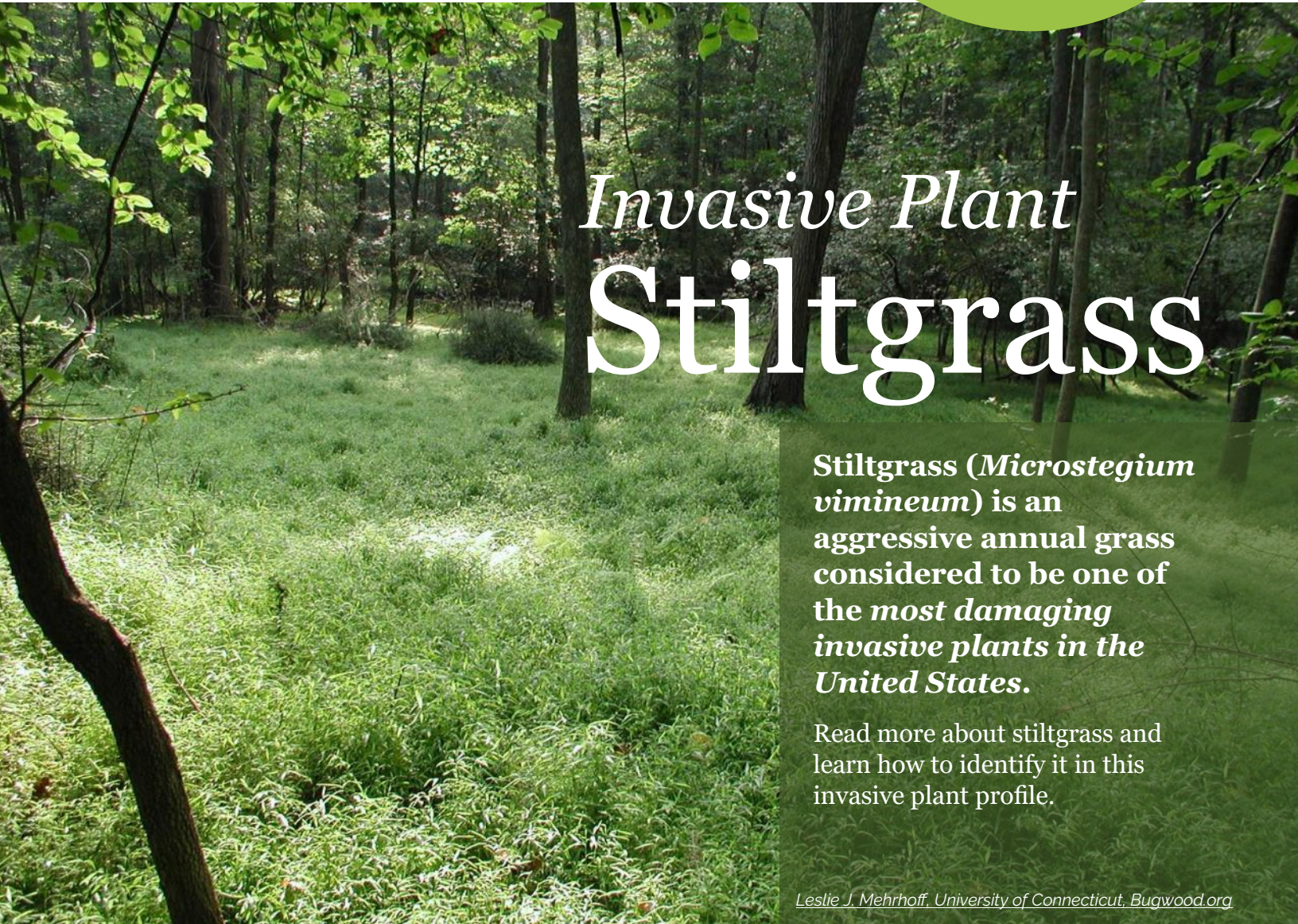


Spring Newsletter
**NATURAL AREA
PRESERVATION**

April 2024 • Volume 30, Number 2



Invasive Plant
Stiltgrass

Stiltgrass (*Microstegium vimineum*) is an aggressive annual grass considered to be one of the most damaging invasive plants in the United States.

Read more about stiltgrass and learn how to identify it in this invasive plant profile.

