



WNY PRISM

Partnering to Protect Western New York
from Invasive Species



Spring 2026 Newsletter

The WNY PRISM mission is to proactively identify, evaluate and address invasive species priorities in western New York using a coordinated partnership of local professionals, organizations and community members to improve, restore and protect local aquatic and terrestrial resources.



Seven Years of WNY PRISM's Watercraft Inspection Stewardship Program

The WNY PRISM region is home to many outstanding water resources, including two of the Great Lakes, Lake Erie and Lake Ontario, as well as the Allegheny River, Niagara River, Chautauqua Lake and more than thirty miles of the Erie Canal. These waterways provide exceptional opportunities for boating, fishing, paddling and other forms of recreation. But, while watercraft make it possible to enjoy these shared natural resources, they can also unintentionally spread aquatic invasive species (AIS). Invasive species can damage aquatic ecosystems, negatively impact local economies, pose risks to human health and make recreation more difficult. To address this threat, watercraft inspection programs have become a standard prevention strategy employed across New York State. These programs aim to not only stop the spread of AIS, but to educate the public on why prevention matters and how simple, everyday actions can make a meaningful difference.

WNY PRISM's Watercraft Inspection Stewardship Program (WISP) was established in 2018. The program stations trained Watercraft Inspection Stewards/Environmental Educators (Stewards), at priority boat launches throughout the WNY PRISM region from Memorial Day through Labor Day. Stewards conduct voluntary inspections, collect survey data on boating activity, and provide outreach about invasive species prevention and WNY PRISM's work. In 2019, WNY PRISM staffed twenty-two launches, with several Stewards splitting time between multiple launches. Since then, the program has gone through changes and in 2025 we operated at

Seven Years of WISP

twelve launches across the region. This strategic shift allowed WNY PRISM to focus efforts on higher priority sites, including high-traffic launches, waterbodies with known invasive species concerns, areas at risk of new introductions and locations offering greater outreach opportunities.

Since the program's inception, Stewards have interacted with 235,273 members of the public, inspected 102,575 watercraft and intercepted 6,570 confirmed aquatic invasive organisms representing twelve species. Unsurprisingly, in 2020, when everyone was eager to get outside, WNY PRISM experienced its busiest season, with 53,257 interactions, 12,886 inspections and 1,309 aquatic invasive organisms across six species. Even in an average season, however, the program conducts 30,089 interactions, 13,472 inspections and intercepts 832 invasive organisms, demonstrating its consistent regional impact.

From 2019 through 2025, WNY PRISM's Boat Stewards intercepted over 6,500 aquatic invasive organisms!

Sturgeon Point Marina, located on Lake Erie, is a great example of what a watercraft inspection stewardship program can provide. As the shallowest and warmest of the Great Lakes, Lake Erie is also the most biologically productive, supporting world-class fisheries, particularly for walleye, which attracts anglers and boaters from across the region and beyond. Patrons of Sturgeon Point Marina have reported previously launching their watercraft in waters across ten different states and one Canadian province, with one boat arriving from as far away as California! This level of boat traffic creates significant opportunities for AIS to spread. The Town of Evans has graciously hosted a Steward at the marina since 2019. Over six seasons of staffing, Stewards have interacted with 29,645 individuals, conducted 11,547 watercraft inspections and intercepted 1,827 aquatic invasive organisms across seven species. As a result, Sturgeon Point Marina accounts for over 12% of total public interactions and 27% of the aquatic invasive organism interceptions in the region, and underscoring the importance of consistent watercraft inspections and

Help Protect Your Waterways!

Cleaning, draining and drying your boat helps prevent the spread of invasive species to new waterbodies. But what does that actually involve? Follow these simple steps:

CLEAN visible mud, plants, fish or animals from the watercraft after each use.

- Dispose of debris and any organisms at a disposal station or in the trash.
- Some organisms are difficult to remove with water alone, so cleaning your boat with hot water (at least 140°F) and using a brush or pressure washer is recommended.
- Never wash your boat or release organisms into a waterbody.

DRAIN any and all water from the watercraft before leaving the access site.

DRY all watercraft, trailers and equipment before using them in another waterbody.

- Drying times may vary depending on where your watercraft is stored, but a minimum of 5-7 days is recommended.

Every step helps protect our waterways from invasive species!

the adoption of Clean. Drain. Dry. practices.

WNY PRISM will continue operating our Watercraft Inspection Stewardship Program in 2026! This season, Stewards will staff twelve launches across five counties in western New York. If you see one of our Stewards at your local launch, stop and say hello! They are there to answer your questions, share information and help protect the waterways we all enjoy!

Front page photos: center - zebra mussels; others - WNY PRISM Boat Stewards working at their launches, conducting boat inspections and surveys in 2025.

