



THE CONSERVATION CONNECTION

News from MCSWCD



Protecting Today, Providing Tomorrow

Another Successful Tree Program Down!

The District's Conservation Tree & Shrub Program once again grew this year, fulfilling a total of **479** orders and distributing over **20,379** trees and shrubs, along with over **474** conservation multi-packs. Thank you to everyone who ordered from us this year, we hope you had a happy planting and we will see you next year!

Thanks to the hard and efficient work of our packaging team consisting of all our District employees, volunteers at Cornell Cooperative Extension's Master Gardener Program, and volunteers from SUNY Brockport we once again packaged all of our trees in less than one week! As always a special thanks to ecopark and Monroe County Department of Environmental Services (DES) staff for their help and the use of their facility for this program.

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Our bare root stock ready to be pulled and put into orders



District staff assisting a customer with their order

2022 District Dates & Deadlines

September 20-22
Conservation Field Days

October
Fall Fish Program

October-December
NYS DEC Endorsed 4-Hr
Erosion & Sediment
Control Training

Our office will be closed
July 4th for Independence
Day and September 5th for
Labor Day



If you missed out on this year's program, be sure to check out our website in late December for updates on next year's program.

Envirothon Returns to In-Person Format After Two Years!

Thank you to all our instructors, exam authors, volunteers, and sponsors that make this event possible!



On May 12th, the District hosted four local high schools at Monroe County’s Ellison Park for the 30th annual Envirothon educational competition event. The District was excited to introduce our new logo and banner for the event. Special thanks to Finger Lakes Castle for donating T-shirts with our new logo for all of the students, volunteers, and staff! Thanks to Arca Interactive for

designing the logo and thanks to Vital Signs for our new banner!

The Envirothon is an annual outdoor, environmental education competition for high school students. Teams of five compete against each other to demonstrate their knowledge in five core topics: wildlife, aquatics, forestry, soils and current issues which is selected at a national level each year. This year’s current issue topic was Waste to Resources. The winning team represents Monroe County at the New York State competition held on the campus of Hobart & William Smith Colleges in Geneva, NY, which was held on May 25th & 26th. The winner of the

NYS Envirothon will go on to compete in the National Envirothon in Oxford, Ohio July 24th – July 30th.

This year 11 teams, comprised of over 50 students, from Brighton High School, Brockport High School, Eastridge High School, and Honeoye Falls-Lima High School competed against each other for the chance to go to the NYS Envirothon, with Team Apes from Brockport HS taking first place and going on to represent Monroe County in Geneva! They

did the county proud coming in 16th place out of 35 teams and coming in 6th place overall for the oral presentation aspect of the competition! They also placed 7th overall in the aquatics topic!

Students used learned knowledge, critical thinking, and their surroundings to have the best chance at victory, along with helping prepare them for future environmental careers and gain an appreciation for each environmental topic. District staff loved the excitement and determination of the students during the live event and we can’t wait for next year!



Students taking the wildlife exam



The winning team from Brockport!



All competing students gathered for the awards ceremony



District Helps Implement Climate Resilient Farming and Prescribed Grazing Management

Climate Resiliency Farming: Irrigation Reservoir

The reservoir after completion



Climate resilient farming (CRF) is the concept of reducing the impact of agriculture on climate change and increasing the resiliency of farms in the face of a changing climate. The basic idea of climate resilient farming is to mitigate (reducing the impact) and adapt (increase resiliency).

In the case of this project, adaptation was the driving factor. Increased periods of drought are on the rise and expected to continue.

A 0.6 acre irrigation reservoir was implemented on a dairy farm to hold an estimated water volume of 540,000

gallons for the purpose of storing water during periods of drought that can be used to irrigate the farm’s alfalfa fields on the northern and eastern portions of the farm in order to sustain the farm’s forage for the 200 cows present. For more information regarding the CRF program, please visit: <https://agriculture.ny.gov/soil-and-water/climate-resilient-farming>

The reservoir after completion



Prescribed Grazing Management: Windbreaks

As a continuation of a silvopasture and prescribed grazing project completed in 2020, the District assisted with implementation of an additional part of the project:

establishing living fences to act as windbreaks to provide shelter for the animals. Windbreaks are useful to control wind, noise, and visual resources in addition to providing wildlife and pollinator habitat, improving air quality, and reducing soil erosion from wind.

In total, **12 rows** of plantings consisting of **638 trees and shrubs** were established on the pasture.

