



Fox Point files

WEEDS



Garlic Mustard

Weeds are on my mind. It's not because of cannabis sativa – medical or otherwise. Weeds are on my mind because I have recently been appointed the new Village of Fox Point Weed Commissioner. True, it's an obscure post. It is my mission, however, to elevate the office and, in my new uniform, to look dashing in the process.

Permit me to share my credentials. Under Wisconsin law, the chairperson of each town, the president of each village, and the mayor of each city may appoint a weed commissioner. Wis. Stat. §66.0517. A weed commissioner "shall investigate the existence of noxious weeds in his or her district." If a person in a district neglects to destroy noxious weeds, the weed commissioner is authorized to do the dirty deed. A weed commissioner may enter upon private property "and cut or otherwise destroy noxious weeds without being liable to an action for trespass or any other action for damages resulting from the entry and destruction, if reasonable care is exercised." So if you spot me unannounced in your back yard, don't call the police. Don't call your lawyer. Call my wife.

A weed is a plant in an undesired place that grows and reproduces aggressively. Species that are particularly injurious to people, animals, agriculture or horticulture are designated as noxious weeds. Under Wisconsin law, noxious weeds include *cirsium arvense* (Canada thistle), *convolvulus arvensis* (field bindweed, also known as creeping jenny), and *euphorbia esula* (leafy spurge). Wis. Stat. §66.0407. Wisconsin statutes define two species as "nuisance" weeds: *lythrum salicaria* (purple loosestrife or hybrids thereof) and *rosa multiflora* (multiflora rose). Wis. Stat. §23.235. Fox Point's weed ordinance, Code §27.31, adopts the above-refer-

enced statutes and provides for municipal enforcement thereof. County or local units of government may go further and enact ordinances or adopt resolutions that add additional species to the noxious weed list. For instance,



Common Buckthorn



Honeysuckle

some municipalities – Fox Point not among them -- proscribe certain invasive or allergen-producing species such as *ambrosia* spp. (ragweed), *alliarina petiolata* (garlic mustard), *rhamnus cathartica* (common buckthorn), *rhamnus fangula* (glossy buckthorn), and *lonicera* spp. (bush honeysuckle). State law permits a municipality to charge back to an offending resident the cost of noxious weed removal. Fox Point historically has not enforced the law in this way.

Are noxious or nuisance weeds - - and other invasive plants -- bad? Yes. These plants typically are non-native to the ecosystem and

cause environmental, economic or health-related harm. The harm outweighs the known benefits. Invasive plants can overwhelm and displace native growth, including many species of grasses, shrubs and trees. Unchecked, invasive plants can disrupt the natural habitat to a degree that might affect property value or the desirability of property ownership.

Fox Point takes its stewardship of flora seriously. We are a Tree City USA community, a designation sponsored by the Arbor Day Foundation in cooperation with the USDA Forest Service and the National Association of State Foresters. We have a Tree Commission and a Forestry Department. John Gall, a certified arborist, serves as the part-time Village Forester. Judy Shirley, a long-time village resident, preceded Gall in that office; Shirley continues to contribute to flora and forestry-related efforts. The Fox Point Federated Garden Club (established February 28, 1950), in addition to its planting, education and restoration work, maintains a village flower mound at Santa Monica Boulevard and Green Tree Road. All this work is supported, directly or indirectly, by the Department of Natural Resources and the Invasive Plants Association of Wisconsin. Healthy, well-situated, location appropriate vegetation


occupies an important place in Fox Point community life.

If weeds are on your mind too, you can do a lot to help. First, take time to inspect your property and destroy noxious or nuisance weeds and other invasive plants. Participate in community garlic mustard pulls. Volunteer for buckthorn and honeysuckle removal efforts. Finally, plant and cultivate appropriate vegetation. Invasive plant abatement is a long-term commitment. Let's reaffirm our commitment. Our goal: A better village. Our motto: Less is more.

Douglas H. Frazer is a trustee on the Fox Point Village board. The views expressed are his own and not necessarily those of the village, the village board, other village board members, or Neighborhood Communications, LLC.



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