

Plant Stewardship at Oshawa Second Marsh

With spring upon us, there is nothing more welcoming than seeing our plants slowly starting to pop up through the ground. You may already have seen trilliums, trout lilies, may apples and bloodroot as you are out and about on your hikes. Not only are native species coming back, but so also are dominant introduced (invasive) plant species. These plants are a concern for not only the impact they have on the environment, but also on people.

What are some of these impacts? Dominant introduced plant species can grow in very dense monoculture stands. This displaces our native species and reduces the biodiversity in our natural areas. These plants provide poor wildlife habitat and out-compete our native species for light, water and nutrients. They can spread in a variety of ways — producing many seeds that can survive in the soil for years, and then become established quickly when the opportunity is right. These plants can also grow and become well established from very small pieces of their stolons, roots and rhizomes. They can change the chemistry of the soil, thereby preventing native species from growing. Finally, some plants produce a sap that is toxic to people. If this sap finds its way onto your skin, when exposed to the sunlight, it can cause harmful burns.

You can prevent the spread of these introduced species. Seeds and other plant parts can attach themselves to your boots, clothing and pets. This allows them to move from one area to the next with ease. To stop the spread, stay on the designated trails to limit contact with these plants. Do not bring plants home and plant them in your garden. Do not bring plant stalks with seeds home for decorations and do not compost them. Brush down boots, clothing and pets for seeds after your hike.

You can also join us for Volunteer Steward Days on the following Wednesdays — May 10, 17 and 24 at 9:30 a.m. The Friends of Second Marsh Plant Stewardship Subcommittee will be out on the McLaughlin Bay Wildlife Reserve trails on Wednesday some mornings in May to guide volunteers in helping to manage dominant introduced plant species. To learn about the Plant Stewardship Subcommittee, please take a look at our March newsletter at: www.secondmarsh.ca/publications-and-links.

There are many resources available online to learn about dominant introduced plants. One site that you may want to take a look at is the Ontario Invasive Plant Council at www.ontarioinvasiveplants.ca.

The Friends of Second Marsh website — www.secondmarsh.ca — has a list of our upcoming events. You can also email Wioletta at wwalancik@secondmarsh.ca if you are interested in joining us for the Volunteer Steward Days.

Wioletta Walancik is the administrative and programs director with Friends of Second Marsh. She has worked for this organization for more than 20 years. Her title has changed over the years and her responsibilities have increased but her core role remains the same — educating the public about Oshawa Second Marsh and sharing her love of nature with them.