Impact Project Report

Invasive Species Education and Volunteer Removal Program

Issue

Invasive plants can spread through residential landscapes and wooded areas, competing with native vegetation and reducing opportunities for wildlife habitat. Homeowners may want to address invasive plants but lack the knowledge, confidence, or community support to begin. Restoring native habitats therefore requires both hands-on removal and education about the ecological value of native plants. The Invasive Species Education and Volunteer Removal Program was developed as a community-centered approach to this challenge. The program connects property owners with volunteer removal activities while encouraging broader participation in habitat restoration.



Project

The Invasive Species Education and Volunteer Removal Program allows residents to sign up for an invasive plant removal day on their property. In return, participants commit to volunteering at another property and/or making a small monetary donation to the Wake Forest Conservation Foundation. This reciprocal model is designed to extend the benefits of each workday beyond a single yard. Education is central to the program. Its foundational concepts include working with the North Carolina Native Plant Society, incorporating Homegrown National Park principles, introducing participants to Seek by iNaturalist, and discussing beneficial insects, reduced lawn area, and avoiding pesticides and herbicides.

Results

The Invasive Species Education and Volunteer Removal Program completed invasive plant removal projects at three residential properties. Invasive species removed included English ivy, Chinese wisteria, Chinese privet, Japanese honeysuckle, and Japanese stiltgrass. These volunteer efforts helped reduce invasive plant populations and created opportunities for native vegetation to recover.

The project demonstrated how community involvement and hands-on volunteer activities can support habitat restoration while raising awareness about the negative impacts of invasive species. Moving forward, we hope to continue and expand the program through the Wake Forest Conservation Foundation, encouraging additional property owners and volunteers to participate in invasive species removal and native habitat restoration.

Students

This project is the work of Angela DiPaolo & Joshua DiPaolo

Highlight

Partner Organization

NC Native Plant Society

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