

Now That the Invasives Are Gone ... What's Next?*

Many residents have dramatically improved their land by removing and managing invasive tree and weed species in their woodlands. A woodland recently cleared of woody invasive species seems very open and this makes some folks think that the area has been “clear cut.” This is not the case. What has happened is that the woody invasives - which typically grow very thickly from the ground to about 15 feet tall - are now gone, so ground level visibility is enhanced. Woody invasives need to be removed so that the native species can break free and repopulate the understory. The reason invasive plant species take over is that they usually outgrow and out compete the existing native species.

Restoring a woodland or prairie is a long-term effort. The most intense management happens during the first three years following invasive removal. Native wildflowers and trees will attempt to repopulate an opened-up area but will do much better with your intervention on their behalf to get ahead of the invasive competitors.

What are some specific activities that long-term invasive species management and woodland and prairie restoration might include?

Mowing the area under the large native trees to hold back invasives while encouraging the native wildflowers that already are there.

Hiring goats for a couple episodes to eat the non-natives and encourage the natives.

Planting new native understory species such as pagoda dogwood, elderberry, hazelnut, chokeberry, gooseberry, wild plum, gray dogwood, nannyberry, serviceberry, or highbush cranberry.

Buying baby trees from the Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District's annual tree sale (usually available via Sunfish Lake's Arbor Day sale) and repopulating the open understory with native trees acclimated especially for your woodland.

Learning how to plant native flower, grass and sedge seeds of species just right for your woodland or prairie setting to encourage native species establishment even more quickly.

Spot spraying escaping non-native species regularly to keep them from repopulating the area.

Creating a trail mowed through your improved woodland and prairie for ease of management, your enjoyment, and just seeing how your efforts are developing.

Doing a show and tell with your neighbors and friends to share your joy of accomplishment and the progress you have made with your meadow or woodland restoration. Know that you are making your neighborhood, your community, and our world a better place. Thank you for your service!

*There is considerable on-line information available on this topic and there are a good number of companies and organizations that can help in these endeavors. The City Forester is available for discussions on this topic and other related Forestry and environmental issues.