

News

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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FOREST PARK FOREVER, SAINT LOUIS ZOO GO “GREEN” WITH GOATS

Eradication of bush honeysuckle in Forest Park will bring back native woodlands; homeowners can use a variety of methods to get rid of invasive honeysuckle.

- What:** Children’s Zoo goats will eradicate young shoots of invasive bush honeysuckle in Forest Park to encourage growth of native plants
- When:** Tuesday, April 28, 2009
10 -11 a.m.; goats disembark near Jewel Box at 10; spokespeople on hand
- Where:** Five goats disembark from Zoo van across the street from the Jewel Box in Forest Park; Wells & McKinley

On April 28-30, Forest Park Forever, the Saint Louis Zoo and St. Louis Department of Parks will team up in a unique partnership to eradicate honeysuckle bushes in Forest Park. An hour a day for three days, from 10 to 11 a.m., Zoo docents will accompany a group of five goats in a wooded area in Forest Park to nibble shoots of invasive honeysuckle bushes that crowd out Missouri’s native plants.

“Bush honeysuckle dominates urban forests throughout the St. Louis area, and the successional forest was no exception,” says Steve Buback, Forest Park Forever nature reserve foreman. “Over the course of the last year, our staff and volunteers, with assistance from a Missouri Department of Conservation grant and the Emergency Response Team from Americorp, cleared 16 acres of honeysuckle, some more than 30 feet tall. The goats will remove any young plants that have moved in within the last year, helping to control any regrowth that may have occurred. Goats are ideal for this project because they prefer to browse on woody vegetation, and the only woody vegetation remaining in the area is bush honeysuckle. They provide a unique opportunity to control invasive vegetation without the use of heavy equipment or herbicides.”

Forest Park Forever and the Saint Louis Zoo hope their experiment with bush honeysuckle will send a strong conservation message to the community. “We realize that homeowners will not be able to use goats to eradicate their honeysuckle,” says Alice Seyfried, Fred Saigh curator of Emerson Children’s Zoo and director of the Zoo’s WildCare Center for Conservation in Forest Park. “But if homeowners pull up young plants in spring, they can reduce this invasion and allow native plants to return.”

“The long-term goal for this community,” adds Buback, “would be to reintroduce native species such as hazelnuts, redbuds, spicebush, Missouri wildflowers and grasses, as well as young oaks and hickories to provide trees for the future.”

Seyfried also stresses the benefits that come with native species. “These plants provide food and cover for birds, for butterflies and other local wildlife. That is something we really want to encourage.”

Homeowners can learn more about bush honeysuckle from the Missouri Department of Conservation’s web site at <http://mdc.mo.gov>.

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Forest Park Forever along with the St. Louis City Department of Parks, Recreation and Forestry has become a national model for successful public-private partnership. Forest Park Forever’s mission is to restore, maintain and sustain Forest Park as one of America’s great urban public parks for the enjoyment of all – now and forever.

The Saint Louis Zoo’s WildCare Institute, launched by the Zoo in 2004, creates a sustainable future for wildlife and people locally and around the globe. WildCare’s Center for Conservation of Forest Park partners with Forest Park Forever, St. Louis City Department of Parks, Recreation and Forestry and other institutions to encourage an interest in local wildlife and natural resources.