

# EXTENSION SNAPSHOT

Fulton-Mason-Peoria-Tazewell Unit

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Illinois Extension

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## Forestry specialist provides chainsaw safety education to local volunteers and park district staff

University of Illinois Extension Master Naturalist volunteers often spend time assisting partners with trail maintenance, invasive and aggressive plant removal, and restoration efforts in prairies and forested areas. At times, those tasks require some serious gear. A new crew of volunteers serving in Fulton, Mason, Peoria, and Tazewell counties received special training in chainsaw safety from Extension Forestry State Specialist [Chris Evans](#).

Along with [Fon du Lac Park District](#) staff, volunteers received training in the safe and effective use of chainsaws and the proper selection and use of safety gear. They had the opportunity to practice these skills at [Spring Creek Preserve](#) and remove some invasive Bradford Pear and small maples along the trails.

“Many times trunks of the invasive Japanese Honeysuckle are too large to remove with hand tools alone. Using a chainsaw is much more appropriate for saving time and energy,” shared [Christine Belless](#), ag and natural resources extension program coordinator.

All class members were impressed by the TR Industrial Forestry Safety Helmet and Hearing Protection System. Evans demonstrated the full head, face, and ear protection and strongly emphasized its importance. One of the Fon du Lac maintenance staff expressed his appreciation in learning the proper fit of chainsaw chaps which need a two inch overlap of your boots. The class learned chaps should not be washed as it would break down the materials inside the chaps, making them ineffective.

Some of the participants brought their own chainsaws, and Evans had a wide selection of chainsaws from small battery operated to larger chainsaws using a gas mixture. General mechanics, operations, and chain care were covered. The class was able to handle the different saws and practice priming, choking, starting, and running. One very important safety procedure covered and practiced was the chain break. Evans stressed the importance of repeating the chain break safety practice to prevent injuries.

[Master Naturalist](#) Ed Coleman shared the top three things he learned by attending the Beginners Chainsaw Safety workshop: “First, I learned how to make an open-face notch for felling the tree. Second, I found out that there is a ‘felling sight’ on most chainsaws to help the operator drop the tree where he wants. Third, I realized the importance of clearing the immediate area of trip hazards. As I backed up when my first tree began to fall, I tripped and fell over a small log behind me!”

“Safety first, observe your surroundings and take it slow,” is Belless’ motto when doing restoration work for a partner site and even on your own property.



Photo by Christine Belless | Illinois Extension

*Trail maintenance is one of many tasks that Extension Master Naturalists assist with at partner sites. Extension Forestry State Specialist Chris Evans (pictured right) trained a team of local volunteers and Fon du Lac Park District staff on chainsaw safety and technique.*

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