Leslie J. Mehrhoff, University of Connecticut, Bugwood.org



Natural Area Preservation's mission is to protect and restore Ann Arbor's natural areas and to foster an environmental ethic within the community.

a2gov.org/NAP
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Chris Evans, University of Illinois, Bugwood.org



Leslie J. Mehrhoff, University of Connecticut, Bugwood.org



Leslie J. Mehrhoff, University of Connecticut, Bugwood.org



Chris Evans, University of Illinois, Bugwood.org

WHEN TO LOOK FOR

Stiltgrass

Seedlings appear around Memorial Day (they can also germinate later in the season following disturbance), plants flower around Labor Day, and thatch persists through winter.



Leslie J. Mehrhoff, University of Connecticut, Bugwood.org

AN AGGRESSIVE INVASIVE

Rachel Maranto, Stewardship Supervisor

Like most annuals, stiltgrass spreads exclusively by seed. Each plant produces between 100 and 1,000 seeds that remain viable in the soil for up to five years. The tiny seeds are easily transported by foot and vehicle traffic, wildlife, and flowing water. Though it prefers floodplain forests and other shady moist areas, stiltgrass is highly adaptable and known to grow in all ranges of light levels, soil moisture and acidity. Once established, it rapidly forms dense mats that can completely displace our native understory vegetation. For all of these reasons, stiltgrass poses a serious threat to Ann Arbor’s native ecosystems, and it’s important that we do what we can to stop it from taking over our beloved nature areas.

Native to Eastern Asia, stiltgrass was used as a packing material for porcelain and other goods and was likely introduced to the U.S. in this way. Since its initial discovery in 1919 in Tennessee, stiltgrass has become widely established in Appalachia and the southern Midwest and spread to most states east of the Mississippi River. This pernicious invader is a relative newcomer to Michigan, first “arriving” in 2011 in neighboring Lenawee County, then showing up in 2015, just a few years later, in Washtenaw County’s Scio Township.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

Early Detection Most Effective

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

We are fortunate at NAP (so far) to only have known populations of stiltgrass at a few parks: Brokaw Nature Area, as well as Bird Hills and Kuebler Langford Nature Areas—in the power cut area off Beechwood Drive. We are also lucky because patches that are small enough can be hand pulled. Larger infestations do need chemical treatment for several consecutive years to exhaust the seedbank. We further know how lucky we are to have many watchful and caring eyes among our volunteers, and in the [Ann Arbor community](#), and we could use your help monitoring for new occurrences of stiltgrass!

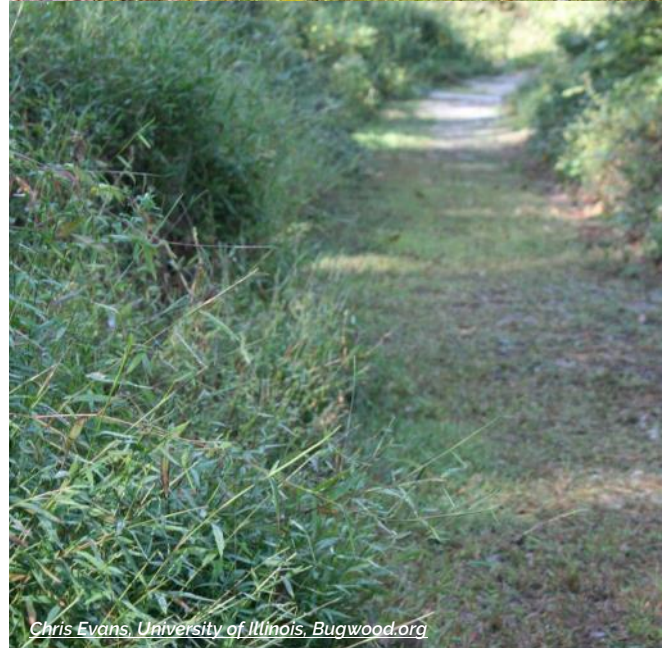
NAP's field crew carefully surveys our known stiltgrass invasions, treating them annually and searching nearby for spread, but due to its ease of spread and persistence in the seedbank, early detection and treatment is key to successful control of this species.

As you're visiting your favorite natural areas throughout the seasons, **use the following guide to help you spot this aggressive grass, avoid lookalikes, and learn how best to report a sighting.** The more trained eyes we have out there, the better!

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



Chris Evans, University of Illinois, Bugwood.org



Chris Evans, University of Illinois, Bugwood.org



Chris Evans, University of Illinois, Bugwood.org

WHERE TO LOOK FOR

Stiltgrass

Often shows up first in areas with disturbance like edges of roads and trails, lawns, gardens, ditches, streambanks, utility easements (power cuts and sewer lines), and forest edges.



