

Cherry Beach Stewards Spring 2022

This spring we thought our site at Cherry Beach was doomed. The empire (of invasive plants) strikes back!

We took off half the old phragmites stalks in one area, but the rhizomes were so thick they had killed off all the undergrowth and were in the process of choking out the bushes and trees. Seeing the completely bare earth was sobering...



We will be removing its regrowth next month, but we need planting permission desperately. Continuing to work in this area is an act of faith - in restoration, in Anna Meng's persuasive powers, and in the good sense of the people who will eventually give us permission.

Elsewhere we took off the second year burdock with enthusiasm. Having wrestled with enormous 3 metre plants last August, we were determined to eliminate them when they were smaller this year. We are winning that war.

We then threw ourselves onto the garlic mustard while the cottonwood fluff is flying. We discovered several of us are quite allergic. Now, heavily medicated, we're managing to get most of it off.

Then, we realized the invasive avens are everywhere. After a brief struggle to identify them, we removed a small percentage. It's a slow and painstaking process to salvage the few native ones hidden among the invasives. We're giving them a lick, and a promise to do better next year.

Dog strangling vine was springing up and I thought, that's it. We're doomed! This site's just too disturbed. It's invasives ALL the way down.



Then I remembered Paula Davies telling us that the natives were hiding there; waiting to be released. So, we went on a hunt in areas we'd just cleared. And there they were ... baby raspberries, currants, cottonwood trees, sumacs, and clumps of bergamot. They're thrilled to have light and nutrients to themselves and are thriving. There were also non-natives, like comfrey and valerian, hopefully fitting into the ecosystem and feeding someone. There was even a little orchid (eaten too soon to be identified. As well as clearing the weeds around it, I should have been building a branch fence!)

Now every day we're out stewarding, we point out to each other the plants we've discovered and released. It keeps us going.