

# SLELO PRISM

St. Lawrence Eastern Lake Ontario Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management  
Teaming Up to Stop the Spread of Invasive Species



## Beware Wild Parsnip!

By Sue Gwise, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Jefferson County

Summer activities expose us to many “not so nice” things that Mother Nature has to offer - bee stings, poison ivy, thorns, and sunburn. Skin irritations or rashes are usually diagnosed as poison ivy if one has recently been in a wooded area. Poison ivy plants are relatively easy to identify and pretty common in our area. Giant hogweed is another rash-causing plant that has been in the news a lot lately. It is easy to identify because of its size, but it is rare.

Another plant that causes an itchy rash is wild parsnip (*Pastinaca sativa*). It is so common that you probably see it every day in the sum-



mer along roadsides and in disturbed areas. It is a noxious weed and highly invasive. It outcompetes native plants and develops into large monocultures. In sensitive individuals contact with the plant will lead to serious skin irritation.

Wild parsnip plants can be up to 6 feet tall. They have a flower cluster that looks like a Queen Anne's lace flower, but the flowers are **greenish yellow**, not white. The flat-topped cluster, or umbel, can be 2 to 6 inches across. It is in flower from late June through July in our area. The compound leaves grow alternately on the stem. The leaves have 2 to 5 paired leaflets that are sharply toothed.

A perennial that reproduces by seed, wild parsnip is native to Europe and Asia and was introduced here in the 1600's. The plant spends several years as a rosette of leaves; then it bolts, flowers and dies. In high summer you will see it everywhere if you look for the yellow flowers. In parts of the SLELO region it is continuous on the roadsides.

Wild parsnip is a member of the Umbelliferae (apiaceae) family, which includes other toxic plants such as giant hogweed and poison hemlock. It also includes food plants, herbs and spices: carrot, celery, parsnip, dill, parsley, coriander, caraway, anise, cumin, lovage and myrrh. The non-native, ubiquitous wild flower Queen Anne's lace is also in this family.

If skin comes in contact with wild parsnip a rash will develop in most people. The plant sap contains psoralens which are chemicals that make the skin sensitive to sunlight. Burn-like lesions will develop within 24 hours of exposure; fluid filled blisters develop after 48 hours. The area will be painful and itchy. After these symptoms subside brown pigmentation of the area and scarring may persist for several months. The plant causes a phytopho-



toxic reaction and affected areas can remain sensitive to sunlight for many years. If you think you have been exposed to wild parsnip wash the area with soap and water as soon as possible.

Wild parsnip populations can be controlled with herbicides. Foliar applications of glyphosate work best if applied to the rosette

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# Right-of-Way Vegetation Management

*Christopher Sherwood, Regional Staff Forester, New York Power Authority*

**T**he New York Power Authority (NYPA) is the largest state owned power organization in the US. NYPA operates 18 generating facilities and maintains 16,000 acres along 1,400 miles of transmission rights-of-way (ROW). The transmission lines pass through nearly all regions of NY, carrying predominately renewable hydropower as well as wind energy. The ROWs traverse the Lake Plains, Western



Adirondacks and Catskills, and the Mohawk, Black, St. Lawrence, Hudson and Genesee River valleys.

NYPA's ROW vegetation management program's main driver is to support the safe and reliable transmission of electric power in an economically, ecologically and environmentally sound manner. NYPA employs Integrated Vegetation Management (IVM) to ensure that tall growing trees and woody shrubs do not interfere with transmission facilities. IVM balances the use of cultural, biological, physical and chemical procedures for controlling undesirable tall-growing woody species while at the same time promoting the desirable low-growing plant communities on the utility ROW. The vegetation management program includes comprehensive site data inventory, mapping and analysis. This allows for the creation of specific annual work plans that encourage and promote a relatively stable and diversified compatible plant community, consisting of various low growing species such as shrubs, herbs, grasses, forbs and ferns, thereby enhancing wildlife habitat conditions on the ROW. The ROW vegetation management program also includes an inspection program and a framework defining Minimum Clearance Distances and Wire Security Zones for protection of the conductors.

