

Native Plant Communities & Cultural Continuity

A Free Invasive Species Treatment Program for Landowners — Prepared for the Tomaquag Museum

RI DEM DIVISION OF FOREST ENVIRONMENT · POCASSET POKANOKET LAND TRUST

PLANTS TARGETED FOR TREATMENT

Seven shade-tolerant invasive plant species suppressing native plant communities important to forest food, medicine, fiber, and biodiversity across southern New England.



Japanese Barberry [HIGH]

Berberis thunbergii — Dense, thorny shrub that smothers native understory and prevents tree seedling establishment. Spreads by bird-dispersed berries.

SUPPRESSES: regeneration of oak and hickory, native blueberry and huckleberry, and woodland forbs of the forest floor.



Japanese Stiltgrass [HIGH]

Microstegium vimineum — Annual grass forming dense carpets across forest floors. Alters soil chemistry and persists through a long-lived seed bank.

SUPPRESSES: wintergreen, partridgeberry, and the woodland herbs and tree seedlings that depend on an open forest floor.



Glossy Buckthorn [HIGH]

Frangula alnus — Shade-tolerant shrub or small tree invading wetland edges. Forms dense thickets that crowd out native shrubs.

SUPPRESSES: swamp and wetland communities — the habitats where sweetgrass, northern white cedar, and wetland medicines grow.



Invasive Honeysuckles [HIGH]

Lonicera spp. — Leaf out before native plants and hold leaves into late fall, shading competitors. Spread by wildlife.

SUPPRESSES: native blueberry, hazelnut, viburnum, and the diverse native shrub layer that supports songbirds.



Burning Bush [MOD-HIGH]

Euonymus alatus — Landscape ornamental that escapes into adjacent forests, forming dense stands. Still widely sold in RI nurseries.

SUPPRESSES: winterberry, black huckleberry, native viburnums, and other native fall-fruiting shrubs.



Garlic Mustard [MOD-HIGH]

Alliaria petiolata — Biennial herb releasing allelopathic chemicals toxic to mycorrhizal fungi — the symbiotic root networks native plants depend on.

SUPPRESSES: native trees, woodland medicines, and the below-ground fungal networks that connect them.



Oriental Bittersweet [HIGH]

Celastrus orbiculatus — Aggressive climbing vine that girdles and topples mature trees, opening the canopy to further invasion.

SUPPRESSES: mature oak, hickory, white pine, and other canopy trees that anchor forest food and material systems.

The forests, wetlands, and waters within Rhode Island's borders are the homelands of the Narragansett people. The native plant communities of these lands — the plants that have anchored food, medicine, ceremony, and craft across many generations — are the same communities now being suppressed by shade-tolerant plants introduced through the colonial pathways of the past four centuries.

We share this as an invitation — we welcome the opportunity to develop a dialogue incorporating knowledge of the land to inform the work

NATIVE PLANT COMMUNITIES AT RISK

Where invasives are removed and regeneration is supported, the plant communities that return support food, medicine, fiber, and ceremony: mast-producing canopies, diverse shrublands, fungal networks, healthy wetlands, and the woodland forbs that together form a living forest.

WHAT THE PROGRAM OFFERS

A coordinated suite of services at no cost to participating landowners:

- ▶ **Mapping & site assessments** — field-based evaluation of invasive presence and priority habitats.
- ▶ **Co-developed treatment plans** — shaped by landowner priorities, site conditions, and stewardship goals with participation incentives.
- ▶ **Professional invasive treatment** — delivered by knowledgeable providers, coordinated and paid for by PPLT.
- ▶ **Workshops** — on invasive species identification and control, forest stewardship, and ecological restoration.
- ▶ **Landowner support materials** — stewardship plans, species guides, and follow-up technical assistance.

PPLT manages contractor coordination and payments — landowners receive the work, plans and treatments at no cost.

POSSIBILITIES FOR CO-DEVELOPED WORK

Co-developed treatment design. Treatment priorities, management actions, and protocols are developed with the landowner — incorporating their vision and knowledge of the land to inform best practice.

Restoration alongside removal. We are interested in conversations about pairing replanting — culturally and medicinally significant species — with treatments on sites where the practice aligns with stewardship goals.



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TIMELINE › Outreach & workshops developing through 2026 · Enrollment late 2026 · Active treatment begins 2027

Built in partnership.

This program comes together through partnerships whose stewardship makes the work possible.

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