

2025

THE CORPS RAPPOR

Meridian Conservation Corps Annual Report



WE ARE HUMAN | WE ARE ANIMALS | WE ARE THE LAND

A note from Meridian Township's Land Stewardship Coordinator, Emma Campbell 2025 was an incredible year for the MCC, battling invasive species & restoring habitat with the collection & planting of common to rarer native species! In addition to that, staff has educated homeowners, organizations, & volunteers alike on how to reconnect with our land & become familiar once again with native plants, insects, fungi & wildlife that we are in danger of losing. The resilience & beauty of the group that is the MCC really hit me this last year. In August 2025, I lost my biggest cheerleader & supporter, my dad, Rudolph Jakobcic. Incredibly, thanks to my staff & you, our lovely volunteers, the MCC kept working in my absence, never ceasing their stewarding. What a relief for me! My parents, city slickers turned farmers, provided me with the safety & love to pursue my dreams as a conservationist. They never knew exactly where my path would take me, but they always supported my love of nature & knew I would end up pursuing my life's passion. Because of their unwavering support, I am here today, the founder of the MCC, a group dedicated to taking care of our natural communities (my mom would have loved you all!). My point is, you do not have to be someone who is the perfect conservationist or environmentalist to make a difference in the future of our nature. My parents certainly weren't, but they saw the beauty in all life, great & small. They took care to love all & never took any of it for granted. You do not need to perfect latin names of species, or have a degree in biology to care about vernal pools. My dad still didn't understand my job completely, yet there are showy goldenrod growing in Lake Lansing north planted by him (right). All you need is the desire to be involved, and to care. Thank you all for taking the time to be that light in this world of uncertainty. It may be an uphill battle, but we are in this together, & we will never stop showing up!



STEWARDSHIP SUCCESS

2025 Stewardship at a Glance

- 622 HOURS OF STEWARDSHIP COMPLETED IN THE TOWNSHIP
- 415 CORPS MEMBERS WITH 67 NEW SIGNUPS IN 2025
- 46 STEWARDSHIP WORKDAYS
- 10 EDUCATIONAL EVENTS
- 36 SPECIES OF INVASIVE PLANTS MANAGED
- 2 SUCCESSFUL PRESCRIBED BURNS
- 51 SPECIES OF NATIVE PLANTS ETHICALLY COLLECTED
- 7 SPECIES OF NATIVE TRANSPLANTS PLANTED
 - Sky blue aster, old field goldenrod, early goldenrod, foxglove beardtongue, American plum, purple angelica, culver's root
- 7 MANAGEMENT PLANS FINALIZED FOR PARKS & PRESERVES
- 'NO BIKE' SIGNAGE INSTALLED AT RED CEDAR GLEN PRESERVE HELPING TO PREVENT EROSION



INVASIVE SPECIES STRIKE TEAM



Pull, cut, dab, and restore!

• 28 WORKDAYS & EVENTS DEVOTED TO INVASIVE REMOVAL & TRAINING

• 19 HERBACEOUS INVASIVES:

- Dame's rocket, garlic mustard, Japanese hedge parsley, Japanese Knotweed, purple loosestrife, phragmites, reed canary grass, lesser celandine, yellow rocket, sweet clover, black swallow wort, Veronica, cutleaf teasel, bird in a bush, yellow bamboo, spotted knapweed, mugwort, Vinca, Pachysandra

• 17 WOODY INVASIVES:

- invasive bittersweet, honeysuckle (4 species), autumn olive, common & glossy buckthorn, multiflora rose, Japanese barberry European privet, black locust, tree of heaven, Siberian elm, winged euonymus, wineberry & jetbead

• 15 PRESERVES & 15 PARKS MANAGED FOR INVASIVE SPECIES

• PURPLE CROWN VETCH & CHINESE BUSHCLOVER WERE IDENTIFIED FOR FUTURE MANAGEMENT

Black Swallow-wort



bittersweet

purple crown vetch

(BELOW) STAFF WAS TRAINED HOW TO UTILIZE NEW TOOLS, LIKE THIS POLE SAW, WHICH MAKES CUTTING DOWN MULTIFLORA ROSE A LITTLE LESS PRICKLY!



(BELOW) STAFF EXPERIMENTED WITH DIFFERENT MECHANICAL MANAGEMENT METHODS, LIKE USING A BRUSH HOG TO BATTLE BUCKTHORN SAPPLINGS AT TOWAR WOODS PRESERVE.



