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Ohio River Foundation Volunteers and Blue Ash Staff Team Up For Summit Park Wetland Restoration

Contributed By: [Rich Cogen](#) | Ohio River Foundation

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On Sunday, May 15th at Summit Park in Blue Ash, several volunteers came out to help remove invasive Callery Pear trees (*Pyrus calleryana*) from a federally protected wetland. This important task is part of a larger creek and wetland restoration project, funded in part by an OEPA 319 grant that Ohio River Foundation helped obtain for the City of Blue Ash. This project, to improve the park's natural areas and to control and reduce stormwater runoff, is part of the multi-year Summit Park development plan.

Removing invasive species from the landscape is important because they displace native plant species by using all essential resources the native plants need to survive. Eliminating an invasive species from an area is no small task. For example, the Callery Pear tree has been widely used in landscaping, as it is tolerant of many soil types, drainage levels, and diseases. It grows quickly, has an aesthetically pleasing appearance, and was thought to be sterile, meaning it could not produce fertile seeds. However, once new cultivars were introduced, it became apparent that they were able to cross-pollinate. Their popularity and ability to produce viable seeds has led to the Callery Pear tree population getting out of control, and now being declared by natural resource managers an invasive species.

Ohio River Foundation is working with the City of Blue Ash to organize volunteer days and ensure proper removal of Callery Pear trees and other invasive plants as part of the restoration project. Greg Bechtel and his son Hank were among the volunteers who came out to support the effort on Sunday, May 15th. Greg brought up a great point when he said that one reason they were able to volunteer is that they "...live close to Summit Park, so [they] have an extra interest in the work going on there plus it is convenient to travel to."

Volunteers are a valuable asset to many habitat restoration projects, and most people who want to volunteer may not want to travel to a remote location. With a little investigation, you might find that there are opportunities in your own neighborhood or even closer to home! Your own backyard might present habitat restoration opportunities. After working with us, Greg mentioned that "...seeing these sorts of projects also gives [him] ideas for things [he] can do around [his] own house to be more eco-friendly."

Controlling invasive plants and maintaining healthy habitats is a group effort. Parks are always working to fight invasives on their property, but there is more privately owned land in the Greater Cincinnati area than is owned by parks – and invasive plants have no concern for property lines! For this reason, private landowners can have a big impact on the local environment, whether they decide to volunteer with a group or work in their own backyard.

This year Ohio River Foundation will be offering workshops about what residents, businesses, and property owners can do to help make our collective environment a little better by removing invasive plants from their landscape.

To learn more about Ohio River Foundation (and any upcoming workshop announcements) or Summit Park, visit www.ohioriverfdn.org or http://www.blueash.com/departments/parks_and_recreation/summit_park/index.php



The work crew posing in front of a pile of invasive plants they removed. (BACK: Bernie Moller, Hank Bechtel, Greg Bechtel, Grace Whitacre, Bowie Bender, Jeff Bender, Zach Hoehn. FRONT: Chase Bodkin, Sarah Meadows, Teresa Metzner)

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