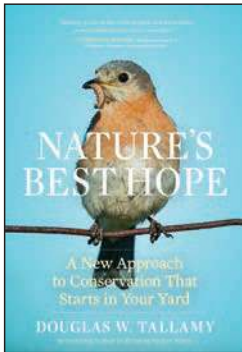


# Invasives Update

With complete indifference to our raging pandemic, garlic mustard is in full bloom; knotweed is pushing up; and summer will bring black swallow-wort vine, doubtless in vastly increased numbers. Such human-introduced non-native invasive plant species, if left unchecked, will degrade biodiversity and lead to decline and local extinction of native plants, insects, and animals (yeah, humans eventually, too, if we are still around).



In the “What Each of Us Can Do” chapter of Dr. Doug Tallamy’s new book *Nature’s Best Hope*, his commandment to “Remove Invasive Species” is second only to “Shrink the Lawn.” (His third is “Plant Keystone Genera,” native plants that support local ecosystems, such as oaks, cherries, asters, goldenrods, and many others.)

A new challenge in the era of Covid-19 has been how to remove invasives while observing safety requirements. NewtonSERVES was cancelled citywide, including our four planned pulls, as were our

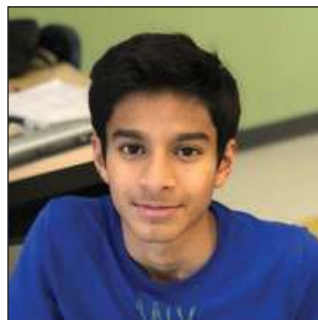


Summer intern Lara Simshauser from the Winsor School

subsequent group sessions due to safety concerns. Experienced pullers (those “regulars” to our sessions who also pull on their own) have, however, still been working away; we also show up at the previously scheduled dates and times and work individually, keeping far apart.

An interesting aspect of the Covid impact is that we are getting about as

much done as we were pre-Covid, because it is the same group of dedicated people who did that work anyway. The sad aspect is that the group could have been much larger, given all the people at home, experiencing spring and appreciating nature, and seeking fun and meaningful outdoor family activities. Newton Conservators decided we could not invite new/



Summer intern Veer Gadodia from Newton North High School



Garlic Mustard



Japanese Knotweed

inexperienced people and families to activities where it would have been hard to maintain safety precautions.

We will, however, engage such new people with outreach, improved access to invasives information on our website, and promotion of outdoor exploration and plant identification using resources such as the iNaturalist app. We always encourage people to learn the species around them and to work in their own yards and neighborhoods to remove invasives and to plant natives, and we are available for questions and consultations.

The city has continued to be very supportive and picks up our bags for disposal in a state-authorized invasives dumpster. The city’s new Open Space and Recreation Plan, currently being finalized, has a greatly expanded focus on improved

biodiversity, including removal of invasives and promotion of native species.

Working to organize the invasives information on our website is intern Veer Gadodia, a wonderful NNHS student volunteering his time and excellent technical website skills. He has been joined for projects, including invasive pulling, by Lara Simshauser, an intern from the Winsor school. Finally, board member Peter Barrer, who has taken on the role of website content manager, oversees the project.



Black Swallow-wort

Veer is making great progress, and you will soon be able to see the website updates.

☞ Katherine Howard