

Organizing Volunteers for Invasive Plant Removal

Friends of Bidwell Park

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- Non-profit 501 (c) (3), formed in April 2003
- Began invasive plant removal June 2003 to increase opportunities for volunteering in the park
- 4,700 hours of on-site volunteer labor to-date, with about 525 participants

Overview

- **Why Use Volunteers?**
- **Volunteers & Invasive Plants are a Perfect Match!**
- **What Motivates Volunteers to Remove Invasive Plants?**
- **How to Get Started?**
- **Publicity**
- **What Kind of Projects Do Volunteers Like?**
- **Other Ideas...**

Why Use Volunteers?

- Provide low-cost labor
- Educate public about invasive plants and their effects
- Provide community match for grants
- Train observers for locating and removing invasive plants

Volunteers & Invasive Plants are a Perfect Match!

- Events can accommodate any size group and all ages
- Schedule of activities provide opportunities for people to participate when it's convenient for them
- Volunteers can focus on one plant species, work alone or work in a specific area

Possible Sources of Volunteers

- Schools—K-12, colleges and universities
- “Community service” from school or court
- Churches, synagogues, temples, mosques
- Outdoor and environmental groups
- Community newcomers
- Clubs, organizations & youth groups
- Businesses
- Retirees



What Motivates Volunteers to Remove Invasive Plants?

What people say...

- Social activity
- Physical challenge
- New to community
- Want to be outdoors
- Team-building activity
- Mindless or relaxing work
- Cares about nature
- Needs to fulfill community service requirement
- Want to learn about the natural environment
- Doesn't require a regular, long-term commitment

How to Get Started?

- **Planning**
- **Recruiting**
- **Managing the event**
- **Recordkeeping**



How to Get Started: Planning

- Find out what prep. has already been done
- Decide what work volunteers can do
- Pre-plan a variety of projects
- Acquire necessary tools and supplies
- Determine insurance requirements
- Produce liability release & community service hours forms
- Develop flyer for description of work and schedule
- Train leaders in first aid, CPR & tool safety

How to Get Started: Recruiting

- Identify volunteer sources
- Contact them about volunteering & ask how they disseminate information to their members
- Attend meetings of prospective volunteers and make presentations about projects or brief announcements



How to Get Started: Managing the Event

- Start with small projects
- Ratio of 5 volunteers per team leader for inexperienced workers, 10:1 for experienced
- Provide short talk about invasive plants, tool safety, etc.
- Invite experts to participate along with volunteers

How to Get Started: Recordkeeping

- Sign-in sheets at each event
- Set up spreadsheet to track time and projects by site and participants
- Publicize volunteer hours contributed

Publicity

- Prepare a media contact list, including cutoff times and days for inclusion in their publications
- Send press releases & PSAs
- Use your personal contacts
- Maintain web site calendar
- Send regular email newsletter to volunteers
- Use your business cards as a way to publicize projects

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**Weekly Volunteer Invasive Plant Removal in
Bidwell Park**
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What Kind of Projects Do Volunteers Like?

Volunteers want to ...

- Make a visible difference in one session (e.g. remove big plants)
- Work in areas with definite boundaries
- Remove the seed source first to avoid repeating the same work year after year
- Remove only 1 or 2 plant species at a time, to make identification easier
- Avoid routine maintenance, poison oak & scratchy plants

Other Ideas...

- Laminated card showing photos/drawings of invasive plants
- PowerPoint presentation for meetings of organizations
- Tool loans/rentals to people removing invasives from their yards
- Neighborhood meetings focused on invasives and removal techniques
- Share tools & supplies with other groups
- Get donated tools & supplies such as tarps, buckets
- Ask for financial contributions to purchase specific items
- Laminated cards with emergency phone numbers

Thank you

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