

Removing Invasive Himalayan Blackberry has a Positive Effect on the Local Habitat and Community: Puget Park Tacoma Restoration Project

Gibson Silagi, Kyrstin Onaga, Ben Looney, Aiden Downey, Sam Knoblich, Cameron Pauahilani
Mendoza, Cynthia Updegrave

Restoration projects primarily focus on removing invasive species, mulching, and replanting areas with suitable native species. This process rehabilitates plant ecosystems and can be applied to any restoration project. However, this broad approach may not address the specific needs of individual projects. The Puget Park Restoration Project emphasizes the importance of community engagement and future stewardship. To achieve this, we needed to understand why the park was neglected and implement a tailored plan. One issue was the direct impact of the invasive Himalayan blackberry (*Rubus armeniacus*) species on the project site. These blackberries formed a dense thicket over 10 feet tall, with thick canes and sharp thorns, creating a visual barrier into the park. Another problem involved ornamental trees that were initially planted when the park had a caretaker and garden. These trees grew unchecked and began to negatively affect native plants on the project site. After removing the blackberries and pruning the trees using best management practices, the site opened up. Volunteer work parties were organized to encourage community participation in restoring the site and experiencing the safe and welcoming space it became after restoration.