

MONROE COUNTY - IDENTIFY AND REDUCE INVASIVE SPECIES

ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 2023



PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT

2023 was an eventful year for MC-IRIS. On the plus side, Weed Wrangles were held every week of the year, we tabled at many events to spread our educational message, and we have more volunteers than ever. On a less positive note, we became aware of the problem of Asian jumping worms and their extent in Monroe County, which had implications for our native plant sale. To get more involved, go to MC-IRIS.org to get on our listserve, or contact us at MCIRIS2022@gmail.com.

Please read on to learn the specifics of all our work this year, and thank you for your support!



ELLEN JACQUART

President

*MC-IRIS is a nonprofit tax-exempt organization in compliance
with Section 501(c)(3) of the IRS code*

WEED WRANGLES

We held 235 Weed Wrangles (workdays to control invasive species) in 2023 to cut, pull, spray, remove or otherwise kill invasive plants in Monroe County with our partners. All those events added up to over 3,600 volunteer hours contributed.

Partners included Hoosier National Forest, City of Bloomington Parks and Recreation, Sycamore Land Trust, Indiana University, Monroe County Parks and Recreation, The Nature Conservancy, McCormick's Creek State Park, and more.

Where land managers need help with invasive species, we are there to help.



INVASIVE PLANT SURVEYS

We provided 22 free invasive plant surveys to county landowners, complete with a management plan on how they can address the invasive plants that were found.

TOOL KIT LOANS

After creating eight tool kits in 2020, we continued to loan these kits across the county. The kits, which include pruners, loppers, folding saw, soil knife and sheath, Pullerbear, and a bag of herbicide application supplies, were loaned out a total of 7 times in 2023. The tool kit borrowers used them to control invasives on their land, including Asian bush honeysuckle, multiflora rose, and more.



JUMPING WORMS EDUCATION

Our goal this year was to better understand the extent of Asian jumping worms in Monroe County. To that end, we:

- Asked community members to test their soil for jumping worms using the mustard method and report the results on EDDMaps.org. Twenty-one jumping worm tests were entered into EDDMaps.org with 9 positive tests and 12 negative tests.
- Gave away approximately 9 pounds of ground mustard in $\frac{1}{3}$ cup baggies for community members to test their land for jumping worms.
- Printed 1,500 jumping worm book marks to share at events. They included basic information on jumping worms and a QR code that went to our webpage on jumping worms.
- Tabled at Monroe County Master Gardeners (MCMG) Garden Fair with educational information on jumping worms.
- Brought dozens of jumping worms to Bugfest to show to attendees of all ages.
- Gave a talk at the Brown County Wildflower Foray on jumping worms
- Received a \$400 grant from the MCMG for the creation of a jumping worm flyer, to be produced in 2024.



Conducting a mustard test for jumping worms



Bugfest 2023



Asian jumping worm

REDUCE ONE INVASIVE SPECIES CHALLENGE 2023



Twenty-four people signed up for the Reduce One Invasive Species Challenge 2023, in which landowners agree to reduce the amount of Callery pear on their land. In exchange for their work, we handed out twenty-six free native trees including Allegheny serviceberry, pagoda dogwood, yellowwood, and black gum to those who participated.

WORKING WITH SCHOOLS & UNIVERSITIES

- Biodiverse-City Class (Dr. Heather Reynolds, Indiana University) students provided service hours and created three educational videos for MC-IRIS, one each on jumping worms, tree of heaven, and mile-a-minute vine.
- Taught Take Control Workshop to Dr. Brian Forist's Intensive Freshman Seminar class August 3 and had them cut invasive shrubs in Dunn's Woods on August 8.
- Taught Take Control Workshop to Dr. Brian Forist's Integrated Resource Management class (Indiana University) Sept. 22 and had them cut and paint Asian bush honeysuckle at Dunn's Woods Sept. 29 (before and after pictures to the right, with all of the green in the first photo being Asian bush honeysuckle).
- Co-led invasive control workday at the IU Auditorium woodlot (Indiana University) with Dr. Jon Eldon on October 6.
- Led Environment and People class (Les Wadzinski, Indiana University) at Dunn's Woods on October 18 to teach them how to identify and pull purple wintercreeper.
- Attended the O'Neill Networking event for environmental students.
- Started a grant program for schools removing Callery pear from their campus and awarded the first grant of \$5,920 to Clear Creek Elementary School.



EARLY DETECTION/RAPID RESPONSE EFFORTS

For very uncommon invasive plants like mile-a-minute vine (pictured below), purple loosestrife, and kudzu, we monitor and control them on private land. Approximately 5 hours were spent on this in 2023.



