



Riverwoods Preservation Committee

A group of resident volunteers dedicated to preserving the ecological heritage of the community

Another Technique in Woodland Restoration: Prescribed Burning

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources is one of many voices in our region that recognizes the impact humans can have, for good or ill, on our natural environment: "Whether you own one acre or one thousand, the decisions you make and the actions you take regarding your property affect the nonhuman species that reside or visit there. . . How you manage that land while it is in your care will have an impact long after you are gone."

Our Village recognizes the importance of our woodlands in the Woodland Protection Ordinance and currently offers residents matching programs for invasive plant removal and reforestation, to help us restore balance to the natural environment in which we reside. Another tool which is recommended and used by local land managers such as the Chicago Wilderness Consortium and the Lake County Forest Preserve, but is not yet part of the Riverwoods tool kit, is **prescribed** or **controlled burning**. As we go to press, an ordinance pertaining to this technique is being considered by the Riverwoods Board of Trustees.

Unlike fall leaf burning, which is a simple cleanup mechanism used by homeowners, a prescribed burn offers numerous benefits including efficient invasive removal, nutritional recycling and increased seed production by native flora. This is not a method to be used by novices or lawn care companies. It should only be used by trained professionals, properly permitted by the EPA and local authorities, as part of a comprehensive natural landscaping plan. When done correctly, in a limited area with wind speed and direction taken into consideration, prescribed burning is safe and has minimal impact on adjacent neighbors.

One resident on Blackthorn who already had utilized mechanical methods of invasive removal on buckthorn, garlic mustard and aggressive green ash, has further restored his woodland using prescribed burning. He retained Tallgrass Restoration to conduct the burn, one of the companies listed on the USDA website at www.il.nrcs.usda.gov.

Frequently a native seed mix is distributed over the area burned. The optimal time for sowing a native seed mix following a burn is in the fall.

We look forward to following the resident's journey towards a more balanced, diverse and attractive landscape, and we will share the information with other interested residents.

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