



## JERICHO STEWARDSHIP GROUP

*Dedicated to restoring and enhancing the natural areas of Jericho Park*

Newsletter

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### Japanese knotweed takes a hit at Jericho

Considered one of the 100 worst invasive species in the world, Japanese knotweed is a huge problem at Jericho.

It's estimated that knotweed infests about 40,000 square metres of the park. Some knotweed stands are relatively small clumps; others cover wide swathes of the park. The only thing they have in common is that they're continuing to expand.

The method known to best control knotweed is the injection of a herbicide (glyphosate), but because the Vancouver Park Board has a policy of not using herbicides in parks, that option is not currently available to JSG.

So, this past year, we conducted some experiments to see how various manual methods – cutting, digging, pulling, covering and various

combinations – worked at controlling knotweed. (Research notes that very rarely do these efforts result in eradication, just control.)

After our first season, we're happy to report that all six test sites saw a reduction in knotweed growth. Further, on some sites – those with native plants such as bitter cherry, bigleaf maple, horsetail and ferns – the existing knotweed took an even bigger hit.

In one site, the stand went from 450 stems to 80; in another, the stand went from 270 stems to 48; both an 82



Photo: Dawn Hanna

*Polygonum cuspidatum* Japanese knotweed

percent reduction.

Early results are promising on at least controlling the spread of this invader in Jericho Park, but knotweed rhizomes go deep and can return with surprising vigour. We'll continue next year and hope to report more good news next fall.

### Earth Day celebrations a huge success at Jericho Park!

On April 21, Vancouver's biggest Earth Day celebrations came to Jericho Park, with all kinds of activities that give people a chance to get to know our little corner of the planet a little better and to lend a hand in helping restore it to a healthier state.

About 3,500 people attended that Saturday, whether to hear Raffi launch his new song, visit the display booths

or help restore one of seven sites at the park.

The day, a partnership between Evergreen, the Vancouver Park Board and the Jericho Stewardship Group, also got a little help from some other friends. The Vancouver Folk Festival, for example, brought in musicians and storytellers. And volunteers from Nature Vancouver led nature walks.

But the focus for JSG was the

restoration work that went on that day. We did some invasive plant removals (mostly English ivy and Himalayan blackberry) and planted more than 1,100 native plants, from Douglas fir trees that will one day tower tall to pretty little false lily of the valley that will provide a lovely carpet of green on the forest floor.

Next year, we hope Earth Day at Jericho will be even better!

## Invasive of the Month: English holly (*Ilex aquifolium*)

**The culprit:** *Ilex aquifolium*, aka English holly. Native to Europe, East Asia and North Africa, it was introduced to Canada as a garden ornamental.

A shrub that can grow to 23 metres in height, its glossy green leaves and bright red berries make it a Christmastime favourite.

**The problem:** English holly aggressively invades West Coast forests. It displaces native plant species that are used by wildlife for food and shelter. As well, it creates an unnatural shrub layer that shades out forest floor plants that are wildlife friendly and that help control erosion.

English holly is also a notorious water hog, using its roots to absorb and store water, thus making less water available to ferns, wildflowers, trees and other forest plants.

Its berries are eaten by a small number of bird species, which then poop out the seeds as they fly through the forest, thus spreading the problem.

**How to control *Ilex aquifolium*:** Hand pulling the entire plant (roots and all) works well at the seedling stage. Weed wrenches can be used to pull out larger shrub-sized hollies. But



**Pretty, but problematic:** English holly may be a Christmas favourite, but those red berries help spread invasive havoc in West Coast forests.

for the big tree-sized specimens, you'll need to chop or saw. Getting the roots out is best (holly stumps will resprout) but may not always be practical.

**Alternatives for your garden:** Tall Oregon-grape (*Mahonia aquifolium*) is a beautiful native shrub that grows up to 3 metres high. Its yellow blooms

attract butterflies and its bluish-purple berries provide food for birds and small mammals.

If you're looking for something tree-sized, consider a smaller native species such as Pacific yew (*Taxus brevifolia*), a conifer with bright red berries that grows from two to 15 m in height.

## Join us!

We meet the second Sunday of each month to remove invasive plants, replant native species and do other projects to enhance wildlife habitat at Jericho Park.

If you're interested, just meet us at the wooden bridge between the two ponds at Jericho at 9 a.m. We work until 1 p.m. (weather permitting), but if you can only manage an hour or two, that's just fine.

Be sure to dress for the elements. That means good footwear – hiking boots or sturdy rubber boots are best – and



clothing to keep you cool.

Although we usually have goodies, it's a good idea to bring a snack and water.

And while we do have some tools, if you have a favourite lopper, pruning saw, clippers or shovel, please bring it with you.

Jericho Stewardship Group (JSG) is a group of volunteers who work with the Vancouver Parks Board with the idea of making Jericho a better place both for the park's wildlife and park visitors. For more information, contact

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