(BELOW) A BIG WEEKDAY WARRIORS GROUP CAME OUT IN THE SNOW TO CUT BACK BUCKTHORN ENCROACHING ON WETLAND BUFFER RESTORATION AREAS.



INVASIVE SPECIES STRIKE

TEAM *Pull, cut, dab, and restore!*

(BELOW) MCC VOLUNTEERS WORK YEAR-ROUND REMOVING INVASIVES FROM THE FROZEN WETLANDS AT SUMBAL PRESERVE



(BELOW) STAFF HELD AN INVASIVE WORKSHOP AT THE NANCY MOORE PARK TRAILHEAD AND TACKLED PESKY AUTUMN OLIVE



(LEFT) MCC VOLUNTEERS REMOVED GARLIC MUSTARD FROM RIVER FLOODPLAIN HABITATS IN RED CEDAR NATURAL AREA



VOLUNTEERS STEPHANIE AND KATI ARE ALL SMILES AFTER TAKING OUT INVASIVE SHRUBS FROM RED CEDAR GLEN PRESERVE & TIHART PRESERVE



(BELOW) NATE & DAVID TAKE OUT SOME EARLY SPRING INVADERS AT LEGG PARK



PLANTING A NATIVE MERIDIAN

Collect, sort & plant!

- 10 WORKDAYS DEVOTED TO NATIVE SEED SOWING & PLANTING
- Transplants & seeds are lovingly collected by MCC volunteers & staff from remnant populations in our parks & preserves
 - Keeping the genetic diversity as local as possible means the highest benefit for local critters
- 9 NATURAL AREAS RECEIVED NATIVE TRANSPLANTS & SEEDS SOWN
 - Davis Foster, Tihart, Red Cedar Glen, Lake Lansing North Preserve, Legg, Nancy Moore wetland, Hillbrook wetland, Forest Hills, Towar Woods
- 7 DIFFERENT SPECIES & 311 TRANSPLANTS INSTALLED:
 - Sky blue aster, old field goldenrod, early goldenrod, foxglove beardtongue, Am. plum, purple angelica, culver's root
- 27 SPECIES WERE SOWN FOR WINTER,
 - the remaining seeds will be grown into transplants or sown this spring or fall

(BELOW) VOLUNTEER GRACE LABELS OUR NATIVE TRANSPLANTS WITH PURPLE FLAGS AT LAKE LANSING NORTH



(BELOW) JASON ALWAYS HAS HIS GARDEN GEAR & JOKES READY FOR PLANTING DAYS,



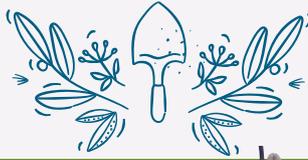
(BELOW) MCC VOLUNTEERS GIVE SENSITIVE NATIVE PLANT SPECIES A HEAD START WITH PROTECTIVE FENCING AFTER PLANTING.



PLANTING A NATIVE MERIDIAN

Collect, sort & plant!

- 3 WORKDAYS DEVOTED TO NATIVE SEED COLLECTION
- 4 WORKDAYS DEVOTED TO SEED PROCESSING
- 51 DIFFERENT NATIVE SPECIES COLLECTED FROM PARKS & PRESERVES
- Seed sorting parties (below) are an essential part of getting the seeds prepared to be sown. Chit chatting & sorting seeds, its a blast!
- For the second year in a row, native seed processing wrapped up by the new year!



(BELOW) MCC VOLUNTEERS COLLECT WOODLAND AND WETLAND SEEDS AT LAKE LANSING NORTH PRESERVE ON A CRISP FALL DAY



(BELOW) SKY BLUE ASTER WAS PLANTED IN SPRING & SEEDED OUT THAT SAME FALL. THESE NATIVES ARE AN IMPORTANT FALL FOOD SOURCE!



(BELOW) MATT & STEVE WORK TOGETHER TO BOTANIZE A BIRCH CATKIN. THESE TWO ALWAYS FIND SOMETHING TO SHARE WITH THE MCC!



PLANTING A NATIVE MERIDIAN

Collect, sort & plant!



- LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT SOME OF THE NATIVE SPECIES THAT ARE NOW THRIVING IN MULTIPLE LOCATIONS, THANKS TO STEWARDSHIP VOLUNTEERS & STAFF
 - Get to know your local native plants!

