

## **Volunteer Programs for Controlling Invasive Species**

Invasive species pose a threat to both NIH campuses and to our own back yards. Their ability to rapidly spread and multiply means we must work together as a community to limit their influence. If only one person in a neighborhood works to eliminate invasive species, they may still gain a foothold in other yards and soon engulf that area. However, we can work together to take a combined stand against invasive species!

This month, we would like to highlight a few of the groups that focus on the widespread containment of invasive species. Many of these groups rely on volunteers to help with removal of invasive species or to report the whereabouts of populations. Below is a list of a few groups and information on how to get involved (please note: the NIH does not endorse or associate with any of the programs listed below and provides their information for informational purposes only).

### [Montgomery Parks Weed Warriors Program](#)

The Weed Warriors Program provides education and training for protecting local parks from invasive plant species. Anyone interested can become a certified Weed Warrior through a combination of online courses, classroom training and field training. Once certified, you are able to work anywhere on Montgomery Parks property on your own schedule and at your own pace. This certification will allow you to identify and remove invasive species on your own!

### [Maryland Department of Natural Resources Statewide Eyes Program](#)

The Statewide Eyes Program was designed to allow researchers and volunteers to quickly collect information about invasive plants on state lands. Volunteers can use a smartphone app called the “Mid-Atlantic Early Detection Network (MAEDN) to identify, photograph and map the location of invasive species within Maryland. Reports are then incorporated into the Early Detection and Distribution Mapping System (EDDMapS) to map the distribution of invasive species. This program provides a quick and easy method for anyone that likes being outdoors to lend their eyes for invasive species control.

### [Maryland Native Plant Society](#)

The Maryland Native Plant Society is a group based in Silver Spring, MD that seeks to promote awareness, appreciation and conservation of Maryland’s native plants and their habitats. They aim to achieve this goal through education, research, advocacy and service activities. Given the threat that invasive species pose to native plants, this group also focuses on removal of such plants. The Maryland Native Plant Society often hosts field trips, conferences, workshops and acts as a great source of information on plant species native to Maryland.

### [National Invasive Species Council \(NISC\)](#)

The National Invasive Species Council provides the high-level vision and the leadership necessary to sustain and expand federal efforts regarding invasive species. This council consists of high-ranking staff from many federal agencies. Although it is unlikely that you will be able to join the NISC, they regularly provide direction for dealing with invasive species across the United States and other crucial information about invasive species.

In addition to these Washington D.C. Metropolitan-based programs, many counterparts exist for other areas of the country. For information relevant to your local area, checking the website of the relevant state department may be a good place to start (often the Department of Natural Resources or the Department of Agriculture). The respective [Montana](#) and [North Carolina](#) sites on invasive species are linked here for added accessibility. Please check your local area for similar opportunities to volunteer or contribute!