Vegetation on NYPA's ROW is effectively controlled by a variety of methods based on the land use of the area, environmental features and the characteristics of the vegetation

on the site (species mix, height and density). NYPA's treatment methods include: Low Volume Foliar, Cut/Stump Treat, Selective Mowing, Cut No Treat and combinations thereof. The Low Volume Foliar is NYPA's most preferred option. It involves walking the ROW with backpack sprayers and selectively treating or spraying the leaf surface until wet, focusing only on high-growing, non-compatible species of trees and shrubs with NYS DEC approved herbicides. Another method that is used is the Cut/Stump Treat method. This process includes cutting high growing species with a chainsaw and then applying herbicide to the cambium layer of the stump. Selective mowing is used in areas where there is a large density of undesirable trees and shrubs or in areas where greater access is needed to get to the transmission structures. Often, after mowing NYPA returns to the area the following year to treat any sprouts from these tall growing species. In many cases NYPA works with landowners to reclaim their property to a mutually acceptable state such as agricultural or wildlife habitat. The last method sometimes used is the Cut No Treat method, where only cutting of the undesirable vegetation is done. This is used in sensitive areas.

NYPA's program has been recognized as a Pesticide Environmental Stewardship Program (PESP) Champion by the EPA. In 2013 NYPA was the third utility in the nation to be officially accredited as a "Right-of-Way Steward Utility"



by the Right-of-Way Stewardship Council. This is a proactive industry initiative intended to raise the bar for responsible management of the land occupied by transmission lines. NYPA also worked with the Environmental Energy Alliance of

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# Poolside Science: The NYS ALB Pool Survey

Amber Merrell, Outreach Coordinator, NYSDEC Division of Lands & Forests

**P**ool owners are invited to join New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) in the third annual Asian longhorned beetle (ALB) Swimming Pool Survey from July until the end of August. The idea behind the pool survey is simple: Insects often land or fall in bodies of water, such as swimming pools, and are unable to escape. If ALBs are in the area, some may end up in a pool and become trapped in filters, where they can be easily found and collected. Participants in the pool survey are asked to collect any beetles found while cleaning pool filters and strainers. Collected specimens can be photographed or sealed in a hard-walled container and sent to the DEC diagnostic lab for identification.

Pool monitoring offers a simple, economical alternative to traditional procedures for surveying ALB infestations in the state, which often require a lot of time, work-hours and transportation costs. In 2013, a new ALB infestation on Long Island was discovered by a homeowner who became aware of the beetle through the pool survey program. Having citizens volunteer to survey their swimming pools greatly increases the number of eyes on the ground and the overall effectiveness of survey efforts without increasing costs. This results in a better chance of finding new infestations early, which will help DEC and

other state and federal agencies focus their efforts to eliminate infestations.

Citizen science initiatives have become increasingly popular and utilizing these resources has the potential to greatly aid in the fight against invasive species. Citizen science can help the public become more interested, knowledgeable, and willing to engage by supplying specific actions and measurable results. The pool survey program gives residents across the state the ability to take an active role in protecting the trees in their yards, communities and forests by taking simple actions that do not require large amounts of time, money, or experience.



ALBs were unintentionally introduced into the U.S. from Asia, most likely in the 1980s or '90s, in wooden packing pallets and crates. Since its introduction to this country, ALB has caused the death of tens of thousands of trees across the nation. This deadly invasive infests a variety of hardwood species, but maple trees are the preferred host. Continued survey and eradication efforts, including citizen science initiatives, will be needed to prevent this pest from forever changing the landscape of New York's forests and urban communities.

