

## Featured Volunteer Work: The Restoration Battle



It is Saturday morning. As I do every week I will become a volunteer warrior against invaders from Europe and the Orient. Well, I guess to be more precise, these are invaders from my neighbors' yards.

The battle field will be one of several forest preserves in the Palos/Willow springs area. The invaders are the shrubs Honeysuckle, Buckthorn, Barberry, and Mutli-Flora Rose; the forbs Garlic Mustard, White and Yellow Sweet Clover; and the grasses Reed Canary Grass and Teasle. From fall through early spring we are cutting and burning invasive shrubs. From late spring throughout the summer we are tackling the invasive forbs and grasses.

I meet with the site steward other volunteer warriors from the Palos Restoration Project, in a forest preserve parking lot at 9:00 in the morning. The steward passes out the weapons (loppers, hand saws, brushcutters, chainsaws, herbicide, buckets, rollers, sprayers; or clippers and plastic bags). We then march off to meet the enemy.

The shrubs meet us with a wall of defiance. We hack them down and drag them to the fire. Depending upon the size of our army, and the density of the opposing force, we might clear 20 to 50 feet of the invaders. Once cut and dragged away herbicide is applied to the stumps to help keep the army from reassembling at a future date.

Forbs and grasses are harder. We often have to hunt them down. At times they are gathered in close proximity to each other. At other times they are hiding amongst native forbs and grasses. We cut or pull them then bag them. They get carted off to some remote spot where they are disposed of or composted.

Some time after noon we pack it in for the day and march off to fight another day.

-Dave Branigan, Cook County Master Naturalist