Scotch broom (*Cytisus scoparius*) is a perennial shrub in the pea family (Fabaceae) that can grow up to ten feet tall. Native to parts of Europe and northern Africa, it was introduced to North America in the late 1800s as an ornamental plant and was later used for erosion control. In New York State, scotch broom has been reported in six of the eight PRISM regions and is listed as a Tier 2 species in each of them, meaning early detection and rapid response efforts aim to remove it entirely. It was first reported in western New York in 2019, at Letchworth State Park, which remains the only known location in the WNY PRISM region.

Why It's a Concern

Scotch broom tolerates a wide range of environmental conditions, including low-nutrient soils and varying moisture levels, though it thrives best in dry, well-drained soils in full sun. It is commonly found in disturbed areas such as roadsides, forest edges, riverbanks and fields. The plant poses several ecological concerns. It reduces habitat quality for grazing animals and increases wildfire risk due to its high oil content and dense growth. As a nitrogen-fixing species, it alters soil chemistry, allowing it to outcompete native plants adapted to nutrient-poor soils. Over time, it forms dense thickets that displace native vegetation and can hinder wildlife movement.

How to Identify It

The best time to identify scotch broom is in the spring, particularly May through June, because it's in peak bloom. The plant produces small, bright yellow flowers about a half inch to one inch long. The flowers grow along the stems, which are sharply angled with five prominent ridges. Young stems are green and hairy, while older stems are yellowish-brown and hairless. Leaves are small, oblong, and pointed at both ends, usually occurring in groups of three, and may be

dropped during drought or other stress conditions.

Scotch broom produces flattened, pea-like seed pods that are one to two and a half inches long and hairy along the seams. They appear as early as June, starting out green and turning blackish-brown as they mature. Once fully mature, the pods split open explosively, propelling seeds up to twenty feet away. Seeds are also dispersed by water, ants attracted to their nutrient-rich structures, and human activities such as mowing. Each plant can produce over ten thousand seeds annually, and the seeds can remain viable in the soil for thirty years or more, making management particularly challenging.

Management and Prevention

Effective management depends on early action, ideally before seed pods mature, and on minimizing soil disturbance to avoid creating favorable conditions for seed germination. Small plants can be hand-pulled or dug up, ensuring as much of the root as possible is removed to prevent resprouting. Larger plants may be removed with tools designed for pulling

woody shrubs (e.g., Weed Wrench). Combining a spring mowing with a fall herbicide application, once plants have regrown, can also be effective. Large infestations are often best treated with herbicide using cut-stump, foliar or basal bark applications. Because of its prolific seed production, long-lived seed bank and ability to regrow from root fragments, several years of monitoring and follow-up treatment are necessary for successful control.

To prevent further spread, clean all equipment, boots and clothing after working in or traveling through an infested area to avoid unintentionally transporting seeds. Avoid planting scotch broom as it can escape cultivation and contribute to new infestations. If you spot scotch broom, please let WNY PRISM know so we can work together to prevent it from spreading!



Scotch broom at Letchworth State Park.

Partner Spotlight: Royal Fern Nursery

Written by: Dr. Jonathan Townsend



Royal Fern Nursery LLC was established in the spring of 2019 as one of the few nurseries in the region that sells only native plants. In addition to our focus on native species, we specialize in providing locally sourced

genotypes that would be appropriate for restoration projects as well as home gardens. We carefully, and with permission, collect seeds from wild populations, grow them out, plant propagation gardens, and use the resulting seed sources to supply our customers. This model can take two to three seasons before we can add a new species to our regular inventory.

As the founders of the nursery, we had long envisioned a mission-driven business that would not only sell native plants, but assist landowners, governmental entities and nonprofits in invasive species management and ecological restoration. We do this through on-site consultations, public programming, and technical assistance such as biological surveys and mapping-based analyses.

Royal Fern Nursery LLC (RFN) provides landowners with an assessment of their property, including species lists that outline how to improve their gardens through removal of invasive species and replanting with native species that are suited to



Part of one of Royal Fern Nursery's propagation gardens.



Cardinal flower starting to bloom in demonstration garden.

local growing conditions. We work with businesses and governmental entities to supply plants that assist in controlling erosion while enhancing ecosystem services that native plants provide. We also coordinate closely with nonprofits such as land trusts to develop large-scale restoration projects and conservation planning tools and regularly provide educational programming on invasive species and native plants both locally at RFN's Botany Barn and at numerous locations throughout the region.

Our nursery itself is an active restoration demonstration site. We manage forty acres of diverse habitat types that include stands of mature oak and maple, wildflower meadows, and riparian zones. As with most natural areas in western New York, we have issues with invasive species that, left unchecked, would spread throughout the property. We work closely with WNY PRISM to ensure we are employing the best available science when conducting invasive species control efforts, and we connect any interested landowner with WNY PRISM to ensure they are doing the same.

All of this is a lot of work! We have seen tremendous success – as invasive species become less dominant, native plants are doing their part to attract insects and wildlife and it shows. The hard work is definitely paying off, stop by and check out our progress!