## Black Lake Association to Distribute SLELO Information

Black Lake is a 4,593-acre freshwater lake located in St. Lawrence County, New York. The lake is regularly utilized for fishing and as a vacation destination. Large portions of its shoreline are developed with cottages and camps, making for the right conditions to spread aquatic invasive species (AIS). Representatives from the Black Lake Association recently contacted the SLELO PRISM and offered to distribute AIS boater information cards and booklets to hundreds of homeowners and in public venues surrounding the lake. According to PRISM Coordinator Rob Williams *"We look forward to collaborating with the Black Lake Association and appreciate their concern for our freshwater resources."*

## COORDINATOR'S COLUMN



On my daily commute I have often noticed a relatively small patch of Japanese Knotweed (*Polygonum cuspidatum*) in the southeast corner of a nearby intersection. My previous

disregard stems only from the fact that this small patch does not lay within one of our PRISM's identified priority conservation areas (PCAs).

In a more recent drive-by of this same site, I noticed a small bulldozer clearing, or should I say grading the land. The topsoil, about 20 cubic yards, was being staged along the south end of the lot. Given that the entire site was covered with knotweed, it is pretty certain that the topsoil was full of seeds and *cuspidatum* propagules.

After pondering the demise of the topsoil throughout the workday, I toyed with the idea of stopping after work to inquire as to what plans they had for the topsoil; after all topsoil is a sought after commodity. Too late - all the equipment and topsoil were nowhere to be seen.

Often overlooked in our discussions of invasive species pathways and mitigation is the idea of land clearing and the translocation of topsoil contaminated with invasive plant

fragments and/or seeds. I assume that the aforementioned "spoil" was used elsewhere to fill a need.

Let's extrapolate using another species known for it's high seed production (Pale swallow-wort (*Cynanchum rossicum*). At 2,000 seeds per square yard multiplied against an average 550 cubic yards per acre of topsoil, that suggests 1,100,000 seeds translocated per acre of contaminated topsoil.

In cooperation with the Ontario Invasive Plant Council, the SLELO Education Committee will soon pursue a clean equipment protocol initiative to target heavy equipment and hopefully serve to identify contaminated topsoil and its translocation as a significant pathway for the spread of terrestrial invasive species. Identifying the need to manage contaminated topsoil is a good beginning, but must be followed with best management practice recommendations along with incentives to implement such practices.

I'm confident that this initiative will serve to educate developers, engineers and heavy equipment operators on the need to better manage this pathway.

*Rob Williams*

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### SLELO PRISM Partners

- ◆ Cornell Cooperative Extension County Offices
- ◆ The Nature Conservancy
- ◆ NYS Department of Environmental Conservation
- ◆ NYS Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation
- ◆ NYS Department of Transportation
- ◆ NY Sea Grant
- ◆ Ducks Unlimited
- ◆ County Soil & Water Conservation Districts
- ◆ Fort Drum Military Installation
- ◆ Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust
- ◆ Tug Hill Commission
- ◆ Save The River
- ◆ Audubon - Central NY Chapter
- ◆ Thousand Islands Land Trust

### *NYPA continued from page 2*

New York (EEANY) and NYS DEC to develop and implement a Best Management Practice to prevent transportation of invasive plant species during maintenance activities on utility ROWs. It is designed to be practical and cost effective in deciding what means are necessary to prevent the transport of invasive plant species.

NYPA strives to be on the forefront of new technology, and to provide safe and reliable power in an environmentally and economically sound manner. The future of NY's Smart Grid is an integral part of NYPA's desire to incorporate such technologies as: real time usage monitoring, LiDAR for advanced ROW decision making and micro grids for better usage of local generation capabilities.

### *Beware Wild Parsnip continued from page 1*

stage in the early spring or late fall. Keep in mind that glyphosate kills all plants. Keep it away from desirable plants in the area; read and follow the product label instructions completely. Several years of treatment may be necessary to bring large populations under control. Continue to scout the area for new plants that may develop from latent seeds. Manual or mechanical methods of control are not recommended because they will expose the operator to the plant sap and spread the seeds. If you must get near the plants use gloves, protective clothing and eye protection.

Contact Cornell Cooperative Extension of Jefferson County at 788-8450, or your local Cooperative Extension office if you have questions.