



Bamboo Ordinance Comments

March 7, 2022

Dear Chairman McKay and other members of the Board of Supervisors,

Friends of Accotink Creek thanks the Board for holding a public hearing and supports a Fairfax County bamboo ordinance. Running bamboo spreads fast, infests natural areas, and is difficult to remove. However, we recommend that the Board of Supervisors **clarify a small ambiguity in [Article 2: Definitions](#)**: "No more than 12 inches" is specified for the height of "grass or lawn area" with exemptions including "beds of ornamental grasses, ferns....flowers, or wildflowers". "Grass or lawn area": The words "grass or lawn area" shall include means an area of ground covered with grass and/or associated growth. Trees, shrubs, and cultivated areas, including, but not limited to beds of ornamental grasses, ferns, fruits,vegetables, herbs, spices, flowers, or wildflowers are specifically excluded from this definition."

Where does that leave someone trying to convert their entire front yard to a native plant meadow? As a mix of wild flowers and 3-foot high grass can look weedy and unkempt, will that homeowner find a notice in their mail demanding they mow their lawn? The amendment must not discourage creating pollinator habitat! This point was also made by Barbara Ryan from McLean and the NVSWCD.

As for the difficulty and cost of removing/controlling bamboo, Friends of Accotink Creek hopes that will not deter the Board of Supervisors from passing this badly-needed amendment. We recommend the County provide well-researched, detailed **guide on the various removal tools and removal methods** to suit all budgets and abilities - and strongly encourage non-herbicide control. Perhaps a working group could produce an info packet.

A simple handsaw (Corona RS 7041 Razor tooth folding saw, \$21 or Kakuri bamboo cutting Japanese handsaw, \$21) or loppers, \$20, will cut the canes. Or an electric saw. Other options are weed eaters (also called string trimmers and weed whackers) with blade attachments, or, for large infestations [brush cutter](#)s. Brush cutters will clear the canes fastest, but they are dangerous, and all are gas-powered.

Removing the roots manually is not an impossible task. A bobcat or back-hoe may be desirable, but it is not essential. The ["slammer"](#) tool's 5-sided cutting blade can penetrate tough roots without having to strain one's back swinging a weight. For those with unreliable backs, weak wrists, or bad knees, some tools minimize stress on the body, for example the [broad fork](#). A wrecking bar provides leverage to pry apart matted rhizomes.

For non-digging options: After cutting, cover the area with heavy tarps or sheets of plywood for at least a year. Or, keeping the area well watered, wait until the new shoots are about 4 to 5 feet, then, just before they leaf out, cut them at the base. In 3 to 4 years, this will deplete any stored sugars and eradicate the plant. There is also the continuous mowing option which will control though will not eradicate the bamboo.

To facilitate homeowners dealing with their bamboo infestations, Friends of Accotink Creek suggests the County **set up a listserve or google group where people might share tools and know-how**, and form neighborhood bamboo removal teams. One individual fighting bamboo piecemeal is tortuously slow. Muscle fatigue happens very soon from using the same few tools over and over again. But a group all sharing tools, tasks, and skills might well level an infestation in one fell swoop.

The more removal options tailored to their individual situations and budgets homeowners get, the more likely they are to try and get rid of their running bamboo rather than merely containing it.

It must be noted that digging a trench to install a barrier may not always be possible. Apart from the presence of utility easements on some property boundaries, **digging a 2-foot trench could damage the root systems of nearby trees.**

For homeowners, removing their running bamboo may be a daunting task. Friends of Accotink Creek urges that **Fairfax County set a good example by funding a running bamboo eradication program in parks and on County-owned property.**

We hope that the County will direct its attention towards the **many more invasive plants still being sold** all over the Commonwealth. These escape from private properties and end up infesting and overwhelming huge areas of natural habitat in Fairfax County.

Friends of Accotink Creek

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