TAENIDIA INTEGERRIMA, AKA YELLOW PIMPERNEL. THIS ONE IS BARELY HANGING ON LOCALLY. IT IS SO DELICATE & HARD TO SPOT.



(BELOW) PYCNANTHEMUM VIRGINIANUM, AKA MOUNTAIN MINT. DEER RESISTANT & A BEAUTIFUL WAY TO FEED THE BIRDS & INSECTS.



(BELOW) ERIGERON PULCHELLUS, AKA ROBIN'S PLANTAIN. ONE KNOWN POPULATION IN THE TOWNSHIP, NOW THRIVING AT 5 NATURAL AREAS.



(BELOW) ZIZIA AUREA AKA GOLDEN ALEXANDERS. A SHOWY & EARLY BLOOMER THAT HOSTS THE BLACK SWALLOWTAIL.



(BELOW) HEIRACIUM VENOSUM, AKA RATTLESNAKE-WEED. MOST SPECIES YOU SEE LOCALLY IN THIS GENUS ARE NON-NATIVE. THE LEAVES ARE LOVELY TOO!



WEEKDAY WARRIORS & CLEAN UP CREW

Digging trash out of wetlands is what we do!



(BELOW) VOLUNTEERS HAVE FUN PICKING TRASH OUT OF NANCY MOORE WETLAND



(BELOW) SOWING NATIVE SEEDS POST BURN AT DAVIS FOSTER. SO MUCH AWESOMENESS!



(BELOW) TIRES, TVs & TAIL LIGHTS! THEY TOSS IT, WE FIND IT.



- 15 WEEKDAY WARRIORS EVENTS
- 4 OF THOSE WORKDAYS DEVOTED TO REMOVING TRASH FROM PRESERVES, PARKS AND ROADWAYS
 - An estimated 550 pounds of trash removed
- TIRES, HUB CAPS, CAR PARTS, PLASTIC LITTER, TAKE OUT WASTE, & CARDBOARD BOXES
 - Favorite piece of trash found: sprinkler system
- WEEKDAY WARRIORS ARE DEDICATED TO MORE THAN JUST TRASH CLEANUP
 - They plant native species, collect & process seeds, and remove invasive species



MATT ROBERTS SPENT THE SUMMER TIDYING UP THE NATIVE GARDEN AT THE OKEMOS LIBRARY. WE THANK THE LIBRARY FOR GROWING NATIVE PLANTS & MATT FOR GIVING THEM MORE SPACE TO SHINE!



VERNAL POOL PATROL

A citizen science program working to protect our smallest wetlands!

- Volunteers complete a statewide training program & monitor vernal pools 3 times a year to gather vital data that helps protect these valuable wetlands
- Species like fairy shrimp & blue-spotted salamanders depend on these temporary pools for their life cycles
- **19 MONITORED VERNAL POOLS IN THE TOWNSHIP**
 - Thank you to our volunteer monitors for contributing data to these important wetlands!
- **THERE ARE OVER 140 UNVERIFIED POOLS IN THE TOWNSHIP**
 - Want to help out? Email ecampbell@meridian.mi.us for more information on how to join!



(BELOW) FAIRY SHRIMP THRIVE IN VERNAL POOLS SINCE THE WATER INTERMITTENTLY DRIES UP & KEEPS PREDATORY FISH OUT.



(BELOW) THE BEST PART IS PEERING INTO THE POOL TO SEE WHAT'S GOING ON IN THERE. EVERYONE DESERVES TO SEE A SHRIMP!



(BELOW) SKUNK CABBAGE EMERGING EARLIER THAN ANY OTHER PLANT WE KNOW. HAVING YOUR OWN HEATING MECHANISM DOES HELP!



A CRYSTAL CLEAR DIP FROM A VP IDENTIFIED IN PONDEROSA PRESERVE. A RESIDENT OF POOLS, THE DIGGER CRAYFISH CREATES VITAL HABITAT FOR OTHER SPECIES!



PRESCRIBED BURN PROGRAM

Restoring native ecosystems with fire!



(BELOW) A FANTASIC BURN AT RED CEDAR GLEN BY ROBB & CREW AT STANTEC.



(BELOW) DAVID BORNEMAN'S CREW DID AN INCREDIBLE JOB BUILDING A SLOW FIRE THAT GREW INTO A HEALTHY (& SAFE) ROAR.



(BELOW) BURN WATCH PARTY AT DAVIS FOSTER PRESERVE!



