

## Invasive Plant Species in Meredith

An invasive plant species inventory has been completed for most public roadsides in the Town of Meredith. The inventory process began in June 2008 and ended in November. The inventory was accomplished with the invaluable assistance of Douglas Cygan, the Invasive Species Coordinator with the New Hampshire Department of Agriculture, Ralph Pisapia from the Meredith Conservation Commission and Janan Hays, a citizen volunteer.

In June, an Invasive Species Proposal was prepared that outlined the strategy for possible Conservation Commission involvement in addressing the increasing problem of the spread of invasive species throughout the town. Janan and Doug had previously made a presentation to the Commission about the problem. The first task of the strategy was to determine the extent of the problem.

Non-native invasive species have become a major problem throughout New Hampshire and the United States. Native plant species have naturally occurring control mechanisms that have built up over evolutionary time so that one species does not overwhelm or out-compete all others. With native species there is a natural ecological balance. However, problematic non-native species usually have few if any natural control mechanisms. This lack of ecological balance can result in a reduction of natural diversity, impact wildlife habitat including endangered species, affect recreational uses such as done by aquatic species (Milfoil) and reduce forest and agricultural production by extensive invasions of large areas of habitat normally occupied by native species.

The 2008 inventory was conducted with the a Global Positioning System (GPS) and is documented in electronic format and paper maps produced by the Town Geographic Information System (GIS) specialist Michelle Therrien. The results show that the major invasive species occurring along public roads in Meredith is Japanese knotweed (*Polygonum cuspidatum*) and Oriental bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*). Many other non-native invasive species were documented but the knotweed and bittersweet were the most damaging to the scenic and ecological beauty of Meredith. Future action of the Commission will include an educational component for Town employees and the public as well proposal for a pilot control program to address this spreading problem.