

Alternative Spring Break – Invasive Species Control Program

Program Overview

As elsewhere in the State of Rhode Island, Prudence Island has a number of non-native, invasive plant species which are negatively impacting natural communities. Current NBNERR control efforts targeting autumn olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*) are a component of an island-wide effort to control this species in accordance with the Prudence Island Cooperative Weed Management Area (PI CWMA) strategy for addressing invasive plant species. Autumn olive poses a great risk to sensitive coastal shrubland habitat and has been identified as having a high management priority. (Visit <http://www.riwps.org/newsletter-22-02.pdf> to view an article about the PI CWMA in WildFlora RI, the RI Wild Plant Society's newsletter.)

Introduced to the United States from its native range in China, Japan, and Korea, autumn olive was often planted to revegetate severely disturbed areas. On Prudence Island, it is likely that autumn olive was first planted by the Navy to provide a visible barrier to DOD dump sites. There are two heavily infested areas located on the South Prudence unit of the Reserve. Over time, the geographic extent of the infestations has increased and it is no longer uncommon to find scattered plants in the vegetated buffer along the shore and along roadsides.

[Autumn olive](#) plants are large multi-stemmed shrubs which may grow to 20 feet in height. These shrubs typically form dense thickets which displace native vegetation. Since cutting of larger plants generally results in thicker, denser regrowth it will be necessary to apply herbicide to the cut stumps. A commercially available herbicide product which is suitable for use by non-professionals (*e.g.* Round-up) will be applied. Individuals who do not wish to handle herbicides will be assigned to other tasks. Young seedlings and sprouts will be hand pulled providing there is adequate ground moisture to ensure the removal of the root system. Autumn olive plants will be hand pulled or hand cut with bow saws and, if possible, chipped on-site. Alternatively, the cut plant material will be loaded in trucks and hauled to a location which is suitable for chipping and / or brush burning.

Control efforts will initially be focused at the most heavily impacted sites. However, if time permits we will target scattered small patches and individual shrubs throughout the island. Future efforts will emphasize the continued removal of large shrubs and resprouts (if this occurs), as well as the removal of seedlings before they are able to mature and produce fruit (generally at 3 + years).

Due to the strenuous nature of this work volunteers will be required to sign a waiver form, which restricts participation to individuals who are over the age of 18. To register, please use the on-line registration tool available through [VolunteerSpot](#). If you experience any difficulty with registration, or would like some additional information, please contact Robin Weber (robin@nbnerr.org; 401-683-7369).

Please help us to spread the word. Copy or print an [announcement](#) of this opportunity to post in your dorm, classroom, etc. or simply to share with friends.

Prudence Island Overview

The [Narragansett Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve \(NBNERR\)](#) is responsible for managing properties on Prudence, Patience, Hope, and Dyer Islands which are owned by the State of Rhode Island. NBNERR managed properties on Prudence incorporates approximately 55% of the land area of the island. An additional 20% of the island is owned by the Prudence Conservancy and the Audubon Society of Rhode Island and is protected from development.

Visitors to Prudence Island will discover that the island has a number of roads and hiking trails which allow many opportunities for exploration. The island is largely forested but also contains a mix of coastal shrubland, salt marsh, and freshwater wetlands. The charm of Prudence Island is in the amount of its open space and lack of commercial activity. Overnight visitors should be prepared to entertain themselves as there is, quite literally, no place to go on the island except for long drives and hikes.