Photo Credit: Jessica Townsend.

Your ticket to the next step on your native plant journey!

Join Dr. Jonathan Townsend at WNY PRISM's Spring Partner Meeting on April 16, followed by a special tour of Royal Fern Nursery.

Learn more and register:

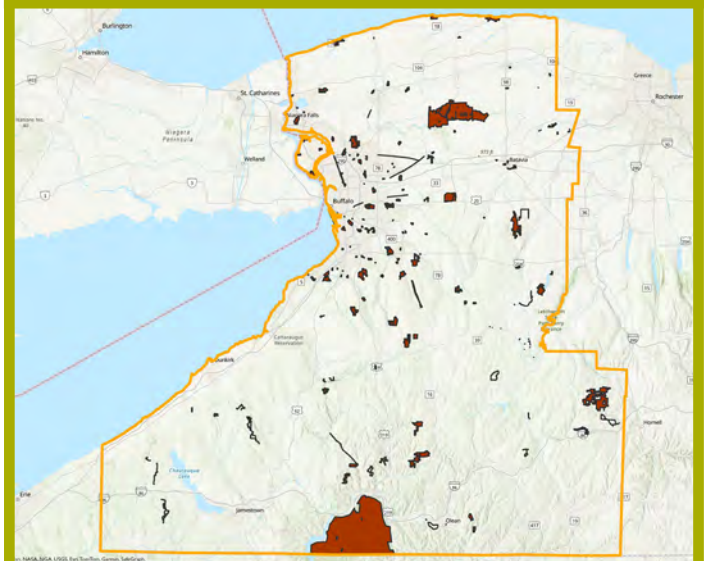
wnyprism.org/2026-spring-partner-meeting.

BUILDING THE ROADMAP: The Importance of Collecting Not Detected Records in iMapInvasives

If you use iMapInvasives, you are likely familiar with how the free, publicly accessible database is New York state's leading platform for tracking the presence and distribution of invasive species within our communities. Observations uploaded to iMapInvasives allow community scientists and natural resource professionals to track invasive species populations, evaluate treatment effectiveness, and help set early detection efforts in motion. The information provided to this database by community scientists helps answer vital questions like: "What invasive species are here?", "How much of a species is present?" and "How has the landscape changed over time?" However, a question that is just as important is, "What invasive species *aren't* here?"

Data regarding a species' absence from an area is referred to as a "Not Detected" record, and this information is essential for prioritizing regional survey efforts and management efforts for a variety of organizations, agencies and land managers. At WNY PRISM, our staff rely on these records to help plan our field season – particularly with coordinating survey efforts for our Early Detection Program which aims to help locate and manage new and emerging invasive species threats to the region. Not detected data identifies sites that have already been searched for certain species with none found, ensuring that we don't duplicate that survey effort. It also helps identify sites that may need to be re-visited, such as one that has not been surveyed in several years, and identifies sites that have never been searched at all. In addition, we can know with more certainty that a species is only present at certain sites which allows us to develop more effective management plans.

Anyone can help build this database by collecting and uploading "Not Detected" records via the iMapInvasives app. Before your next hike at the park or trail of your choice, choose one or two invasive species you feel confident in identifying, and look for those during your survey. If you finish your survey without seeing them, you can select the "Species Not Detected" option in the app. By reporting where a species is absent, you are recording essential data that helps protect our natural spaces from invasive species.



Annual WNY PRISM surveys track early detection, approaching region and data gap species. Map shows where slender false brome was searched for but not found, guiding future survey efforts.

Help Fill 2026 Data Gaps!

WNY PRISM is seeking observations for priority species lacking survey data in iMapInvasives.

- **Elm Zigzag Sawfly** (*Aproceros leucopoda*)
- **Wood Sedge** (*Carex sylvatica*)
- **White Perch** (*Morone americana*)
- **Black Jetbead** (*Rhodotypos scandens*)

Every report counts – even if you searched and didn't find them. Submit your observations today in iMapInvasives!

WNY PRISM Connecting with the Community this Winter



Catherine Eaton shared information on WNY PRISM and invasive species management with local high school students at the Environmental Ambassador Summit.



At the Rural Landowner Workshop, Andrea Locke presented on the relationship between birds and invasive species.



Rachel Taylor trained community scientists on assessing hemlock stands infested with hemlock woolly adelgid.



At SUNY Buffalo State University's Job Fair, Nick Farese discussed WNY PRISM's Watercraft Inspection Stewardship Program and seasonal job opportunities.

Contact Us!

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WNY PRISM



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WNY PRISM Steering Committee Members

Cornell Cooperative Extension - Erie County | Great Lakes Center - SUNY Buffalo State University
New York Sea Grant | NYS Department of Environmental Conservation - Great Lakes Program
NYS Department of Transportation | NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation
Royal Fern Nursery | U.S. Army Corps of Engineers - Buffalo District
U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service - Lower Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office