Some of the species used in the living fences included American chestnut, American elm, American hazelnut, balsam fir, northern catalpa, northern pecan, pawpaw, persimmon, red cedar, streamco willow, swamp white oak, and white spruce.



One of the living fences installed



Sheep in one of the rotational pastures

Invasive Species Spotlight: Swallow-wort

Monroe County (and most of New York state) has become home to both species of invasive swallow-wort vines: pale swallow-wort (*Vincetoxicum rossicum*) and black swallow-wort (*Vincetoxicum nigrum*). These herbaceous vines spread fast and choke out native species, often interfering with valuable forest regeneration. These vines have toxins that make them undesirable to deer and other wildlife that may be able to biologically control them. Their opposite, glossy leaves travel up the entirety of the stem, along with maroon to pale-pink flowers that are present from May until July. Flowers are followed by long, slender seed pods that split open releasing hundreds to thousands of seeds depending on the infestation.

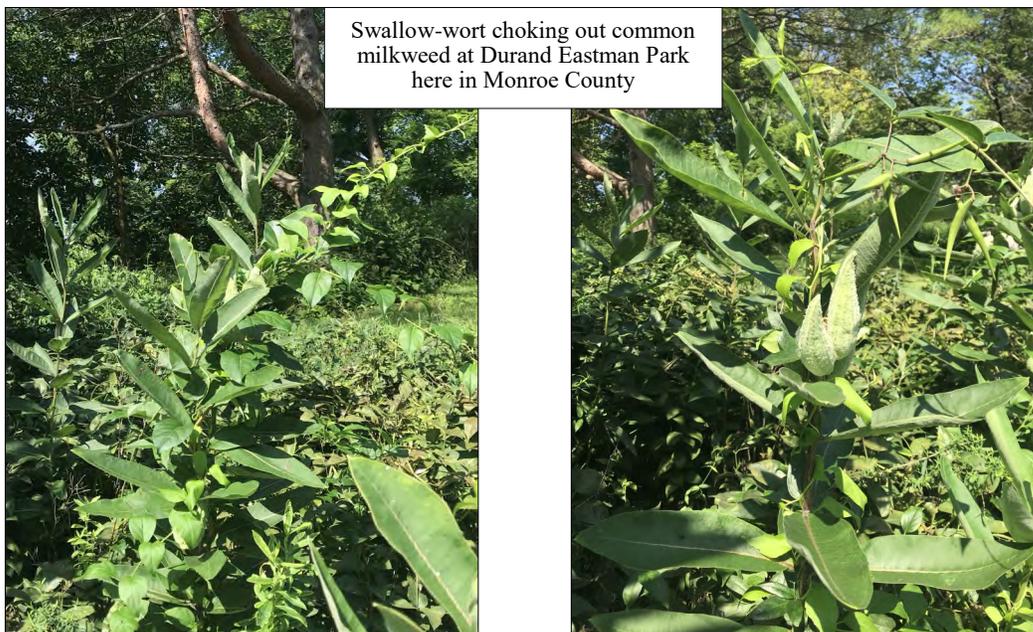


Flowers of pale swallow-wort

A major threat of swallow-wort species is that they often choke out our native common milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*). Swallow-wort is related to milkweed and can closely resemble it when both are growing at the same rate. This is such a major threat since monarch butterflies (*Danaus plexippus*) use common milkweed as a host plant for their eggs. Once the eggs hatch, the larvae feed on milkweed until they begin the process of transforming into an adult butterfly. Since swallow-wort commonly invades milkweed patches and is closely related, adult monarchs will lay eggs on swallow-wort by accident and the larvae cannot survive off swallow-wort and die.

Monarch populations have decreased significantly in recent years, making swallow-wort all the more dangerous. Smaller infestation of swallow-wort can be dug up, but cutting them will make them aggressively resprout, so continued management is necessary.

National Pollinator Week is June 21 - 27 this year and you can help monarch populations by planting native pollinator gardens on your property to combat the destruction of invasive species like swallow-wort. To learn more about creating your own pollinator garden, please visit <http://monroe.cce.cornell.edu/master-gardeners/pollinator-friendly-gardens> or call (585) 753-2555.