- 18.9 ACRES WAS SUCCESSFULLY BURNED THIS YEAR
- DAVIS FOSTER PRESERVE'S SOUTHWESTERN UNIT WAS BURNED INCLUDING THE WETLAND
- DAVID BORNEMAN LLC & HIS CREW CONDUCTED A SAFE & EFFECTIVE BURN AT DAVIS
 - They burn private parcels too, including several in the Township!
- STANTEC BURNED 4.6 ACRES OF RED CEDAR GLEN TO HELP RESTORE UNDERSTORY FLORA!
- PRESERVES THAT ARE CONSISTENTLY BURNED SHOW THE MOST PLANT DIVERSITY
 - Research shows that prescribed fire simulates historic conditions & increases species diversity. We are conducting field surveys in burned and non-burned areas to track this diversity increase.



(LEFT) STAFF INSTALLED THIS SIGNAGE AT RED CEDAR GLEN TO ALLOW HIGHLY ERODED AREAS IN THIS PRESERVE TO REGROW. NATURAL AREAS ARE NOT JUST FOR OUR ENJOYMENT, BUT FOR THE WILD THINGS TOO.

STEWARDSHIP EDUCATION



We can't have hard work without a little fun!

- 8 TRAILSIDE ECOLOGY WALKS
- TRAILSIDE ECOLOGY AQUATIC PLANT EDITION LED BY STAFF MEMBER LUCY BREDA
 - Lucy taught us about the importance of native aquatic plants and how to survey for aquatic species!!
- WOODY INVASIVES SPECIES ID WORKSHOP
- The best thing about MCC volunteers is that they are endlessly dedicated to learning more. They care about being the best stewards they can, for their own yards & our natural areas. We are so grateful for them!

(BELOW) STEWARDSHIP STAFF, LUCY, EDUCATES ABOUT BOTH NATIVE AND INVASIVE AQUATIC PLANTS AND HOW TO ID THEM.



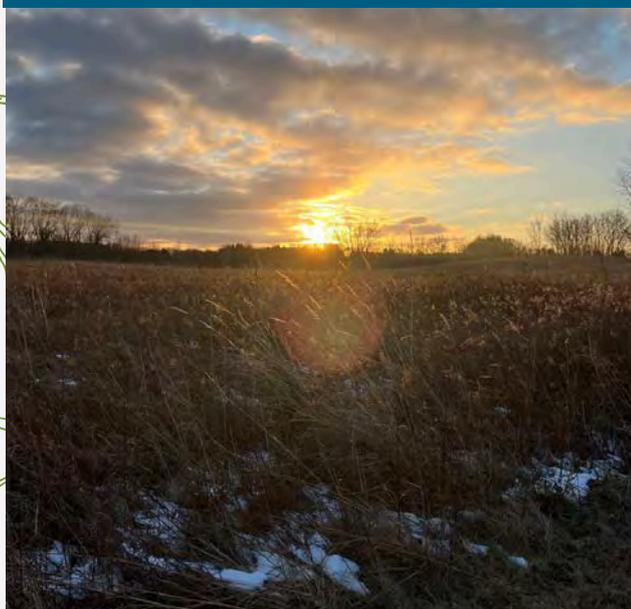
(BELOW) CREEPY COOL CRITTERS WALK HOSTED BY EMMA AS A STEWARDSHIP SNAIL.



(BELOW) THIS YEARS CONTINUATION OF THE WINTER SOLSTICE SUNRISE HIKE. THE ROLLING HILLS OF DAVIS FOSTER PROVIDED EXCELLENT VIEWS OF THE SUNRISE.



(ABOVE) VOLUNTEERS LEARN TO IDENTIFY WOODY INVASIVE SPECIES LIKE HONEYSUCKLE. (RIGHT) AQUATIC PLANTS FLOATING PONDWEED (TOP) AND MUSK GRASS (BOTTOM) WERE SOME OF THE PLANTS FOUND IN CENTRAL PARK'S POND!



STEWARDSHIP COLLAB

Connect, Learn, and Conserve!!

• BACKYARD STEWARDS PROGRAM

- We offer backyard consults to anyone who is a taxpayer. We will ID invasives & native plants, and offer stewardship recommendations for your property. This year Wildwood Lakes HOA partnered with us to better steward their HOA common spaces!

