

Natural Resources Management Activities

DeKalb County Forest Preserve District

August and September 2018

August and September are busy months which we dedicate mostly to seed collecting and the control of invasive species Phragmites and cattails.

Our stewards group are a big part of our seed collection program. Every Wednesday they meet and help collect bulk amounts of habitat specific seed. In August they helped us collect nearly 10 pounds of wetland sedges and rushes. In September they helped us collect several large bags of Prairie forbs and grasses. The seed that they collect along with the seed that Natural Resource staff collects will be combined into batches of habitat specific mixes and used for over seeding sites that we sprayed or mowed for weeds, into areas that need diversity enhancement, and into new plantings in the winter. Without the help of the stewards we would have a hard time collecting as much as we do and we are very thankful for their help.



Stewards taking a break after collecting seed for our prairie mixes.



Seed drying in our “Seed Room”. We put them in trays and bags so that they dry out. Once they are dry we process them down so that we can add them to the mixes.



Trays of seed drying out to be processed.

Our major invasive species control for the months of August and September are Phragmites and Cattails. These are two of the more aggressive plants in our wetland which both have interesting histories.

Cattails were used by Native Americans for basket weaving, medicine, shelter, and food. The fluffy heads were used to make pillows and pad the bottom of moccasins. It is likely that their heavy use of the plant kept it from becoming a major problem in its preferred wetland habitat. Sometime in the recent past the broadleaf and narrow leaf cattails hybridized to form a new species that is a superior competitor and has a tendency to overwhelm healthy wetland communities and form monocultures. Our ultimate goal with cattail control is not to eliminate them but to keep them in control and not overwhelm our successful wetland restorations and reconstructions.

Phragmites australis is native to North America and commonly found around the world. It was also used for making baskets and other applications. One strain of this species is thought to be exotic or hybrid and is quickly replacing the native strain in many areas. As you drive many roads throughout the county you will see stands of a tall feathery grass blowing in the off draft from passing traffic. The plants that we are dealing with are either a hybrid or cultivated variety that escaped into the natural areas. It is as aggressive and maybe more so than cattails. We have very few large infestations in the district with the exception being Wilkenson-Renwick Marsh. At Wil-Ren we have begun a treatment program to begin the process of eliminating the Phragmites and are on the lookout for plants at every preserve. When we see a plant we treat it with a device we call the glove of death. This is a neoprene glove liner with a cotton glove over the top. We spray the glove with glyphosphate (commonly called roundup) and wipe it on the stem. This method is a direct application that is very effective at killing the plant and not other plants around it. With large infestations other more aggressive methods are used.



Phragmites along the Kish.