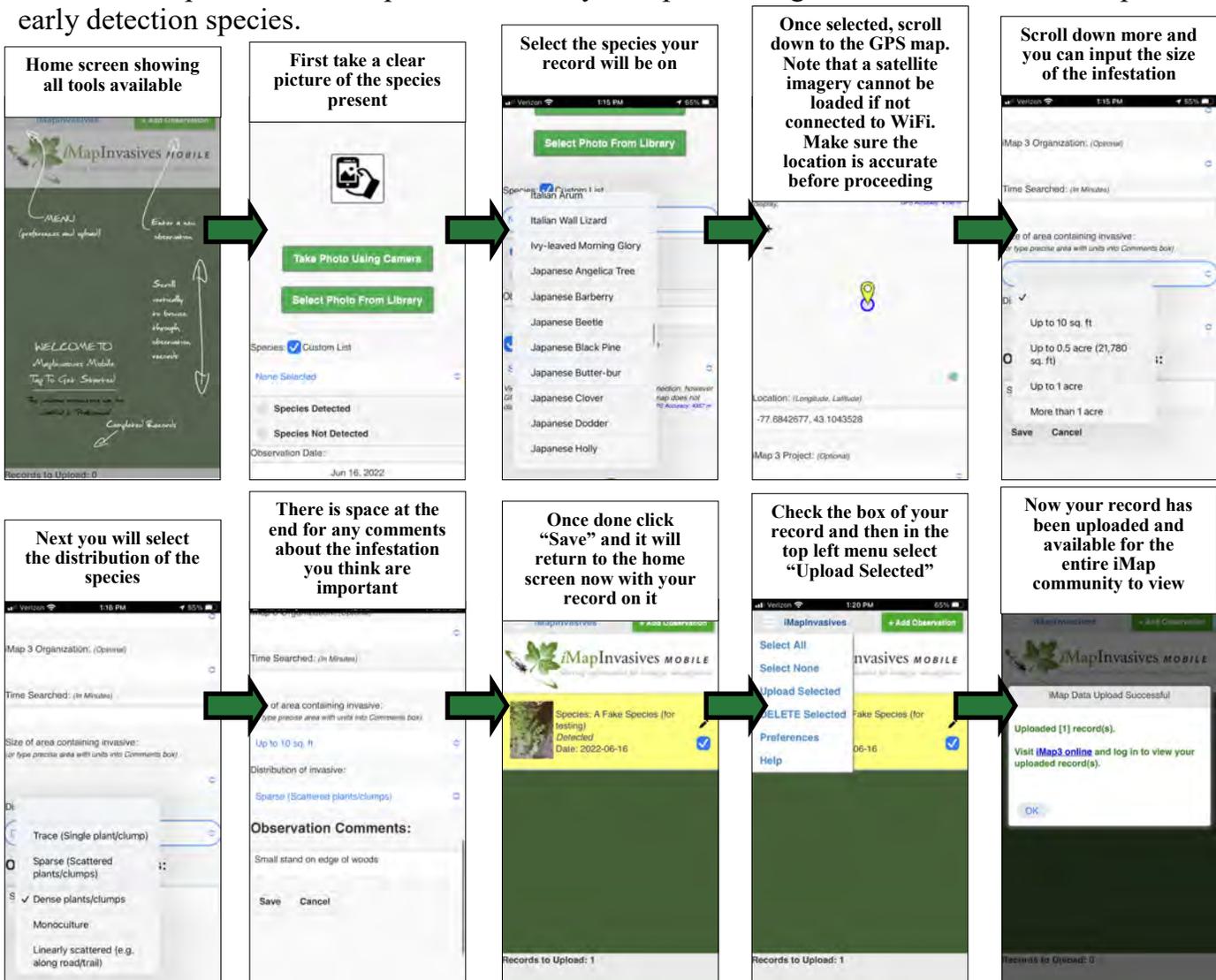


Swallow-wort choking out common milkweed at Durand Eastman Park here in Monroe County

Citizen Science: Using Apps to Report Invasive Species in Your Own Backyard

These days it can be pretty hard to go for a walk at your favorite park or just through your neighborhood without passing by an invasive species. Perhaps you see one and think that it's unfortunate it is growing where it is, but that's the only thought you give it. One simple way to quickly document the presence of that species is through the iMapInvasives mobile app or website. iMapInvasives is a great citizen science tool that can be used straight from your mobile device. This online data management system is Geographic Information System (GIS)-based and assists industry professionals, along with community scientists, with tracking the spread of invasive species so they can work to protect our natural resources from invasive threats.