• MICHIGAN WATERWAYS STEWARDS

- 2025 was our second year working with MI Waterways Stewards on their Red Cedar River Cleanup & Stewardship with Delta Sigma Phi, MSU Landscaping & Grounds, & East Lansing.

• MSU DEPARTMENT OF FISHERIES & WILDLIFE

- Department of Fisheries & Wildlife Deer Targeted Anti-Tick Project is in its third year. This project will provide important data on our white-tailed deer & tick population in Meridian.

• MI LESSER CELANDINE COALITION

- A collaborative of conservation districts, CISMA's, parks departments, & more that are coordinating species surveys & targeted strikes along the Grand River. If you see it, report it on the Michigan Invasive Species Invasive Network (MISIN).

• CHIPPEWA MIDDLE SCHOOL

- Every year, Matt Prinz brings his middle school students to Hartrick Park to remove invasive species & pick up trash. This year they took on the autumn olives and collected seeds at Sander Farm. Despite the relentless stickseed burs, they still were able to make a sizable dent in the amount of shrubs at Sander Farm!

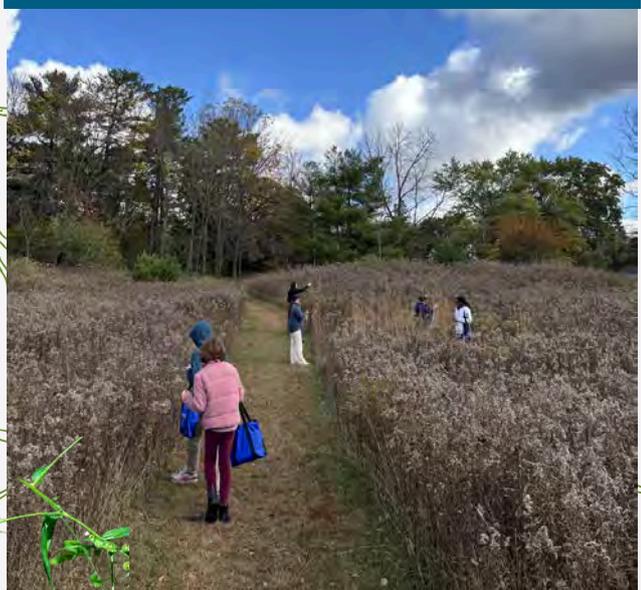
(BELOW) STAFF MET WITH LEADERSHIP FROM A LOCAL HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION FOR GUIDANCE ON MANAGING THEIR NATURAL AREAS



(BELOW) STAFF SPEND TIME AT WHOLE FOODS ON EARTH DAY TO EDUCATE ABOUT NATIVE PLANTS AND INVASIVE SPECIES REMOVAL.



(BELOW) CHIPPEWA MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS COLLECTING SEEDS AT SANDER FARM NATURAL AREA. THEY COLLECTED REMNANT BIG BLUESTEM AND BERGAMOT



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

The MCC is made up of the most amazing humans ever, showing up in rain, snow & shine. These two volunteers have devoted many Saturdays & seasons to conserving our local natural areas. They have helped restore acres of habitat by removing invasive species, collecting native seed & planting them back into restoration sites. Their consistency & dependability makes our community a better place to be, & inspires us to keep our work going. How lucky we are!

COURTNEY TANG

MCC VOLUNTEER SINCE 2021

- Courtney is a librarian who has lived in Meridian Township since 2013. She joined the MCC about five years ago in an effort to "get outside and touch grass". She keeps coming back for the fellowship, the quiet moments in the morning woods and fields, and out of gratitude for being born on such a beautiful planet. Her favorite MCC activity is seed collecting, but Fall sowing is up there. She is grateful for all the opportunities MCC provides to visit and help preserve our many varied and wonderful natural areas, especially in the winter.



KASPYR LAZULI

MCC VOLUNTEER SINCE 2024

- Kaspyr Lazuli loves nature, stories, and spending time in their community. They started Salus Center's Queer Nature Club and continue to organize monthly nature meet-ups throughout the Lansing area. They are a Vernal Pool Patrol volunteer and love looking at all the cool little bugs in the water! Their favorite thing about being an MCC volunteer is learning to identify both native and invasive plants in the area. In their free time, Kaspyr enjoys reading, drawing, and hiking. Their favorite parks in the area are Legg park and the Lake Lansing parks.



