

The survey results demonstrated that individuals who have previously participated in the Great Air Potato Roundup are more educated regarding invasive non-native plants than new volunteers and the general population that is represented by the proof sample. Of all volunteers surveyed, 94.8% stated the Roundup was an educational experience. Considering that 73% of surveyed volunteers had not previously participated in the event, it is clear the educational objectives about invasive non-native plants are being conveyed to community members.

Challenges for the Future

An issue that needs to be addressed is providing public education by delivering factual information and ensuring it is properly understood. The survey results indicate that a significant portion of people had either no knowledge of invasive non-native plants or had a false impression of their own knowledge. Public education is a major goal of the Great Air Potato Roundup, and measures need to be taken to connect with the community and provide information that is exciting and valuable. By achieving this, a more complete understanding of the importance of invasive non-native plant control is attainable for community members. Increasing the number of volunteers at the event by focusing on advertising methods and target audiences is a means to achieve this goal. According to the survey results, television and radio advertisements were the least effective in attracting new volunteers (4.1% and 3.2%, respectively). However, there is no method to measure what portion of the general population was made aware of the problem of invasive non-native plants but did not participate in the event. Promoting community involvement in the removal of invasive plants, both within public and private lands, and spreading a message of land conservation and stewardship is the ultimate goal. Efforts should be made in the future to develop a more diverse advertising campaign that will reach a larger segment of the population.

Creative Project Combination Extends Grant Value

The Bay Area Resource Council (BARC) is a group of elected officials in the Pensacola, FL area, committed to building environmental awareness in the two counties and three cities within the jurisdiction. BARC was awarded a \$550 grant from FLEPPC to provide education on exotic invasive plants, and used an existing project to springboard in a different but related direction to get the most "bang for the buck." "There is a lot of wonderful information available on the web, and we didn't want to reinvent the wheel," stated Eleanor Godwin, Project Coordinator.

"Help Stop Pointless Pollution" is the theme of a year-long project for the BARC and a grassroots organization, the Bayou Texar Foundation, funded by a Florida Coastal Management Program grant. Programs, workshops, booth displays, and literature focused on what the individual can do to help keep stormwater runoff cleaner.

Landscaping tips included use of Florida native plants and removal of exotic plants. To supplement the initial project literature, FLEPPC funds paid for flyers that featured information on the characteristics of exotics and reasons why they should be removed. The flyers also included several good websites with color photos and listed common exotics in this area of the state.

The "Help Stop Pointless Pollution" booth was used at many local events such as a Waterfront Living workshop, Earth Day, "Picnic in the Plaza" in downtown Pensacola, an Open House at a local public community center on Bayou Texar, and a "State of the Bay" symposium sponsored by the BARC. A second booth was created for the invasive plant project, using the photo-

mural available from the University of Florida Center for Aquatic and Invasive Plants. Information in the two booths complemented one another at the above events.

In addition, a scout troop distributed the flyers to members and volunteers engaged in the removal of Chinese privet on the University of West Florida Campus. A local Florida Native plant nursery took a large stack of the material to distribute to customers. This vendor keeps a display of desirable natives and exotic invasive plants at his nursery to educate his customers. (Photo below.)



Earth Day 2002, Pensacola, FL, joint display with Florida Native Plant Society and the Echo Center, a Florida native plant nursery, that educates the customers with a display of desirable vs. invasive native plants.

BARC staff explains information on exotic invasive plants to attendees at the Picnic in the Plaza event in Plaza Ferdinand, Pensacola, FL.