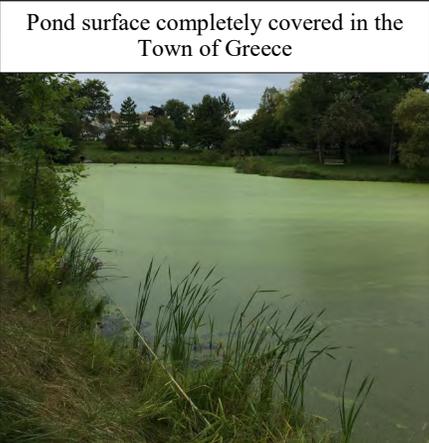
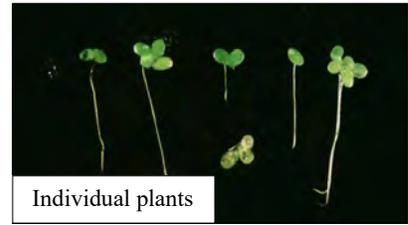
iMapInvasives is a user-friendly way of getting everyday citizens like you and me to do our part in getting valuable data to scientists, along with stopping the spread of invasive species. This is especially important for early detection species that have the potential to invade our area and create destruction. Species like the Spotted Lanternfly or Japanese Angelica Tree would be examples of early detection species.



*Note that you must first login to iMapInvasives online and create an account before uploading through the mobile app. Once you upload a record through the app, you can then go to your account online to find your record on the map.

Attention Pond Owners: Got Duckweed?

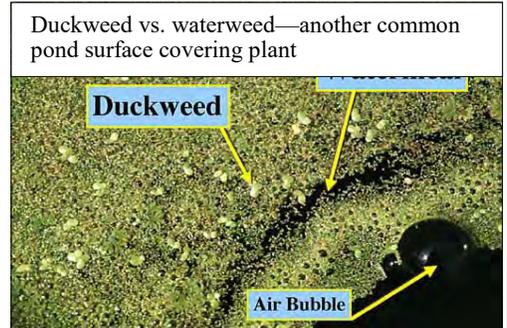
What’s all that green algae that’s covering your pond throughout the summer? Well, it’s actually not algae at all - it more likely is duckweed (Lemnaceae). Duckweed is a native free-floating plant that totally covers up a pond’s surface when left unchecked. Individually, duckweed plants are no larger than 1/4th of an inch wide and are round in shape with a single root hanging from each plant. Duckweed is most commonly found in ponds that are in woodlands or on the edge of them. They are also commonly found in ponds that receive drainage from feed lots, septic fields, etc. as they love nutrient-rich environments. Duckweed is most commonly spread by ducks, geese, and humans as they attach to each source of spread.



The quick spread of duckweed (within a few weeks of the first emergence your pond could become covered) across the pond makes for an unsightly aesthetic and prevents any sort of recreational enjoyment for your family or guests. In addition to being unsightly, duckweed can severely harm your pond’s fish population. Once the surface layer of your pond is covered, all sunlight is blocked from entering the deeper areas of your pond, resulting in underwater vegetation and algae no longer photosynthesizing, and therefore no longer producing oxygen. This lack of oxygen stresses fish populations, often leading to fish kill events. Eventually the water quality, and therefore fishing quality, of your pond will diminish over time. While control for duckweed is difficult, the best ways to

control duckweed in your pond would be eliminating the source providing nutrients to the pond, skimming the surface and disposing of the weeds far from the pond, or draining the pond if the infestation is largely out of control (and even with this the pond would need to be fully dredged to remove the plant altogether).

The use of herbicides is not recommended to control duckweed and this requires a NYS DEC permit and improper use could harm the ecosystem and other organisms. The use of grass carp is also not recommended as they rarely feed on duckweed enough to control it.



Look for the Stewards and Signs



While duckweed is not an invasive species to New York, it does have characteristics of most aquatic invasive species. With boating season here, the District is helping Monroe County Department of Environmental Services to distribute signs at various boat launches around the county to educate the public on proper ways to stop the spread of aquatic invasive species like draining your boat and removing all aquatic vegetation on your boat.

Next time you’re at a launch whether boating or not, be sure to check out the signs and stop the spread of invasive species.

Our watercraft stewards will also be stationed at two launches in Monroe County: the Erie Canal launch on Ayrault Road in Perinton and the Port of Rochester in Charlotte within the City of Rochester.