BIODIVERSITY REPORT

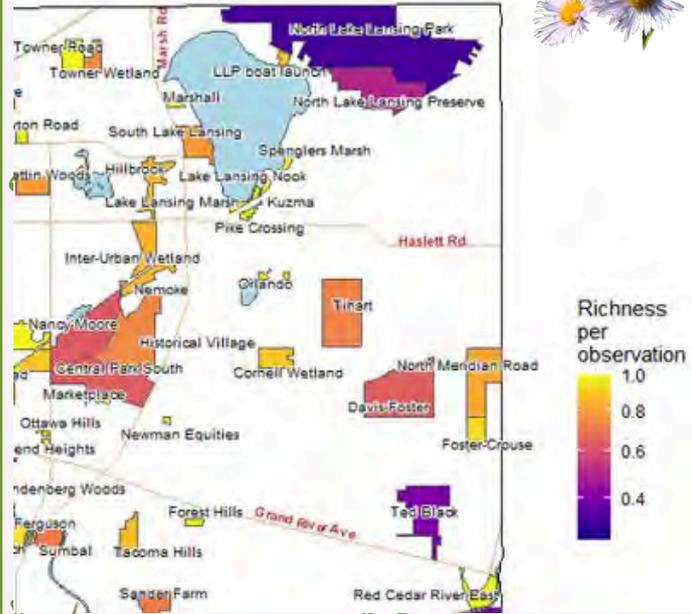
MATT



(LEFT) MATT CHANSLER JOINED THE MCC IN 2024 & HAS GRACED US WITH HIS PLANT KNOWLEDGE SINCE!

MCC BIODIVERSITY REPORT & R-CODE

- There are 1,700 acres of land to manage in Meridian Township. With one full time staff and three part-time staff, prioritizing these areas can be a challenge and often time consuming. Matt had a lovely idea to help us do just that!
- The data from this report is drawn from iNaturalist and the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF).
 - GBIF pulls data from many sources including eBird, records of physical specimen collections, and other smaller community science platforms.
- Matt also created a code that allows staff to predict where certain species will grow and/or suitable habitat to plant species for restoration efforts!



(ABOVE) TABLES LIKE THE ONE ABOVE SHOW SPECIES RICHNESS BASED ON OBSERVATIONS. NO SURPRISE THAT LAKE LANSING NORTH IS DARK PURPLE TO NOTATE HIGH DIVERSITY. AREAS OF LOW DIVERSITY COULD ALSO BE AREAS WHERE WE SIMPLY NEED TO TAKE MORE SPECIES OBSERVATIONS. (LEFT) MAPS LIKE THIS ONE HELP STAFF PRIORITIZE WHERE INVASIVE MANAGEMENT COULD HAPPEN! USING BOTH MAPS CAN GUIDE HABITAT RESOTRATION.

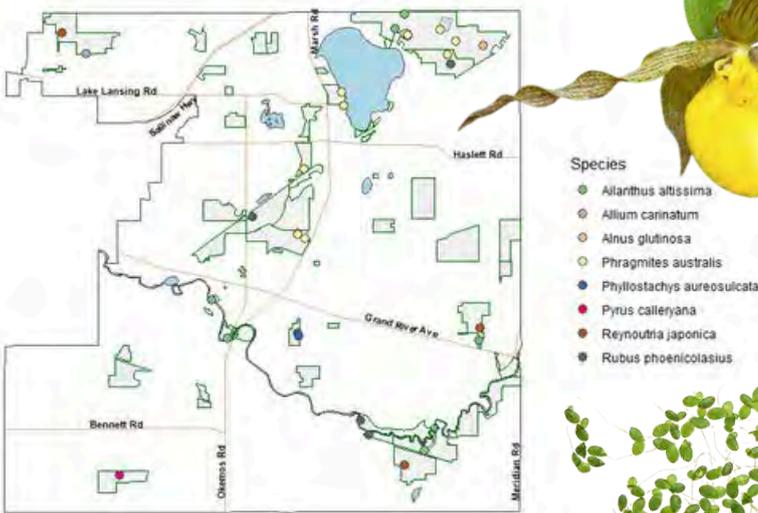


Figure 25: Occurrence map of selected invasive plants with potential for management.

PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

- Identify number of species, and which ones have been observed in each natural area.
- Identify hotspots with uncommon and high coefficient of conservatism (c-value) species & where they are located.
- Where do notable species like fairy shrimp occur, & do they have additional, undocumented habitat?
- What natural areas would benefit from additional documentation?
- Where is suitable habitat located for restoration of various species?

