

YEAR-END SUMMARY REPORT 2008

Mad Gardeners' Litchfield County Mile-A-Minute Vine Control Project

Mad, Gardeners, Inc., a non-profit organization, working with The Nature Conservancy, the Housatonic Valley Association, and the Town of New Milford, organized and administered an Early Detection/Rapid Response project for Mile-a-Minute Vine (MAM) in Litchfield County in 2008, continuing the project begun in 2007 in Litchfield and Upper Fairfield Counties. Weantinoge Heritage Land Trust organized and administered a similar ED/RR project on one of their properties and several adjacent private properties within the Carlson Road infestation area.

Preventing seed production by early pulling is effective. Seed production is estimated to have been reduced to less than 1% of that expected without control. **The known MAM in Litchfield County remains contained** within a 1 mile diameter area on the New Milford-Bridgewater border, a ½ mile diameter area near New Milford High School, and a room sized patch in Roxbury. Although some new patches of plants were discovered in 2008's expanded search area, their size indicates that they are from seeds deposited prior to the beginning of the project in 2007.

Volume of seeding plants is one measure of success. In 2006, volunteers stuffed 150 contractors' bags with huge plants from a single half-acre hillside. In 2007 and 2008, most plants were pulled prior to seed set and left to wilt. In 2008 fewer than 40 half-full bags of plants in seed were collected from the entire 600 acre work area.

An excellent paid crew of college student interns, a graduate biologist and two regular volunteers did over 1100 field hours of "search and destroy" on more than 150 properties between May 21 and October 22. Most plants were pulled while small. Regular workers - either paid interns or regular volunteers - were better at finding small scattered plants than were occasional volunteers. All workers were part-time. All of the 2008 full-season college students would like to return in 2009.

The Nature Conservancy was an active participant. Wayne Woodard of TNC's Sunny Valley Preserve in New Milford mowed the accessible fields and brush areas. An intern employed by TNC used a weed whacker to cut access paths through areas too steep or rough for the tractor. Although rough mowing does not eliminate MAM plants, it is vital for worker access.

A pre-emergent herbicide was applied in early April to selected areas difficult to access because of dense populations of multiflora rose. Herbicide application significantly reduced the number of MAM plants. The heavy rains and spring floods of 2008 also helped: some flooded areas that had dense MAM in 2007 had almost no MAM in 2008. Plants survived only on raised lumps and bumps in the flooded areas.

After two seasons of field work, we've concluded that 1) MAM does not survive in regularly mown lawn 2) a large percentage of MAM seeds remain viable and germinate in the second and later seasons 3) checking known MAM patches every 2-3 weeks from June until frost can almost eliminate seed production. 4) dense woody vegetation, especially multiflora rose, is the greatest physical obstacle to control 5) new patches can appear at least as far overland as 1/3 mile from a seed source.

Preventing downstream spread is a primary concern. In Newtown, plants have spread downstream by more than a mile per year. In the New Milford/Bridgewater control area, the downstream limit of plants was the same in 2008 as in 2007. In the area near New Milford High School, extensive downstream searching revealed two small dense patches of plants on a property not checked before, just downstream from plants discovered late in 2007. They are probably from seed deposited in 2005 or 2006.

Education efforts included 1) 18,000 ID cards, plus posters, distributed to individuals, businesses, and town offices throughout the region, 2) speaking engagements, 3) displays at fairs and events, and 4) articles in numerous publications. In addition, workers checked sightings reported by the public. Most were negative. MAM was found at only 4 of the sites reported, one each in Monroe, Danbury, Newtown, and New Milford.

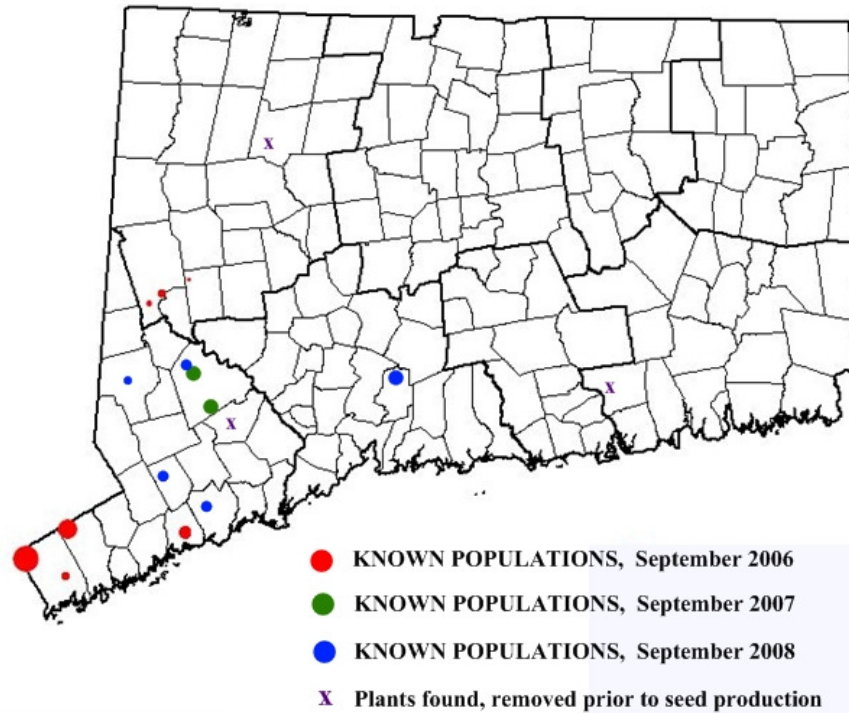
Money was very tight in 2008 and the prospect for 2009 is worse. We began 2009 with a balance of less than \$200 toward an expected \$30,000 cost for 2009. Most of our work is on private property. We were approved for a grant from the State for that portion of our work occurring on publicly accessible properties, but in February the State withdrew funding for the invasive species program.

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MORE ON MILE-A-MINUTE VINE AT www.madgardeners.com

Location of Known MAM Populations, CT

prepared by Elizabeth Corrigan, 2007, updated by K. Nelson, 2008



Location of Known MAM Populations, Litchfield County

Limit of New Milford/ Bridgewater populations, end of season, 2008. Patches of Mile-a-Minute Vine are scattered in areas circled. Map does not show the only other known MAM population in Litchfield County, a room-sized patch in Roxbury.

