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Medina Gazette Edition

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Leaflet

Your Connection to Nature  Medina County Park District

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Medina County Invasive Species Buy-back Program

By: Shelley Tender, Interpretive Services Manager



In January of 2018, the Ohio Department of Agriculture published a list of invasive plants newly declared as illegal to buy, sell, or propagate. The entire list contained 38 plants, but only 36 were immediately illegal, while two others were given a grace period. *Lythrum virgatum*, European wand loosestrife, was given an extra year, and *Pyrus calleryana*, Callery pear, was given a five-year reprieve.

Seems a bit harsh, right, classifying garden plants as illegal? Not really, if you understand the reasoning behind it. Just what does invasive mean, exactly, in the context of plants? The definition of an invasive plant as written by the USDA Forest Service is “a species that is: 1) Non-native (or alien) to the ecosystem under consideration; and 2) Whose introduction causes or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health.”

Invasive plants are introduced from foreign regions and thrive so exceedingly well in the new region that they crowd out native species and outcompete them for the resources they need to survive. Additionally, invasive plants come to the new region without the natural checks and balances from their home region, such as the fauna who typically feast on them and diseases that might keep their populations balanced.

Most invasive plants are transferred through humans by both accidental and deliberate actions. In many cases, the plants that are labeled as invasive were favorites in the nursery trade because they had qualities that made them desirable to the consumer -- attractive foliage or flowers, low maintenance, fast growing/spreading, etc. Unfortunately, it is these same traits that enable them to thrive outside the confines of the home landscape and become a problem in our natural areas. A good example of this is *Pyrus calleryana*, a.k.a Callery pear/Bradford pear/Cleveland pear, which was once touted as an incredible home landscape tree but is now colonizing in fields and forests across the country.

The five-year grace period for Callery pear ended this January, and it has joined the ranks of its co-listees as illegal to buy, sell, or propagate in the State of Ohio. But, while no new invasive plants from this list are legally allowed to be intentionally introduced, our environment is still at risk from all those that were planted before 2018.

Enter the *Medina County Invasive Species Buy-back Program!* This program is a collaborative effort between the Medina County Soil and Water Conservation District and the Medina County Park District. It has been generously funded by the Ohio Watershed Mini Grant from

Local Family's Land Donation Allows Lake Medina to Expand

Medina County Park District (MCPD) is pleased to unveil a new master plan for Lake Medina that includes a third entrance to the park located at the corner of Foote and Weymouth roads in Medina Township. This future addition is made possible thanks to a generous donation of eight acres by the Shotwell family.

The Shotwell family is no stranger to the park district. In 2018, the family donated an adjacent 17.5 acres to protect the west branch of the Rocky River. Becky Shotwell shared, “We are excited to help preserve and create a new area that will serve not only as an additional access to Lake Medina but also provide an exciting new place where friends can strum their guitars, a grandparent can identify a wildflower with a child, families can enjoy a tranquil picnic, or where a child can magically transform his/her imagination while climbing through a treehouse.”

Shotwell said Medina County Park District has provided her family with places for hikes, company picnics, meetings, celebrations, education, and more over the years. “We are honored to make this gift and feel fortunate to have a park district with the vision and leadership to preserve land and expand services for future generations,” she added.

In recognition of the family's generosity, this new area will be called The Shotwell Gardens at Lake Medina. It will include an outdoor amphitheater, an indoor space for public programs, gardens featuring native plants, walking trails, treetop views, and more. The park district and the Shotwells worked with Environmental Design Group last year to develop the plan. Improvements that will provide access to the water for fishing and paddlecraft and a concept to turn the former pump house into an observation platform are also included in the master plan.

MCPD Director Nathan Eppink anticipates construction will take place in phases starting in 2025. “Visitors will be able to watch this site grow over several years.”

Lake Medina was created in the early 1960s when the city of Medina was looking for a way to supplement its water supply. In 2002, due to increasing demands for water usage as the city grew, an alternate water supply from Lake Erie was developed, and Lake Medina was no longer needed as a water supply. In 2003, MCPD secured a lease agreement with the city of Medina to turn the 103-acre lake into a county park. Currently, Lake Medina can be accessed off State Route 18 as well as from Granger Road.



The Shotwell Gardens at Lake Medina will include an outdoor amphitheater, small pond, an indoor space for public programs, gardens featuring native plants, walking trails, treetop views, and more.

Dominion Energy & Western Reserve Land Conservancy and a donation from the Rocky River Watershed Council. The new program will encourage Medina County residents to remove Callery pear, bush honeysuckle, and/or autumn olive from their yards and be given the opportunity to receive one free native replacement tree or shrub in return. The goal of this program, according to MCSWCD's Conservation Educator Kellie Docherty, is “to replace invasive species with native plants, educate the community about the threat that invasives pose to our environment, and improve habitat and watershed health.” In addition to offering the free flora, the two agencies will be co-hosting educational workshops on invasive removal at the Oenslager Nature Center and have an informational display at the annual Earth Day Festival on April 22 at Buffalo Creek Retreat. Details for workshops can be found on the park website as they become available. Complete details regarding the *Buy-back* program can be found on the soil and water district's website at [medinaswcd.org](https://www.oipc.info/invasive-plants-banned-on-ohio.html). To see the complete list of Ohio's illegal, invasive plants visit: <https://www.oipc.info/invasive-plants-banned-on-ohio.html>.

DONATION CORNER

Tree of Life

In Memory of Mary Repp
Mary Broggin

In Memory of Eloise Franke
Vicki and Larry Lushek

In Memory of Marian Hallum
Vicki and Larry Lushek

Oenslager Nature Center

In Memory of Mary Repp
Randy and Rosie Williams

Hibernation Station

Angela May

17 Plates and 10 cups for program use
Heather Donley