

TACKLING INVASIVE SHRUBS BEFORE WINTER SETS IN

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Winter is the time to enjoy the dunes area from a different vantage point, with bare branches, dormant plants, and snowdrifts (sometimes) offering a very different landscape compared to other seasons. Before the long, chilly months really set in (and after the mosquitos have finished biting for the year), November is a good time to work on removing invasive shrubs you may have growing on your property. Even if you can't remove them completely, it helps to take out even a little bit. Do what you can, and you'll be rewarded by knowing you'll be helping to reduce their spread, making some space for native species to begin to flourish again.

When we removed invasive shrubs in our yard, mostly [privet \(*Ligustrum*\)](#), we started by tackling a few large ones. That is the hardest part – facing a stand of mature, overgrown shrubs can be overwhelming. But we chipped away at it, and now the site is free of privet (the vacant lots next to us still taunt us with invasives, though).

With regular monitoring, we're now able to remove any privets that start to come back much more easily since they are small. The best part was that in the process we discovered some native red twig dogwoods, which had been hidden in the middle of the thicket. They are now visible and free to spread.

Along with privet, some examples of invasive shrubs growing here in Beverly Shores include oriental bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*), autumn olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*), Japanese barberry (*Berberis thunbergia*), burning bush (*Euonymus alatus*) and tree of heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*). The last two have been the focus of the [Beverly Shores Environmental Restoration Group's \(ERG\)](#) diligent eradication efforts for years.



*Before: A wall of invasive privet (*Ligustrum*) once lined the road. Photo by Brian Ebling, October 2013*



*Redbud (*Cercis canadensis*) and red twig dogwood (*Cornus sericea*) are taking root in the open space. Invasives still crowd the lots beyond ours. Photo by Brian Ebling, Sept 2023*

First, you'll need to identify any invasive shrubs – ERG has a photo gallery with more information at <https://www.bsERG.org/invasive-roguers-gallery>. Then, some best practices are as follows:

When prioritizing where to start, focus on mature plants, especially those situated in full sun and that bear fruit.

Choose appropriate control methods. Late fall is a good time to prune those with woody stems, and ERG has tools to help with the job through its [tool loan program](#). Herbicide is recommended to keep the plants from returning.

With large plants, cut the stems close to the ground but not so close that you lose sight of them. Stems will need to be treated with herbicide. Fall is a good time to do this since desirable plants are less likely to be damaged. ERG can offer more guidance on what to use and how to apply it.

Smaller shrubs can be pulled directly from the ground, either by hand or with the “Puller Bear,” a useful tool available through ERG’s tool loan program that allows shrubs with stems up to 2.5 inches in diameter to be pulled up by the roots.

If you’d like to learn more, ERG has information at <https://www.bserg.org> and hosts educational events. More useful information and resources can be found at <https://savedunes.org> and <https://heinzetrust.org>. Another source for in-depth learning is the Midwest Invasive Species Information Network, which can be found at <https://www.misin.msu.edu>.

We encourage you to get out before winter weather keeps us all inside for longer stretches. Every effort to remove the invasives that threaten the biodiversity we are so lucky to enjoy here in Beverly Shores makes a difference. And if we can do it, anyone can!
