

# Minions, soldiers and ninjas: Harnessing the ivy-killing power of volunteers

Presentation by Jane Hartline from the Sauvie Island Habitat Partnership  
to the Ivy Forum, March 29, 2016

Ivy ninja	<p>I am an <b>ivy ninja</b>.</p> <p>Over the last five years, my loppers and hand saw have liberated hundreds....no thousands.....of trees from clutches of evil vines.</p>
Group photo	<p>I don't work alone. I'm part of a <b>small but mighty band</b> of fellow ivy ninjas who have been working together nearly every Tuesday morning for the last three years.</p>
Wapato	<p>We aren't beholden to any formal organization. We aren't part of any agency's overall weed removal plan. We just go out and kill ivy.</p>
Mike with giant vine	<p>Our main battleground is Sauvie Island and a narrow corridor along US Highway 30, bordering Forest Park, between the St. John's Bridge and the Sauvie Island Bridge.</p> <p>We concentrate on tree ivy, since our priority is to kill it before it sets seed and the birds spread its evil spawn. But we often tackle ground ivy as well.</p> <p>Look at the size of that vine, will you? Yes....that's ivy Mike is sawing through.</p>
	<p>OK....that gives you an idea of where I fit in. Let's talk about you.</p> <p>You have paid work crews. You have an arsenal of herbicides. But face it. You will never have enough time, money, crew hours, staff or herbicides to get on top of the ivy problem.</p> <p>You need an army. You need ninjas.</p> <p>My main goal for this talk is to impress upon you the full potential of highly motivated, unpaid people, to tackle and complete ivy projects beyond your wildest dreams.</p>

	<p>But as requested, I'll also talk a little about techniques and about circumstances where you shouldn't use volunteers.</p>
Grange work party	<p>So let's start by talking about traditional volunteer work party.</p> <p>But let's not spend much time on them.</p> <p>I'm going to assume you know how to set up a weed work party where you pick a location, set a date and recruit volunteers.</p> <p>You show up that morning, have people sign waivers, hand them some tools, give them a bit of on-the-job training and then keep an eye on them while they work to make sure they aren't stomping on natives or ripping out the wrong plants.</p> <p>You ply them with cookies and coffee and have them give you their contact information so you can contact them the next time you schedule an event.</p>
Linda Klarquist	<p>Those work parties can get a lot done, but perhaps most important, they are entry-level events for ninjas, and places for you to notice and groom people that can work in the future at a much higher level.</p> <p>To move people from being minions at work parties to being ninjas, you have to look at them a different way. You have to realize their potential.</p>
Jeff	<p>Keep your eye on the retirees in the group. That term doesn't mean what it used to. I don't know many fellow Oregonian retirees who are content to play golf all day every day or sit in front of a TV. They are fit, active and highly motivated.</p> <p>Many of them supervised people and managed big projects during their paid work years. They are content, at times, to have 20-year olds tell them what to do, but mostly they are itching....just itching....to take charge.</p> <p>All you have to do is train them, empower them and get out of their way. Once they've earned your trust, you don't even have to be on site.</p>
	<p>I've run into many an agency professional who don't think that unsupervised volunteers can be trusted, so I want to spend the next few minutes bragging about a few ivy projects I've been involved that illustrate how wrong that thinking is. And as I do,</p>

	I want you to look for some common themes.
Grange before	<p>I'll start with the <b>Sauvie Island Grange Forest</b>, where I cut my ninja eye teeth.</p> <p>This two-acre forest next to the Sauvie Island Grange Hall was completely infested with ivy on the trees and on the ground. It was so bad that that the grange had gotten a quote from a logger to clearcut it because they didn't know how else to deal with it.</p>
Grange- working	<p>I talked the grange poobahs off the clear-cutting cliff and set about organizing work parties.</p> <p>I recruited mostly grange members, island neighbors and friends, but I also recruited volunteers through SOLVE's Project Oregon,</p>
Project SOLVE web site	If you aren't familiar with this program, check it out on line. Project Oregon allows anyone to be a ninja---to organize their own event and covers volunteers with waivers. As part of this program, SOLVE gives awesome trainings for group leaders and even gives out \$100 grants for buying tools and gloves. We took advantage of all those things.
Cookie ladies	Many of the grange members were past the point in their life where they could yank on ivy, but they ninja'ed by providing homemade cookies and jollyng us when we came in from the rain during breaks.
Kathy with giant ivy pile	Over five work parties, 46 different volunteers put in 496 hours of hard labor, and the dead ivy piled higher and higher as the forest transformed.
Dump trucks	Bailey's nursery on the island got involved by hauling off our pulled ivy--- <b>three large dump trucks</b> full !
Paid crew	We used our sweat equity to talk the West Multnomah Conservation District into getting involved. I wrote a successful grant to their FISH program, and we used our volunteer hours as match toward having their crews treat the corners of the forest that had the worst infestations. At that point, the project spilled over to ivy at the school next door and onto three private properties down the road. We cleaned up the whole neighborhood. Yay!!!

