. In response to Kate Throckmorton’s 9/8/20 letter to the CC stating the necessity of collecting data on invasive plants on public property

and open spaces in Wilton, **the CC is interested in partnering with other Wilton environmental organizations** (Wilton Land Conservation Trust, the Wilton Garden Club, Woodcock Nature Center, and the Norwalk River Water Association, Trout Unlimited and Wilton Go Green) **to explore, develop and implement best methods to track, record and report the data on invasive plant growth on *public property and open spaces in the Town of Wilton*.**

Partners would be responsible for how they collect data on the properties they monitor or use as well as areas of public land (tbd-roadsides + ?) where invasives are appearing. Since we are in the time of Covid, Zoom meetings with partners can accomplish a lot (Led by the CC) beginning with brainstorming sessions, followed by research of methods, and development of a plan of action.

This could include reporting to the statewide CT Invasive Plant Working Group (CIPWG). In addition, the Committee could track effectiveness of eradication and restoration methods.

Several organizations in Wilton are already working on invasive species projects. By directing The CC's education to the general public, we complement and amplify the work already being done. Collaborating with the committee on improved tracking of growth, eradication and restoration rates throughout Wilton's public properties and open spaces will provide a way to measure for success.

Summary of work that is already being done in Wilton and opportunities for the CC to add value and complement:

Education on Environmentally Responsible Eradication and Restoration

The Pollinator Pathway and its members educate through their web site, as well as in opportunities engaging their partner organizations in projects to eradicate invasive plants, replant natives and restore healthy habitats for pollinators. The Pollinator Pathway partner organizations include Wilton Land Conservation Trust, the Wilton Garden Club, Woodcock Nature Center, and the Norwalk River Water Association. Other environmentally conscious groups include Trout Unlimited and Wilton Go Green.

The Pollinator Pathway and its members and partners use environmentally responsible eradication methods when working on projects in the field. The Pollinator Pathway communicates environmentally responsible eradication on its website and engages partner volunteers on projects in the field. In addition, the Pollinator Pathway and its member organizations engage in habitat restoration projects.

The CC education initiative to the general public through the E-newsletter i³, will educate the public in identification and environmentally responsible eradication of

Conservation Commission strategy for invasive plants on public property and open spaces

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Susan DiLoreto and Jackie Algon

specific invasive plants. A next step might be to develop native plant lists for specific habitats and make them available to the public for use when replanting open areas after eradication.