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Learn about invasive species at the Spring Invasive Species Summit!

Have you noticed the sudden death of red oak trees in your neighborhood or tall Phragmites blocking your view? Phragmites, a tall reed, and oak wilt fungus, are examples of invasive species that are impacting quality of life throughout Oakland County. Whether you are aware of these invaders or are new to the topic of invasive species, a wealth of practical information will be available at the Spring Invasive Species Summit March 23 at the Waterford Oaks Activity Center from 1-4 p.m. The workshop is free and open to the public.

Organized by the Oakland County Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (Oakland County CISMA), the Summit will feature guest speakers, hands-on workshops, vendor tables and kids activities. Workshops will include invasive species identification, how to report invasive species, as well as a kids game modeling the spread of invasive species. You can also learn about native plant gardening and how you might implement it at your property.

“Native plants provide food for our bees, butterflies, other beneficial insects,” Ben VanderWeide, Natural Areas Stewardship Manager for Oakland Township Parks & Recreation said. “Invasive plants don’t provide the nutrition that pollinators need. Landscaping with native plants highlights the natural beauty of Michigan and gives our wildlife a big boost.”
Oakland County CISMA Coordinator Erica Clites elaborates: “Invasive species affect homeowners in Oakland County by reducing property values and damaging infrastructure. They also hurt natural areas by crowding out native species. We want to give municipal governments and landowners the tools they need to fight back.”

Non-native Phragmites and oak wilt, an invasive fungus, are widespread in the county. Phillip Kurzeja of American Arbor will advise attendees when to prune oak trees to prevent the spread of oak wilt. Via a video presentation, Dr. Janice Gilbert of the Invasive Phragmites Control Centre will share techniques for managing Phragmites.

Early detection of new invasive species is a high priority for the Oakland County CISMA as well as the State of Michigan.

“Oakland County has a history of moving quickly to control new invaders, such as our success removing water hyacinth within two days after detection in 2016,” Oakland County CISMA Chair, Emily DuThinh, explained.

The Summit will include presentations on red swamp crayfish, which was discovered in Oakland County in 2017 and European frogbit, discovered in 2018. By learning to identify these newer invaders and how to report them, citizens can help prevent their spread. There are also everyday actions people can take, such as cleaning their boots, boats, pets and other equipment after outdoor adventures.

Vendor tables at the event will include information on additional invasive species and their treatment. Breaks will provide time to enjoy refreshments and ask questions of experts. The Waterford Oaks Activity Center is located at 2800 Watkins Lake Road Waterford, MI 48328. No registration is required. Waterford Oaks Activity Center is an accessible facility with free parking available. Find the full schedule of activities at: https://www.sixriversrlc.org/oakland-county-cisma

The Oakland County Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (Oakland County CISMA) is a collaboration of 30+ partners founded in 2014 to help prevent the spread of invasive species in Oakland County.
Funding for the event is provided by the Michigan Invasive Species Grant Program (www.michigan.gov/invasives), Six Rivers Land Conservancy and Oakland County Parks and Recreation with additional assistance from the Clinton River Watershed Council.

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Oakland County CISMA Coordinator Erica Clites exhibiting materials about invasive species.
Phragmites leaning over Silverbell Road in Oakland Township.