

## Timberline Forest Restoration Project - What You Need to Know

Katherine Low, Forest Steward

[katwink@comcast.net](mailto:katwink@comcast.net)

As many of you may have noticed, some parts of our forested open spaces have been invaded by non-native plants. This is not good for the health of our forests and the wildlife that rely on native plants. The homeowners association has paid a consultant to update the Forest Stewardship Plan created in 1994, and is in the process of securing funding for the project. We will also be organizing restoration events for neighbor volunteers to help remove the noxious weeds and plant native species in their place.

This project will be completed using a combination of professional services and volunteer work. We need to remove the ivy, holly, laurel and blackberries which are smothering native plants and threatening the health of the big trees in our greenbelts. Some of that we can complete with volunteer crews. The more stubborn weeds, especially on steep slopes, need professional assistance.

But if we stop there, additional noxious weeds can fill in the blank spaces, so we also need to plant native species in the spaces left by removal of the invasives. But why not let the ivy and blackberry just grow? Don't the birds eat blackberries? Can't the insects find shelter and nesting places among the ivy?



***Birds love salal berries!***

Well, yes. But remember that the native species of the Pacific Northwest evolved together. Native birds, insects and mammals became adapted to finding specific native plant resources at a particular time. The food, shelter and nesting places that native wildlife adapted to over centuries are not necessarily found at the right time and place with invasive plants. For example, invasive blackberries don't bloom at the same time as the native blackberry and their fruit may not be available at the time native birds are looking for them.



***Birds will eat blackberries, but distribute seeds wherever they fly, making the problem worse.***

Think of it this way. Imagine going into a grocery store and finding only one kind of cereal on the shelves. Or only tomato soup. Now imagine that there is only one type of fruit in the produce aisle, like peaches. But they are only available in the summer because that's when the fruit ripens. That's what our native wildlife encounters when forests get taken over by one or two invasive plants. Sure, birds can eat the Himalayan blackberries, but only when they're ripe. What are they going to eat the rest of the year? And those blackberries are sterile in our climate, so no seeds are produced to nourish birds later in the year. Lack of food diversity is a big problem for all wildlife, including the human kind.



***NOT a healthy forest! That's a monoculture of ivy.***

Another problem with invasive species is they have no competition within our native ecosystems. Without the plants to compete, and bugs and mammals of their original locations to eat them into submission, these plants take over. They can blanket forest floors and enrobe trees, squeezing out seedlings of native trees and shrubs. A forest floor composed entirely of ivy or blackberry is not the kind of diverse ecosystem our native fauna requires. Plus, a place covered by ivy or blackberry turns out to be a wonderful habitat for rats and other rodents. Could this help explain the numerous "pest control" commercial vehicles that frequent our neighborhood?



***No space for tree seedlings to grow.***

So your Board is undertaking a long-term project to remove the invasive, noxious weeds and plant a diversity of native plants in the common area green spaces that make our neighborhood unique in Sammamish, perhaps in all of King County. Where else do you enter a subdivision and see only green? Timberline is special, unique, blessed with an abundance of natural areas that enrich all our lives - and the Board means to keep it that way. No monoculture of noxious weeds; no damage to our abundance of towering cedars, maples and firs; no degradation of the amazing resource granted us by the developer of our subdivisions. Our forested green spaces sequester carbon dioxide, filter stormwater, cool our homes in summer, shelter our homes from winds in winter, purify our air and provide habitat for a wide variety of native insects, birds and mammals.

With a little help, we can keep these green spaces healthy for us and future generations. We can keep them working for our benefit, and the benefit of all our downstream neighbors.



*Healthy, diverse forest.*

Coming soon to this website will be links to specific invasive plants so you can find out more - and discover how you can help keep these plants out of our forests. All of the invasive species started out as pretty specimens used for landscaping our yards. As homeowners, we are all responsible for these ornamental plants in our yards, to make sure they do not endanger the natural areas surrounding our homes. Do you have ivy as a groundcover? No need to pull it out unless you do not want to keep it pruned so it doesn't escape under your fence into the common area . Did you inherit laurel bushes from the previous homeowner? Pruning those bushes to stop berry production will help keep them out of the forest. Love being able to cut holly for your holiday decorating? Be sure to cut off all the berries. Birds will eat them and distribute the indigestible seeds as they fly over the trees. We can have these noxious plants in our yards and they won't damage our forests *as long as homeowners adequately maintain these plants.*

Information from Joy Wood, the project consultant with Restoration Analytics and Design:  
"The Timberline common area forest is already relatively healthy, but it does have some places that are impacting its ability to provide ecosystem services to the Timberline community. Thus this area is in need of ecological restoration that can be performed by volunteer community members, as well as restoration professionals. By increasing the presence of Pacific Northwest native vegetation, and decreasing non-native, invasive vegetation, the Timberline common area forests will perform even better to supply ecosystem services and enjoyment for the entire HOA."

and

" The invasive vegetation in the Timberline Common Area Forest is considered by the King County Noxious Weed Control Board to be harmful to forest health (i.e. limiting ecosystem services), but with help from the community, there is time to stop this incursion before too much damage is done."

[joy@restorationad.com](mailto:joy@restorationad.com)