

Open Space Committee – 2013 Annual Report

The Open Space Committee's annual report typically describes properties conserved in the past year and the natural resources protected thereby—farmland, intact forests, stream corridors, wetlands, trails, scenic views and so on.

For the first time since 2006, there are no completed projects to report. Instead, it's an appropriate time to turn the focus on natural resource protection of another kind.

Increasingly, attention is turning statewide—and nationwide—to invasive plant species. As a threat to a functioning, resilient natural landscape, they rank second only to loss of natural resources through development of all kinds.

Along with the Conservation Commission, the Open Space Committee is launching an effort to raise awareness of the most invasive plants in town. These are flowers, shrubs and trees that are on the state's list of prohibited plants—their sale and/or transport is prohibited by state law.

One priority target species is garlic mustard, often introduced in roadside or other fill. About two feet tall with white flowers in May, garlic mustard spreads rapidly to create a single-species mass that crowds out other plants. As double trouble, as it spreads into the forest its roots release a chemical that impedes tree health and growth.

Crush stem or shiny leaves and they'll smell like garlic.

A second target species, Japanese knotweed, also known as “false bamboo,” spreads through an aggressive root system. If segmented, the bamboo-like stem sections also can take root.

Double or triple trouble for this plant: while the roots of most plants help anchor soils against erosion, the bulbous roots of knotweed lack fine rootlets. Knotweed actually increases erosion along streams where it often takes over.

Water quality and stream channels suffer.

The Conservation Commission and Open Space Committee's new brochure, ***“Pulling Together, Invasive Plants of the Monadnock Region, Identification and Control,”*** features 12 plants for landowners and townspeople to be on the watch for plus another really bad actor expected soon.

Early detection is the best approach; after an invasive reaches a certain mass, control and eradication are difficult. Waterways, farm and forest lands suffer, along with the many resources they support.

The brochures are available at the Town House. Photos help with plant ID, and recommended control methods are covered.

“Pulling Together” is the goal. The brochure includes photos of people doing just that—in schoolyards, backyards and roadsides—pulling together for a good cause.

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