



Department of Planning and Building Services
380 A Avenue
Post Office Box 369
Lake Oswego, OR 97034
503-635-0290
www.ci.oswego.or.us

INVASIVE PLANT REMOVAL IN SENSITIVE LANDS DISTRICTS

Invasive plants are broadly defined as species that were introduced to locations outside of their native range that spread and persist over large areas, outcompeting native species. Invasive plants have a significant negative impact on native plants and animals and natural ecosystems. For example, invasive plants displace native species, reduce biological diversity, alter hydrologic and soil conditions, and degrade wildlife habitat.

Given these negative impacts, many property owners are interested in removing invasive plants from their land in order to protect and enhance natural resources, including tree groves, stream corridors, and wetlands. The City of Lake Oswego encourages the removal of invasive plants from public and private lands. Due to the growth patterns of many invasive species, however, removal is sometimes only the first step of a restoration project. Invasive plants frequently grow in large, dense monocultures, and the removal process may require clearing all of the vegetation from an infested site. If a site is cleared and the underlying soil is exposed, it should be replanted with native or locally adapted plants in order to stabilize the soil, prevent erosion, and provide food and cover for wildlife.

The restoration of cleared areas is especially important near environmentally sensitive natural resources. The Sensitive Lands section of the Community Development Code (LOC 50.05.010) protects wetlands, stream corridors, and significant tree groves by regulating development near those natural resources. This handout explains how the code applies to invasive plant removal projects in Sensitive Lands districts. (In this context, "invasive plants" include the shrubs, herbaceous plants, vines, and grasses listed in the Lake Oswego Master Plant List. For information about the removal of invasive trees, please see the Invasive Tree Species brochure available at City Hall and on our website.)

CAN I REMOVE INVASIVE PLANTS FROM AN RP OR RC DISTRICT?

Yes, invasive plant removal is allowed in RP and RC districts in accordance with the Sensitive Lands requirements described below.

Very small invasive plant removal projects are exempt from all code requirements. For example, if a property owner catches an invasive plant infestation early and wants to remove several small, scattered plants—like thistles or Reed canary grass—the project would be considered "weeding." Weeding is exempt from all code requirements because it qualifies as "routine maintenance and repair" of existing landscaping [LOC 50.05.010.2.b.iii]. The removal of small, scattered invasive plants is thus allowed in RP and RC districts, and there is no replanting requirement.

If an invasive plant removal project is more extensive than weeding and involves clearing of land, it must meet several code requirements. Removing invasive plants is considered "clearing" if the plants are large or clustered together—like ivy, Himalayan blackberry, or Scotch broom—and their removal exposes the

underlying soil. This type of removal project is allowed, but it must meet the standards for native plant removal and replanting as described below.

CAN I REMOVE NATIVE PLANTS IN CONJUNCTION WITH INVASIVE PLANT REMOVAL?

The size and location of the project determines whether any native plants can be removed from Sensitive Lands district in conjunction with invasive plant removal. If the project site is 200 square feet or smaller and is not located within a wetland or below the top bank of a stream, then native plants may be removed too. LOC 50.05.010.2.c.iii allows a cumulative total of 200 square feet of *de minimus* development in a Sensitive Lands district, which means that native plants can be removed to accommodate uses like sheds, barbeque pits, and gardens. A property owner could thus completely clear an area of up to 200 square feet that included a mix of invasive and native plants. If the cumulative development area is larger than 200 square feet, or if the removal area is located within a wetland or below the top bank of a stream, only invasive plants may be removed; any native plants growing within the removal area must be preserved [LOC 50.05.010.2.c.v].

DO I HAVE TO REPLANT A CLEARED AREA?

There is no replanting requirement for invasive plant removal projects that qualify as weeding, as described above. If a project involves clearing, however, it must meet the construction standards described in LOC 50.05.010.4.d. Construction standard LOC 50.05.010.4.d.vii states that "surface runoff...supplying hydrology to an RP District shall be designed and maintained so as not to adversely impact the functions and values of the resource." This standard could apply to an invasive plant removal project in an RP District or an RC District adjacent to an RP District, if the exposed soil would result in erosion and runoff into a stream or wetland, or if the cleared area would no longer provide food and shelter for wildlife. Both of these impacts would have an adverse effect on "the functions and values" of the stream or wetland, so the cleared area must be replanted with native or locally adapted plants [LOC 50.11.004]. (Please note that if a cleared area is larger than 500 square feet or within 50 feet of a water body, the City's erosion control standards will also apply. For more information, please contact the City's Erosion Control Specialist at 503-635-0290.)

PLANTING PLAN REQUIREMENTS

If an invasive plant removal project will clear a site in an RP district, the property owner should contact Planning Department staff to determine whether replanting will be required based on the potential natural resource impacts. If replanting is required to comply with the Sensitive Lands regulations, the property owner would need to submit a planting plan that includes the number, species, and size of all replacement plants, and the general location where new materials will be planted, as required by LOC 50.05.010.4.g. Staff will review the planting plan and provide feedback to the property owner in a timely manner. (This process does not require a formal application or fee.)

THANK YOU FOR YOUR STEWARDSHIP!

Thank you for removing invasive plants from your property! Your good stewardship helps protect the functions and values that tree groves, wetlands, and stream corridors provide. We hope you enjoy your restored natural area.