

Horticulture Standing Committee

2018 Activity Report

1. Need for experienced arborist on staff

Following our 2017 recommendation for the rehiring of an experienced arborist to the MetroParks staff, we supplied staff and commissioners with a list of recommended classes and hands-on training to comply with the MetroParks' desire to train current staff instead.

We have continued to monitor this issue during 2018. Our concerns with training current staff included the length of time that training takes. In November 2018, the Committee was informed by the Human Resources Director that three interested staff are taking the preparatory course for the certified arborist exam. One staff person will take the exam in December 2018 and the other two in January or February 2019. No hands-on training has been scheduled, as of yet.

A concern remains that any newly certified arborist(s) at the MetroParks will not have the advantage of learning the hands-on techniques of tree work by working alongside an experienced arborist.

2. Scouting for tree hazards, invasive plants, pests, diseases and other horticultural issues

Regular scouting throughout the MetroParks used to be performed by the Supervisor and Arborist(s) on the Forestry Crew along with the Assistant Horticulture Director. As most of these positions no longer exist on the MetroParks staff, the Committee is concerned that this function is not being sufficiently accomplished and important issues may not be found or recognized.

During 2018, the Committee met in different areas of the MetroParks to do a walk-through to scout for issues. The following is the list of areas visited and the issues found in these areas:

Fellows Riverside Gardens - 1/25/18

Possible tree hazards and new security cameras were discussed with Gardens Director, Andrew Pratt.

Lily Pond – 4/12/18

Numerous fallen trees along with piles of cut branches and brush on the north side of the pond and behind the donation bench on the west side are detracting from the beauty of the area. At a minimum, spreading the brush and smaller tree pieces around more naturally would improve the landscape appearance.

Tree work could be done on the trees leaning over benches around the pond to improve safety.

In the past, the Forestry Crew cut logs with smooth tops and laid them in the pond to create habitat for turtles. More logs could be added to the few that are in the pond at this time to increase the amount of turtle habitat.

Yellow Creek Park – 5/30/18

Garlic mustard plants (an invasive plant) and poison ivy were found near the walking trail. Removing the garlic mustard plants each year will keep it from spreading. Garlic mustard spreads very quickly and is highly damaging to native tree and plant growth in natural areas.

Fellows Riverside Gardens – 7/17/18

At this time of year, the roses in the Modern Rose Garden should be in full growth. We found the rose plants had all been cut back to about 12” due to an infestation of rose midge. The Committee reviewed the pesticide records for the Rose Garden and found that insecticides had not been applied for the last two years. To avoid pest and disease infestations on these types of roses, pesticide applications need to be made on a monthly basis during the warmer weather months.

Large unplanted areas were still obvious in the Perennial Border. These gaps in the display have been present since 2016.

Plant labels throughout the Garden are not being tended. Few annual labels have been placed. Permanent labels are not being tended – many are falling over, hidden by plants, crooked, etc. New permanent labels are not being made when new plants are added to the Gardens. Red duct tape was used to hold plastic labels onto stakes in the Trial Garden which was very noticeable and unpleasant-looking in a Garden that is known for its beauty.

Lanternman’s Mill – 8/27/18

Cutting back the tall weedy perennials between the parking lot and the road would increase the security of the parking lot area.

Many weedy and invasive plants are present along the walkway and steps down to the Mill. These problem plants include privet, English ivy, bush honeysuckle, Ailanthus, grapevines, maple tree saplings and buckthorn.

A very noticeable, unkempt-looking area of weeds were found growing in the ground around a planted container on the south side of Mill. This is an area that should be highly maintained and weeded regularly to avoid this unkempt appearance.

Beech leaf disease was discovered by the Committee on numerous American beech trees in the Mill area. This is the first finding of this disease in Mahoning County. Staff liaison Andrew Pratt agreed to report the finding to the ODNR. Little is understood of this disease at this time. It can be fatal to young trees. Its full impact on mature trees is not known.

The very large American elm tree on West Newport looks healthy. This tree had been treated yearly for prevention of Dutch Elm disease in previous years. No treatment has been applied since the Forestry Crew was disbanded in 2016.

MetroParks Farm – 9/24/18 & 10/22/18

The annual flower beds along the entrance to McMahan Hall contained many large, noticeable weeds in this highly public area.

3. Construction of new High Tunnel in the Horticulture Service Area at Fellows Riverside Gardens

The Committee monitored the progress toward the construction of this new production house at the Gardens. As of 11/28/18, construction and utility work were expected to be completed during the first week of December.

4. Natural Resources Steward & Natural Areas Management

The Committee met with the new MCMP Natural Resources Steward, Nick Derico, and Justin Rogers, MCMP Planning Manager, to gain an understanding of the goals and responsibilities of this position. The Committee was pleased with the emphasis on invasive plant management.

Horticulture Standing Committee 2018 Summary of Recommendations

- 1. If cut brush and branches cannot be removed from natural areas, spread them as naturally as possible to maintain an appropriate appearance.**
- 2. Keep tall perennials and shrubs between the road and the Lanterman's Mill parking lot cut back to improve security.**
- 3. Monitor Beech Leaf Disease developments. Make, and follow-through with, an action plan when appropriate.**
- 4. Spray modern roses at Fellows Riverside Gardens with a combination of insecticide(s) and fungicide(s) on a monthly basis from May to September.**
- 5. Keep landscaped beds in public areas weeded.**
- 6. Continue on-going invasive plant removal efforts.**

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2019 Goals

- 1. Monitor progress of arborist training, including hands-on training, of Mill Creek MetroParks staff or the hiring of an experienced certified arborist or trained forester. Monitor tree work performed by staff, work out-sourced to outside companies and forestry work that needs to be done.**
- 2. Continue site visitations throughout Mill Creek MetroParks to scout for horticultural issues, such as plant pests & diseases, landscape issues, hazardous trees and invasive species.**