Jill Swearingen, USDI National Park Service,
Bugwood.org



Leslie J. Mehrhoff, University of Connecticut,
Bugwood.org

Chris Evans, University of Illinois,
Bugwood.org

Overall Appearance

Delicate, low-growing annual grass. Longer stems sprawl over one another and root at the nodes, forming a dense, tangled mat 1-3 feet tall. Taller plants can be up to 6 feet in length but usually lie flat along the ground or propped up against other vegetation. Turns a purple-brown color in the fall or during drought (hence another common name, Nepalese browntop). Winter thatch can appear bright tan to orange in color.

COMMON NATIVE LOOKALIKE

White Grass

White grass (*Leersia virginica*) is probably the most commonly mistaken species for stiltgrass in our area. It has a very similar growth habit and site preferences – it can often be found growing with stiltgrass. Luckily, white grass has several characteristics that differentiate it from stiltgrass.

White grass is a native perennial with a well-developed root system, which makes it hard to pull. Its leaves are longer and thinner, and they lack the distinguishing silvery midrib of stiltgrass. Around each leaf base, the stem has patches of dense white hair (whereas stiltgrass is almost always hairless, or nearly so). Its flower spikes are much larger, up to 10 inches long, and its inflorescence is more spread open.



Chris Evans, University of Illinois,
Bugwood.org



Nancy Loewenstein, Auburn University, Bugwood.org



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Roots

Underground, a thin, weak root system that is easy to pull. Above ground, look for stilt roots descending from the lower nodes of longer stems.

Nancy Loewenstein, Auburn University, Bugwood.org



5483810



Leslie J. Mehrhoff, University of Connecticut, Bugwood.org

Leaves

Pale green with a **silvery, slightly off-center stripe along the midrib of each leaf** – this is one of the most defining characteristics of stiltgrass. Leaves are lance-shaped (pointed at both ends) with smooth edges. Each leaf blade is 1-3 inches long and ~1/2 inch wide. Leaves alternate and are well-spaced along the stem.



James H. Miller & Ted Bodner, Southern Weed Science Society, Bugwood.org

Stems

Thin, smooth, and fleshy to wiry depending on time during growing season. Often multiple stems branch out near the base of the plant. Stems can root at the nodes, forming small, stilt-like roots, from which the species gets its common name.



Chris Evans, University of Illinois, Bugwood.org

Leslie J. Mehrhoff, University of Connecticut, Bugwood.org

Flowers & Seeds

1-3 thin spikes, each 1-2 inches long. Tiny seeds are ~4 millimeters long.

WHAT TO DO

If you think you've found stiltgrass

NOTE YOUR LOCATION

Coordinates, name of park/nature area (if applicable), other descriptors will help us key in on the right spot (e.g. "forest edge just behind the picnic tables," or "west side of the trail").

SNAP SOME PICTURES

Photos are incredibly helpful! Capture different parts of the plant – it can be challenging to get good photos of grass, but do your best!

Once NAP has received word of a potential stiltgrass sighting, we will send trained staff to verify identification and determine what actions are needed. Even if what you've found isn't on park property, we'd still love to know about it! If you are the landowner, we can recommend control options and connect you with available community resources.

OPTIONS FOR REPORTING POTENTIAL INVASIVE SPECIES:

1. On public property in the city of Ann Arbor, use the [A2 FixIt reporting tool](#). NAP's [oak wilt video](#) includes instructions for reporting oak wilt, but the process is nearly identical.
2. On private property, or outside of Ann Arbor, use the [Midwest Invasive Species Information Network reporting page](#).
3. Email NAP@a2gov.org with photos and location.

OTHER COMMON LOOKALIKES

Other lookalikes include the native Nimblewill (*Muhlenbergia schreberi*), native Deer tongue (top) and other panic grasses (*Dichanthelium spp.*), native and non-native Smartweeds (*Polygonum spp.*), and invasive Crabgrass (*Digitaria spp.*) (bottom).



Richard Gardner, Bugwood.org



Joseph M. DiTomaso, University of California - Davis, Bugwood.org

NAPPENINGS

Staff Updates

Farewell...



Dana Novak
Workday Coordinator

I never would have imagined when I started at NAP back in August 2007 that I'd still be working there nearly

17 years later. NAP has been my refuge, as an escape to an adult world when my kids were little, as well as a connection to nature, wonderful people, and places. I have moved on to a position within the City Parks Department as the Adopt-a-Park Coordinator at GIVE 365. I am grateful to ALL of the awesome volunteers I've met for the amazing restoration progress I've witnessed over the years in our natural areas and friendships and connections along the way. Some of the places where positive change has been most dramatic are Bluffs, Mary Beth Doyle, Sunset Brooks, Leslie Woods, Ruthven, Kuebler Langford, Cedar Bend, Molin, Huron Parkway Nature Area, and Redbud. Every little bit of restoration work adds up to a huge impact over time – so keep up all the good work! I will always be a NAPper at heart.