STAFF BEHIND THE SCENES

*Our Stewardship Team is small, but mighty!
Here are some of our favorite moments from the field!*



(LEFT) WHILE BRUSH CUTTING A RESTORATION SITE, STAFF GENTLY MOVED A BROWN SNAKE. WE ALWAYS STRIVE TO BE MINDFUL OF THE INHABITANTS OF THE LANDS WE STEWARD.

(BELOW) WE LOVE GETTING THE OPPORTUNITY TO SEE A TURTLE WHEN WE ARE IN THE FIELD! WE LOVE TURTLES!



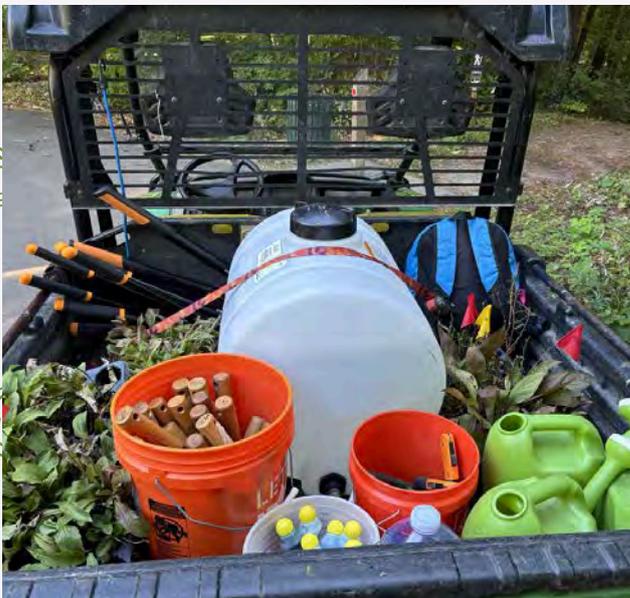
(BELOW) STEVE THOMAS DEMONSTRATES TO STAFF THAT NATIVE THISTLE LEAVES ARE NOT SPINY LIKE THEIR INVASIVE COUNTERPART!



(LEFT) RECORDING THE NAMES OF NATIVE TRANSPLANTS WITH FLAGS IS IMPORTANT FOR US TO KEEP TRACK OF WHERE TO WATER & LOOK FOR SEEDS!



(BELOW) LOOKING UP FROM BELOW FOR A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE.



(LEFT) PACKING VEHICLES TO THE GILLS IS OUR SPECIALTY! WORKDAYS TAKE A LOT OF TOOLS. EVEN ON PLANTING DAYS, WE ALWAYS BRING LOPPERS. YOU NEVER KNOW WHEN YOU WILL NEED TO CHOP AN INVASIVE PLANT!



STAFF BEHIND THE SCENES

Our Stewardship Team is small, but mighty! Here are some of our favorite moments from the field!



(LEFT) THIS YEAR WE HOSTED OUR FIRST GLASSEN SCHOLAR INTERN FROM MSU. LAUREN WAS A GREAT ADDITION TO OUR TEAM FOR THE SUMMER. WE KNOW SHE WILL CONTINUE TO DO GREAT THINGS!

(BELOW) STAFF EDUCATES PUBLIC ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF MICROINVERTEBRATES AT THE MERIDIAN TOWNSHIP FISHING DERBY.



(BELOW) OH TO ID A SEDGE! THIS PLANT FAMILY IS LEGENDARILY HARD TO BOTANIZE, BUT WE CONTINUE TO TRY! SHOUT OUT TO MATT FOR HIS TEACHINGS.



(LEFT) EXPLORING SUMBAL PRESERVE LOOKING FOR RARE SEDGES TO PRACTICE OUR SEDGE IDENTIFICATION SKILLS



(BELOW) EMMA CHANNELS STEVE IRWIN AND SHOWS OFF A SMOOTH GREEN SNAKE FOUND DURING VOLUNTEER FIELD SURVEYS.



(LEFT) THE VOLUNTEER THANKQUET IS THE BEST! THIS VOLUNTEER MEET & GREET IS SO INSPIRING, ALL THE HELPERS IN ONE ROOM TO GET THE THANKS THEY DESERVE! (AND EAT SOME YUMMY FOOD)



FAVORITE PHOTOS OF 2025



FAVORITE PHOTOS OF 2025