NATIVE PLANT SALE



We held our third native plant sale on September 9 with thousands of plants sold including approximately 110 different native plant species. MC-IRIS volunteers grew 4,491 plants for the sale, and we held seven potting parties to pot those plants up. We had over 35 orange-shirted volunteers at the sale, which brought in \$20,024. We added 150 shrubs from Woody Warehouse this year and sold out of them quickly. Left over plant stock at the end of the sale was valued at \$4,305 and was donated to City of Bloomington Parks and Recreation, Monroe County Parks and Recreation, and Sycamore Land Trust for planting on their properties.



EDUCATIONAL EVENTS

We sponsored 10 MC-IRIS volunteers to attend the State of Indiana Cooperative Invasives Management conference in June 2023, at a cost of \$250.

NEIGHBORHOOD MEETINGS AND GRANTS

- Blue Ridge Neighborhood applied for a general Small & Simple Grant from Housing and Neighborhood Development (HAND), part of which they used to dispose of Asian bush honeysuckle that the neighbors removed. Angela Van Rooy of HAND reports that “invasives are on the radar more generally, and folks find it worthwhile to work on removing them.”
- Woodlands HOA - Ellen gave talk on the invasiveness of burning bush at the HOA meeting.

RESEARCH

- Reports to the 20 landowners we worked with Indiana University Dr. Heather Reynolds to study the impact of invasive plant removal, native plantings, and deer browse control in Monroe County forests were drafted, with delivery expected in 2024.
- We worked with City of Bloomington Parks and Recreation to conduct a study on how to best control lesser celandine, a particularly difficult invasive plant species to control. Preliminary results expected in spring 2024.



Lesser celandine

FIGHTIN' IRIS AWARDS

These annual awards go to individuals, groups, or businesses that are working to decrease the impact of invasive species in Monroe County. This year the awards went to:

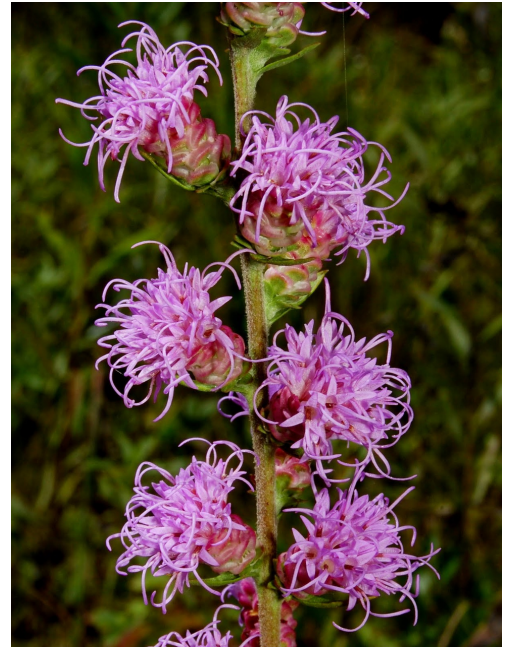
- Mary Reardon – Action Award
- Ken Cote – Partner Award
- Debi O’Heran – Action Award

Information on their award-winning activities can be found at <https://www.mc-iris.org/fightin-iris-award-winners.html>.

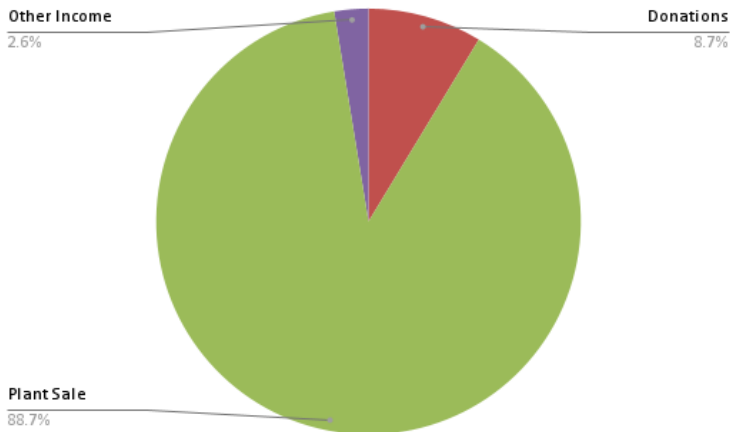


FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

MC-IRIS was able to increase its financial reserves through generous donations and the very successful Native Plant Sale in September 2023 while keeping expenses low for the year.



2023 Income: \$22,885



2023 Expenses: \$13,252

