

Spring 2006 PRLC Newsletter (3 articles)

The Aliens have Landed !

Believe it or not the aliens are here! Alien invasive plants that is.

Struggling with a vine, shrub or herbaceous plant that just won't go away? You may be fighting the good fight against one of the many non-native invasives that seem to be taking over our yards, woods and roadways. Not all non-native plants become invasive but Westchester sure has its share of ones that do. These invasives tend to grow profusely, taking over an area and greatly reducing or even eliminating other vegetation. Our native plants cannot out-compete these invasives and diversity is suffering.

Vines such as Asian or Oriental Bittersweet, Porcelain Berry and Mile-a-Minute (left) will cover existing plants, shrubs and trees, blocking out their sunlight. Garlic Mustard, Japanese Stilt Grass, phragmites, Japanese Knotweed, Mugwort and Purple Loosestrife (Below), to name only a few, take such a stand that they just blanket an area pushing out the less rigorous species. Shrubby vegetation such as Japanese Barberry, bush honeysuckles and Winged Euonomous has become the dominant shrubby understory.

Tackling invasives is no easy task and takes time, muscle and diligence. One also needs to assess the area where invasives are growing. For instance, if barberry is the only understory plant, it would be detrimental to wildlife to remove it all. They are relying on it for cover, nesting and possibly as a localized food source. Unless it is removed in stages, with native shrubs planted in its place, it is not a good practice to clearcut. It is also important to correctly identify the invasives you are interested in controlling, find an appropriate native alternative if need be, and research the best way to manage it.

The Pound Ridge Land Conservancy will be inventorying the flora and fauna on their preserves, with an emphasis on an invasive species management plan. If you are interested in helping us manage for invasives, look for updates in our upcoming newsletters. In the meantime, you can help by identifying and managing invasives on your own property. Buy native plants and encourage nurseries to stop selling alien invasives and to go native!

For more information on alien invaders contact these local resources:

[The Invasive Plant Council](#), [The Native Plant Center](#), [The Nature Conservancy](#), [The Institute of Ecosystem Studies](#), and [Hudsonia](#).

by Brenda Bates



Fens are our Friends

The unique geological and environmental beauty of Pound Ridge, etched by the icy fingers of the glaciers into stunning rocky woodlands and intricate networks of wetlands and streams, gives rise to some rare areas called calcareous fens.

Three such fens are located at the [Pound Ridge Land Conservancy's Isaacson Preserve](#), which was donated by Joe and Evelyn Isaacson in 1981 and 1985.

A fen is a floating mat of mostly sedge vegetation, mixed with a diversity of other flora, with an inflow of cold,

alkaline groundwater. The groundwater is alkaline due to its passage through calcium-rich bedrocks such as the marble bedrock found in Pound Ridge. Due to the alkali conditions, fens provide a unique habitat for a variety of plants and animals, both common and uncommon. Plants such as orchids, lobelias and carnivorous plants may be interspersed with Skunk Cabbage, Highbush Blueberry, sedges, sphagnum mosses and Red Maples. A diversity of frogs, toads and salamanders along with snakes and turtles also typically inhabit fens.

Fens and bogs are similar in that they are both peatlands. Peatlands are areas consisting of peat soil, or soil made up of partially decomposed remains of plants and sometimes animals. A fen, however has flowing water, whereas a bog's only water source is from precipitation. This seemingly small difference actually differentiates them further through mineral contents, soil pH, peat source and species diversity.

This summer, pending approval from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, Dr. Ellen Kearns will begin a volunteer research project for the Pound Ridge Land Conservancy on controlling an invasive reed, *Phragmites australis*, which has been sighted in the fen areas of the Isaacson Preserve. The research project is based on previous work cited by The Nature Conservancy and is designed to take advantage of the natural plant physiology and carbon metabolism of the reeds to weaken the reed colonies and allow native fen plants to hold their own. High school and college students interested in plant physiology and ecology are encouraged to contact the Pound Ridge Land Conservancy for more information about volunteer opportunities for research in the fens.

by Brenda Bates and Ellen Kearns

President's Message:

We are very excited about our two newest projects described in this newsletter. As the local land conservancy, we invest time and effort in educating our community and town leadership on the importance of protecting natural resources and critical open space through varied conservation tools.

Each individual decision to protect land adds to our town's natural habitats and wooded character. As we continue to grow our membership, leadership, and varied projects, we hope you will join our efforts. Many of our members are the backbone of the environmental advocacy community here in Pound Ridge.

Financial support is always welcome, but perhaps just as critical, is your time, energy and interest in the issues facing our community. Our organization's mission is to preserve undeveloped open space in perpetuity. Without this land, other natural resources, which we relish in Pound Ridge, will not survive. Whether you have a few hours a month or more time, please consider joining our board or becoming an active member. We are sure you will learn much and your time commitment will be personally rewarding. Come learn about our town mapping efforts that lead to land acquisition, preserve management projects, or help design a proposed prototype 'green' steward's home to educate our community to alternative building design and energy systems that will protect our land and planet.

Thanks for your support.- Elyse Arnow