Improving Water Quality Through Proper Lawn Maintenance

Summer is officially here which means it's time for lots of lawn maintenance for the next 3-5 months including lawn mowing, debris disposal, landscaping and more, especially if a stream or pond is on your property. The way you treat and maintain your lawn can make the difference not just for your property, but for your neighbors' properties as well; really anyone downstream, and even beyond to whatever waterbody your stream drains to, is affected by how you maintain your lawn and dispose of lawn debris. Lawn debris should remain just that, debris on your lawn. Grass clippings from mowing and other debris should not be blown or swept onto sidewalks, driveways, or roadways. If any debris is on these impervious surfaces, it will be washed into the nearest storm drain during the next rain event. This debris will then contaminate our waterways with nutrients leading to a decline in water quality and health.

Any lawn debris should also not be thrown into the creek or pond as the organic matter will then decompose, leading to the depletion of oxygen levels in that waterbody, which in turn can lead to fish kill and an overall decrease in water quality. Grass clippings can be a major source of decreased water quality for the above reasons and can also lead to excessive algae growth in your property's waterbody from all the nutrients released by the grass clippings. Too much algae is harmful for your pond or stream's health. In addition to depleting oxygen, increased algal growth from nutrients, and overall decreased water quality, improper disposal of your lawn debris can also clog the storm drains, which can lead to flooding if stormwater cannot drain properly.

Leaving lawn debris, especially grass clippings, in your lawn opposed to dumping them elsewhere can actually help your lawn. By leaving them in your lawn, they, along with their nutrients, are recycled back into your lawn and landscaping, basically acting as your own natural fertilizer by providing valuable nutrients back to the soil. The same goes for leaves in the fall; instead of collecting leaves after raking, you can instead mow over your leaves getting them into small bits and leave them in your lawn to act as natural fertilizer.

If you really don't want to leave debris in your lawn, using it as mulch is an additional beneficial alternative. Mulching vegetable gardens, flower beds, or tree/shrub plantings with leaves and clippings is a way to get them out of the lawn and out of our storm drains.



It is important to remember that larger lawn debris (fallen branches, logs, old lawn furniture, etc.) should also not be dumped in your stream or pond. Many of the towns and villages in Monroe County offer curbside debris pickup. Follow this link to see if your town or village offers it and when pickups are: <https://www.monroecounty.gov/designvironmentalrecycling>

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Conservation Field Days Registration is Now Open: Volunteers Needed!

The District's 33rd annual Conservation Field Days event is being held September 20th - 22nd this year and we are going to need volunteers! Fifth and sixth graders from around Monroe County will be coming out to Ellison Park to learn about and engage in a plethora of environmental topics ranging from wildlife conservation to stormwater management to simply appreciating nature taught by various experts in their fields from the Seneca Park Zoo, the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, Cornell Cooperative Extension, and many more.

Volunteers will be needed to help at school check-in, take pictures during the event, and help set-up and take down stations. If you are interested in volunteering for this event please email JacobKearney@monroecounty.gov with what day(s) you can help out.

If you are a school or instructor interested in participating in Conservation Field Days, please email JacobKearney@monroecounty.gov to get added to our outreach list for upcoming years.

Calling All Youth & Adult Volunteer Groups!

We are looking for volunteers to help District staff in the removal of the invasive Oriental Bittersweet vine at Legion Eyer Park in East Rochester. Anyone interested should email JacobKearney@monroecounty.gov with their availability. We anticipate removal activities will take place in July during the morning and last approximately 2-3 hours with your extra help.

Oriental Bittersweet is present all along the streambank and the District will be cutting and pulling the vine from the bank. Volunteers are needed to help cut, pull, and bag the vine.

This is the perfect opportunity for local scout groups, school clubs, residents, and more to get outside and learn about invasive plants, stream buffers, water quality, and conservation efforts.

Come give us a hand and possibly see the local Osprey fish for trout!



This newsletter is published quarterly by the Monroe County Soil & Water Conservation District and is available at no cost to interested landowners, land users, and to the general public. If you would like to receive our newsletter, call us with your email address or view it online at www.monroecountyswd.org. Programs and services offered through the Monroe County Soil & Water Conservation District are made possible through the financial support of the County of Monroe, State of New York, specialized grant opportunities, and fundraising programs. All SWCD programs and services are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis without regard to age, color, national origin, political beliefs, religion, sex, age, marital status, sexual orientation, or disability. Our Board of Director meetings are open to the public; please call for information.