# Invasives! What Now?

## Where to go for information about invasive species.

Story and Photos By Chris Evans

Walking over your fields and through your woods is one of the greatest joys of land ownership. But what if your property is being attacked by alien invaders? Believe it or not, many landowners in Illinois face this very real problem. You may be walking one day along a beautiful creek bed, and suddenly realize that the array of wildflowers you enjoyed in past years has been replaced by a bland stand of Japanese stiltgrass. Or the trout lilies and trilliums in your lovely woodland area may be overwhelmed by the plain, smelly green of invading garlic mustard. Perhaps your pastures and meadows are slowly becoming impassable thickets of multiflora rose. What can you do?

Managing invasive species on your land can be a daunting task. How do you identify the invasive species on your land? How do you find out what methods and equipment are needed to control them? How can you find the time and money to deal with the problem? It all can seem overwhelming. But, fortunately, there are many places to go for help in Illinois.

Nothing beats seeing these invasive species in person to get familiar with them. May is Illinois Invasive Species Awareness Month, and there will be plenty of field days and tours all across the state to give you the opportunity to talk with professionals and see invasive plants first-hand. Be sure to check out the Awareness Month Web site at www.illinoisinvasives.org to see a listing of events.

**The fragrant aroma of the invasive garlic mustard makes this a species even novice volunteers can assist in eradicating.**

Even after May ends, there will be invasive species-related events throughout the year held by state park friends groups, soil and water conservation districts, forest preserve districts and the Cooperative Extension Service.

Local, cooperative efforts to manage invasive species are springing up across the state. These partnerships,

If you don't own property but enjoy your local public lands, plenty of opportunities exist to get involved in managing invasive species. Consider joining a volunteer work day to control an invasive plant. Often state parks, forest preserves and other public lands host these events. If you prefer hiking through the woods over hand-pulling weeds, programs such as the New Invaders Watch Program in northern Illinois or the Southern Illinois Weed Watch are always looking for volunteers to help survey and map infestations. Even if you aren't involved in one of these programs, you can still help by reporting any invasive species sightings to your local DNR biologist or Cooperative Extension Service office.

(Photo courtesy Green Earth.)

**Ryan Campbell joined a team of Green Earth volunteers during a southern Illinois workday to locate and remove invasive plants.**

often called Cooperative Weed Management Areas, bring local groups and agencies together. They often have local knowledge about the location of invasive species and can let you know which species are likely to be a problem for you. CWMAs also have educational programs available, can provide free advice on the best approaches to management and can serve as a great place to start if you have questions about invasive species or are looking for direction on the next step to take. Cooperative Weed Management Areas can be found in southern Illinois (River to River CWMA), Quad Cities area (Quad Cities CWMA), East St. Louis (Gateway CWMA) and northeastern Illinois (Northeast Illinois Invasive Plant Partnership).

Money always is a concern. The good news is that cost-assistance programs are available to landowners to help control invasive species. The best way to start looking into these programs would be to contact your county NRCS office or your local soil and water conservation district. If you have invasive species in your woodlands, you also should consult with a DNR forester and look into getting a forest management plan in place. If you have aquatic invasive species in your ponds or streams, then a DNR fisheries biologist or the Illinois Lake Management Association can provide information on the methods used for control. (See sidebar for links.)

Accessing these resources will help you defeat alien invaders and preserve the natural beauty and health of your land.

**Volunteers of all ages undertake projects to assist in the removal of invasive species.**

## Helpful Web sites for information on Illinois invasive species

**Illinois Invasive Species Awareness Month:** www.illinoisinvasives.org

**Department of Natural Resources:** www.dnr.illinois.gov

**Illinois Aquatic Nuisance Species Program:** www.iisgcp.org/il-ans

**Illinois Nature Preserve Management Guidelines:** dnr.state.il.us/inpc/management_guidelines.htm

**Illinois Lake Management Association:** www.ilma-lakes.org

**Illinois Cooperative Agricultural Pest Survey Program:** www.inhs.uiuc.edu/research/CAPS

**New Invaders Watch Program:** www.newinvaders.org

**River-to-River Cooperative Weed Management Area:** www.rtrcwma.org

**Northeast Illinois Invasive Plant Partnership:** www.niipp.net

Chris Evans is the coordinator of the River-to-River Cooperative Weed Management Area and is based in Marion. He can be reached at (618) 998-5920 or RiverToRiver@gmail.com.