Welcome!



Dane Page
Conservation Crew

I am thrilled to join the NAP Crew for a great season of work in Ann

Arbor's beautiful natural areas. After working at Nichols Arboretum, getting a conservation science degree from the University of Michigan, and several years doing prescribed burns, I am most excited to connect with NAP's incredible volunteer base, have a great burn season, and learn more about salamanders and native plants. Outside of work, I love to canoe, sauna, swim, and go camping. Come say hello if you see me out on the trails!



Lindsey Fleis
Conservation Crew

I am from beautiful Northern Michigan

so I love being outside and being near the water. I graduated from the University of Michigan in December 2022 from the Program in the Environment, with a specialization in Natural Resource Management and a Water minor. After graduating, I worked for Oakland County Parks and Recreation doing a job very similar to the NAP crew, so I am excited to continue working with invasives. Outside of work I enjoy reading, road trips, and car camping.

NAPPENINGS

Thank You!

Many thanks to the individuals and groups who helped out with volunteer work or other support during the last few months. We could not make such a difference without you!

- UM Chi Epsilon
- UM Tau Beta Pi
- Greenhills School
- UM Theta Alpha Psi
- UM Epsilon Eta
- UM Kappa Alpha Pi



Large group at top: Epsilon Eta at Furstenberg

Small groups: Greenhills students at Bluffs

Thank you, new Park Stewards!



Carolyn Green is a new Park Steward at Oakwoods Nature Area! Carolyn recently moved to Ann Arbor from Colorado, where

she was active in shortgrass prairie restoration. She has been engaged as an active volunteer with NAP since August 2023 and an independent volunteer at Oakwoods since November 2023. She is also active in promoting landscaping using native plants. Her motivation is to foster a healthy habitat for insects, such as native pollinators. She enjoys being able to spend time in an Oak and Hickory forest close to home.

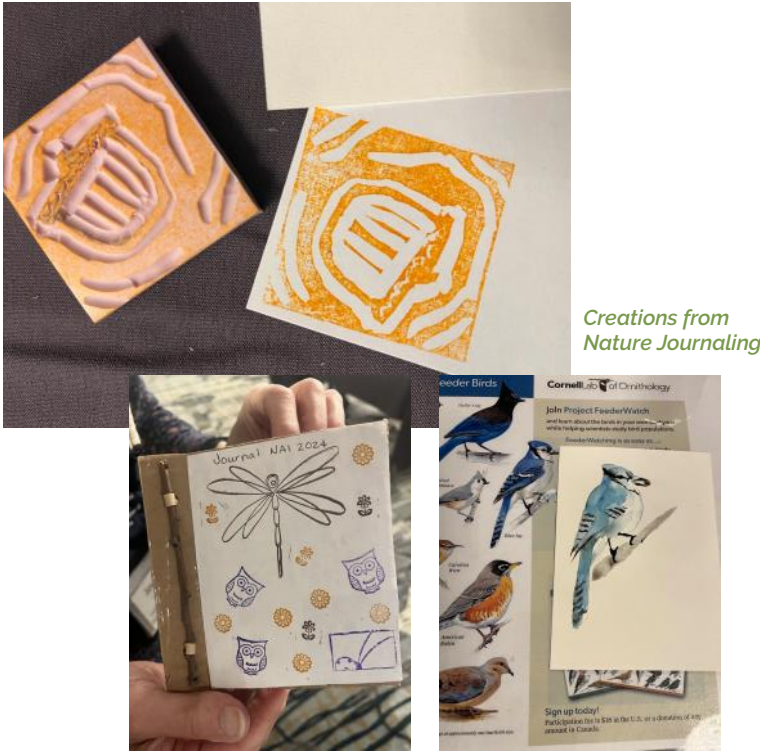


Stu Hayes is a new Park Steward at Brokaw Nature Area! Stu is a retired motion graphic designer and spent the last ten years working

as a park resource technician with Colorado Parks and Wildlife and South Suburban Parks and Recreation. He has been a VERY active volunteer with NAP since October 2023 and independent volunteer at Brokaw Nature Area. He is on the burn crew, is chainsaw approved, and an MDARD herbicide applicator hoping to be approved to herbicide with NAP after his one-year anniversary of being a steward.

