

“Brushing Up” on Invasive Awareness

By Pat Parr

Literally building on ideas derived from efforts of the Southern Appalachian Cooperative Weed Management Program (SACWMP) to increase awareness of the spread of invasive plants by trail users, Eagle Scout candidate Gerrit Dolislager constructed and installed signs at entrances to a popular greenway in Oak Ridge, TN.

Using the SACWMP sign panel template developed by John Odell, SACWMP Resource Management Coordinator, Gerrit customized the text information and photos to address invasive plants causing problems in the Oak Ridge area. Each sign also includes a boot brush for use before and after walking the greenway to remove invasive plant seeds or materials that may have attached to shoes or boots. The Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency provided materials for Gerrit's use in the sign construction.

Gerrit chose this project because he “wanted to do something other than building benches that would be outside, informational, and serve a greater purpose. These signs can inform people who use these trails about something they can do to help the local environment.” Gerrit, from Troop 46, Knoxville, TN, used the project to fulfill his Eagle Scout badge.

The scout project was endorsed by the Tennessee Exotic Pest Plant Council. The construction plan for the sign structure, also developed by John Odell, is posted on the TNEPPC website: www.tneppc.org

Why Bootbrushes?

John Odell performed a small experiment to determine if boot brushes were helping to prevent seed dispersal. He collected soil from two boot brushes at Appalachian Trail trailheads in Hot Springs, NC. The soil was placed in sterilized pots, watered, and placed in a sunny windowsill. Within weeks the pots were overflowing with young seedlings including Japanese stiltgrass (*Microstegium vimineum*). Most of the seedlings were native plants, but the experiment did show that our boots do hold and move unwelcome seeds.

This information was drawn from a longer article, “What’s in Your Boots,” printed in the SACWMP newsletter and posted to the TNEPPC website.



The original SACWMP sign has been installed at Appalachian Trail heads in Madison County, North Carolina. Note boot brush at bottom of sign.

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