

## ***FREQUENT QUESTIONS & ITEMS OF INTEREST***

### ***“THE DESTRUCTIVE IMPACT OF INVASIVE SPECIES ON OPEN SPACE”***

#### ***What is “open space”?***

The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) [defines](#) “open space” as “land or water that is undeveloped (free from residential, commercial, industrial, or institutional use). Open space can be either private or publicly owned and includes areas such as forests, agricultural field, public parks and preserves, and coastal lands.”

#### ***How does the Town protect, expand and manage open space?***

The Town has aggressively sought to protect open space and now owns nearly 800 acres, with a focus on protecting water courses and providing for a Town-wide “green infrastructure” of multi-use trails connecting neighborhoods and places of interest. This spring, the UAlbany Planning Department’s graduate studio class is preparing an inventory of the Town’s open space, and will make recommendations on linking trails and possible open space acquisitions.

#### ***What are “invasive species”?***

DEC defines ["invasive species"](#) as a “species that is non-native to the ecosystem under consideration, and whose introduction causes or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health.” [NYS DEC](#) and [Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission](#) maintain lists of prohibited and regulated invasive tree species.

#### ***What harm is caused by invasive tree species?***

[DEC warns](#) that “invasive species impact all aspects of life, from recreation to livelihood. ... Whether damaging the economy or the environment, invasive species can destroy the places we love and require costly solutions.” The [Commission reports](#) that “black locust and other invasives have transformed hundreds of acres of pine barrens into significantly less diverse habitats of little value to pine barrens wildlife.” The [Audubon Society](#) warns that invasive species damage terrestrial ecosystems, with non-native biomass in New York estimated as high as 35%, harm bird habitat, and alter the historic biological makeup of open space.

#### ***Which invasive tree species present an ecological threat in the Town?***

The Commission assigns a [“very high” ecological threat level](#) to certain invasive tree species found in the Town, including [black locust](#), [Norway maple](#), and [autumn olive](#). The Commission has removed 457 acres of black locusts in the Preserve. The [Japanese knotweed](#) strangles native trees, engulfs tree canopies, and destroys hardwood forests. The [water chestnut](#) is proliferating in the Watervliet Reservoir and impacts processing drinking water.

#### ***Where are invasive tree species found?***

Invasive tree species are often found on previously developed vacant parcels. Over time, invasive tree species adapt to disturbed land, rapidly take hold, and choke out native trees. Most development proposals in the Western Avenue corridor involve previously developed land, including Winding Brook Commons ([Shadow Box restaurant](#) (1954 to 1973) and later a plant nursery), Rapp Road Apartments ([commercial pig farm](#) dating from the 1940s), Vosburgh Apartments (paved vehicle storage lot) and Costco (horse farm and vacant residences). These disturbed sites are dominated by destructive black locust and other invasive tree species.

#### ***How does the Town combat invasive tree species?***

Town, Pine Bush Commission, and other agency staff visit proposed development sites to identify invasive tree species and native tree species. The Town’s review boards follow recommendations by [DEC](#) and [Commission](#) in managing invasive tree species, including possible “whole tree removal,” and require the planting of [native trees and landscaping](#).

#### ***How can I help combat invasive species?***

The [Pine Bush Commission](#) and [DEC](#) have online educational resources on combating invasive species. [iMapInvasives](#) is a mobile application with interactive maps of identified invasive species in New York State, and helps residents identify and report suspected invasive species to DEC.