NAPPENINGS

EVENTS



Creations from Nature Journaling

In mid-March, NAP Environmental Education and Engagement Coordinator, Eleva Potter, presented at the National Association for Interpretation Conference for Region 4 on Nature Journaling: Art, Science and Mindfulness in the Park. Participants created their own nature journal out of recycled materials and braved the cold to look for local birds and collect native leaves and acorn. They then practiced water coloring local birds to get the coloring correct and turned the native leaves or acorns into their own block print.

Volunteer Workdays Register at vhub.at/NAP

- Bird Hills Doubleheader 4/20
- Mary Beth Doyle, 4/21
- Cedar Bend, 4/21
- Lakewood, 4/26
- Argo, 4/27
- Huron Hills GC Woods, 4/27
- Sunset Brooks, 5/5
- Miller, 5/5
- Marshall, 5/11
- Huron Parkway, 5/11
- Molin, 5/12
- Berkshire Creek, 5/12
- Narrow Gauge Way, 5/18
- Ruthven, 5/18
- Black Pond Woods, 5/19
- Bird Hills, 5/31
- Bird Hills Doubleheader, 6/1
- Bluffs, 6/2
- Fuller Park, 6/8
- Dolph, 6/9
- Brokaw, 6/22
- Olson, 6/23
- Bird Hills, 6/28
- Bluffs, 6/30



NATURAL AREA PRESERVATION

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Facebook: [@ann.arbor.nap](https://www.facebook.com/ann.arbor.nap)

Natural Area Preservation is funded by the voter-approved 2020-2026 Park Maintenance & Capital Improvements Millage.

EVENTS

K-5 Forest Fridays and Nature Crafts

Register at [NAP.a2gov.org/EEYouth](https://nap.a2gov.org/EEYouth)

For K-5 students accompanied by an adult. Preregistration is required.

Forest Fridays: Searching for Salamanders

May 3, 4:30-6 p.m., Bird Hills

Learn about native salamanders, what they're up to in spring, and then go for a one-mile hike to try to find some! It's gonna be muddy, so wear your boots!



Nature Crafts: Build a Dragonfly

May 15, 3-4:30p.m., Island Park

Learn about Michigan dragonflies and damselflies! Take a hike to find them in the park, then use natural materials to build your own! Remember to wear your closed-toe shoes and long pants!

Forest Fridays: Finding Frogs

June 7, 4:30-6 p.m., Bandemer

Learn about Michigan frogs, what their calls sound like, and then go for a one-mile hike to try to find some! It's gonna be muddy, so wear your boots!

Inventory Events



Turtle Steward Kickoff & Training

Saturday, April 20

1:30-3:30 p.m.

Help us maintain and protect nest sites, monitor

populations, and look for turtles in habitats along the Huron River and nearby waters! We'll help you learn species identification, nest maintenance and monitoring, and how to report your turtle observations. And yes, you can survey for turtles while paddling down the river on a sunny morning! Open to anyone who can look for turtles. Suitable for families. Surveys can be done from the water. This training will also be recorded.

Register at

<https://nap.a2gov.org/Turtles>



Breeding Bird Survey Kickoff

Thursday, May 2

7-9 p.m.

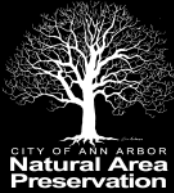
Learn how to put your birding skills to use and survey for

breeding birds in Ann Arbor's parks! Volunteer to help NAP with Ann Arbor's Breeding Bird Survey. Learn how NAP uses eBird to record survey results, sign up to survey your favorite park, hear about last year's survey, and access the survey materials. Note that experience in bird identification is necessary, and you must be able to identify birds by sight and sound to participate in this survey. This training will also be recorded.

Register at

<https://nap.a2gov.org/BBS>

Nature Stewardship VOLUNTEER REWARDS 2024



Volunteer
your time
with NAP in
2024 to
receive
points!



Register now for NAP events at vhub.at/NAP, and start earning points!



1
point

bloodroot
NAP button



3
points

bee balm
NAP magnet



5
points

big bluestem
NAP cap



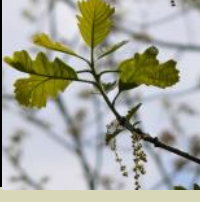
8
points

blackberry
NAP long sleeve t-shirt



14
points

buttonbush
NAP hoodie



30
points

bur oak
Prize announced in Dec.

General info

- Look for quarterly emails to let you know when it's time to pick up your prize!
- Volunteer events get you points! Trainings, lectures, and walks are not eligible.

Eligible events

One point per program per day.

- Public and Private Workdays
- Park Steward activities
- Survey outings for breeding birds, turtles, salamanders, frogs and toads, and butterflies
- Photo Monitoring sessions
- Prescribed Burns
- Other events as identified by program coordinators