

I think that, not only should we allow or encourage residents to volunteer in the parks, but I think that the process should be clearly defined and advertised. (If it had known it was an option, I would have gotten involved in maintaining my local park many years ago rather than watching the invasive species spread and wondering why nothing was being done about it.) We're making some progress with finding volunteers and matching them up with PTRC members who need volunteer assistance, but I think there should also be clearly-defined options for people who want to work independently, such as the Girl Scout group who are putting flowers into Johanna Marsh or residents who want to maintain the woods behind their property.

Here is part of a discussion about volunteering on the Arden Hillbillies page:

“Can just anyone cut buckthorn on city/park land? Or is there some permitting process required?”

“Yes, anyone can remove buckthorn from Arden Hills city property. We have done so over the years behind our house at a small scale with some success in regrowing native species (though honestly not a lot of success 😞).

Unfortunately, in my experience, Arden Hills doesn't have any real requirements/education/restrictions for people who want to do large scale buckthorn removal on City property (aside from the waivers Steve mentioned), and though well intentioned, it can have a lasting negative impact on the landscape (e.g. removal of native trees and shrubs that resemble buckthorn, as well as native understory and woody debris that prevent erosion, using improper herbicides near wetlands, etc.) and neighbor relations.

My experiences with other Cities and Ramsey County have been different than this for sure.

I really appreciate that the folx doing the Hazelnut Park project are providing educational moments, involving the local community and including assistance of a naturalist. With things like this and a long-term plan, volunteer work can have fantastic results.”

I think that the process should be clearly defined so that there are no surprises; the city knows who is working in the parks, what they intend to do, and if they're meeting their goals and the resident volunteers know who to communicate with, what work is acceptable to the city, and what is expected of them.

I think that the Minneapolis Stewardship Program is a great example of how it could be done:

(MPLS) Park Stewardship Program

The Park Stewardship Program allows volunteer groups or individuals to restore, maintain and beautify gardens and natural areas within Minneapolis Parks.

- Volunteers tend the site as needed, with most (if not all) of the work occurring in non-snow months
- Each Park Stewardship Agreement is unique according to the site and interest of the volunteer(s)
- Agreements serve as a communication tool between stewardship volunteers and the MPRB
- Agreements must be reviewed and renewed annually

Park Stewardship Agreements may include but are not limited to the following examples:

- The tending of a garden bed – planting, weeding, watering, mulching
- Invasive species removal – examples include garlic mustard or buckthorn
- Trash pickup

Each Park Stewardship Agreement must identify a lead volunteer who:

- Serves as the contact for the group and as the liaison with the MPRB
- Completes the initial agreement and any annual renewals
- Keeps a record of volunteer work and hours served for end-of-season submittal to the MPRB Volunteer Coordinator

- Helps establish annual work plan tasks and goals for the agreement

Park Steward Leaders can expect to receive:

- A MPRB staff contact person to help with any questions, concerns, and to assist with the development of tasks and work plan goals
- Assistance with the procurement of loaned tools and supplies needed to achieve agreement goals
- The recognition and prestige that comes with being a Minneapolis Park Volunteer!

In order to adequately support the work plan goals and activities of our Park Stewardship Program volunteers all Park Stewardship requests received after June 30th will be reviewed for the following calendar year.

Email to learn more about Park Stewardship Programming.

Natural Areas

Several community groups actively engage to control invasive species such as buckthorn and garlic mustard in our parks.

Garlic Mustard

- Please contact Environmental Volunteers prior to removing garlic mustard. Include the location where you plan to pull.
- All pulled vegetative debris must be bagged (paper or plastic) and labeled "garlic mustard". Please leave bagged debris near existing Park Board trash bins or along a trail that is easily accessible by truck.
- Removal timeframe. Pull before seed capsules form on second year plants which occurs between May and June.

Helpful Garlic Mustard Links

- [MPRB Natural Areas Management](#)
- [MPRB Invasive Species](#)
- [MN Department of Agriculture: Garlic Mustard](#)
- [Garlic Mustard Lifecycle from UMN Extension](#)

Buckthorn

MPRB approval is required prior to commencing buckthorn removal activities. Contact Environmental Volunteers for additional information. You must include the location where you wish to volunteer.

Upon approval of your project please adhere to the following guidelines.

- Any root mass removals must have prior approval by the MPRB Natural Resources Department.
 - Root mass removal requires approval due to erosion concerns regarding the destabilization of shorelines, hillsides, and slopes, and to alleviate the potential introduction of additional invasive species. Soil disturbance facilitates the spread of invasive species. Invasive species are opportunistic, always looking for places to establish and gain the upper hand in our natural landscapes.
- Due to safety concerns no cutting or removal of any specimen over 2 inches in diameter without prior approval.
- Please do not use buckthorn baggies, plastic bags, tarps, or cans to kill stumps without prior MPRB approval. Methods such as these need constant monitoring to prevent them from becoming a potential source of litter.
- Volunteers are not allowed to use chemicals or power equipment. Hand tools only.
- Any deviation from the above guidelines must be approved by the MPRB prior to implementation.

Helpful Buckthorn Links

- [MPRB Natural Areas Management](#)
- [MPRB Invasive Species](#)
- [MN Department of Agriculture: Buckthorn](#)
- [MN DNR Buckthorn Identification](#)

Email to learn more about MPRB Invasive Species volunteer opportunities.

This could also help us reach one of the goals of the GreenStep Cities program, of which Arden Hills is a participant.

Best Practice Action 18.8

GreenStep Cities Best Practices: Environmental Management

Parks & Trails No.18

Increase active lifestyles and property values by enhancing the city's green infrastructure

Best Practice Action 8

Develop a program to involve community members in hands-on land restoration, invasive species management, and stewardship projects.

Implementation Tools

- See St. Paul-based [Great River Greening](#) for assistance in working with volunteers, and [Sentencing to Service](#) for a court alternative that puts carefully selected, nonviolent offenders to work on community improvement projects.
- 'Friends of the Parks' civic groups help deliver, among other benefits, cost savings to a city from the use of volunteers.
- Community volunteers often help a city in managing terrestrial and aquatic invasive species; guidance and funding for [invasives' management](#) is available from MN DNR and a number of other organizations.
- Promote or coordinate a citizen science program. Use the [SciStarter](#) project finder to find an activity that will help your community.
- Clean up and utilize unused public land for seasonal needs such as event space, parks, art installations, and community gardens - see [BPA 27.3](#).

Star Level Examples

1 star Create an annual event (can be in cooperation with other organizations) or ongoing 'adopt a park' effort for volunteer trash cleanup of open space, buckthorn removal, etc. for parks or selected public open space areas; educate community members about invasive species. Report gardens plots in city parks under BP 27.3

2 star In addition to cleanup and removal of exotics (1 Star), engage community members in annual restoration of natural areas (replanting shoreland buffers, restoring prairie, etc.).

3 star Create and fund an annual city-wide event for cleanup and restoration, engaging residents in most neighborhoods and creating a public promotion around the event; coordinate the use of unused public land for seasonal community use (pop-up parks, gardens, art, etc.).