<p>Matrix</p>	<p>Something else happened. In the process of tackling a few properties, people all over the island woke up to the fact that ivy was evil and needed to be purged from our little paradise.</p> <p>I drew up a matrix of 37 ivy infestations on our island and we set about tackling them one by one. Volunteers mostly killed the tree ivy, and in some places, ODFW and the Conservation District followed up with ground ivy sprays. But Mary and Michael from the conservation district are going talk more about their role.</p>
<p>Jeff, Jane and Rob</p>	<p>That was the birth of our Tuesday morning ivy group, which is the second project I'll talk about today. We're just a bunch of friends that bonded over ivy.</p> <p>With one exception, we are all retired. Ivy is our gym. If we are going to work out, we figure we may as well do so on a project that yields results. We sneer just a little at all the bikers and joggers that speed by us, thinking that they could put their muscles and leisure time to better use. Our Tuesday mornings are a social time, too.</p>
<p>Mike with grove</p>	<p>We set our own priorities and pick our own sites. If we work on a hard site one week, we might pick an easier one the next. All the group members have input into where we should go and I just send out a weekly email saying where we are going to meet.</p> <p>I send a quick email to our local manager friends at State Parks and ODFW to let them know we are going to be on their property and I send them follow up emails and sometimes photos to let them know what we've done. They trust us and respect us and we know that they really appreciate us. If they have volunteer waivers and logs they would like us to use, I keep them on file in my desk and we use them.</p>
<p>Geums</p>	<p><b>These are smart, experienced people.</b> I hear fears from agency people that volunteers can't be trusted to pull the right weeds. People in my Tuesday group can tell the invasive <i>Geum urbanum</i> on the left from the native <i>Geum macrophyllum</i> on the right. How many of your contract crew people can do that? Enough said.</p>
<p>St. John's bridge</p>	<p>Our biggest permission slip came form ODOT, who allows us to work along their right-of-way on highway 30. They don't have</p>

	<p>a budget or a will to treat ivy, so they let us have at it.</p> <p>I hope you'll have a chance to drive along that stretch of the road and notice all the dead vines on the trees. Or that you'll visit Sauvie Island this summer to get some vegetables and will notice how ivy free it is.</p>
Riverview from bridge	<p><b>I'm going to move on to talk about a second project on a rural road just across from our island.</b></p> <p>This is a project that could be a model for every ivy-infested neighborhood in the state.</p> <p>Every time I drove across our island bridge, I would look at the ivy on the hillside above it at. I imagined the birds enjoying the ivy berries and then coming back to our island to sit on our trees where they would poop out the seeds---which would sprout into new vines. I couldn't stand it.</p>
Riverview street sign	<p>Riverview, the street that goes up that hillside has 12 houses on rural properties. The houses are on long narrow forested lots that back onto a natural area owned by Metro, our regional government. When I first drove up the road and saw how much ivy was there, I was daunted. But only temporarily.</p>
Carol	<p>Only until I met with Ninja Carol, one of the residents of that street.</p> <p>Carol, although physically not up to yanking ivy on steep slopes, knew how to organize her neighbors. She new how to use her computer to make maps. She knew how to throw a potluck. She knew how to bake cupcakes.</p> <p>Two weeks later, I sat on Carol's deck with eight of her neighbors and we plotted the destruction of the hill's ivy. I learned that they cherished the natural area behind their houses and had been sad to watch the ivy slowly take over. After a delicious dinner, I took them all into Carol's backyard and gave a demonstration on how to kill ivy vines.</p>
Jolynn and Tommy	<p>With Carol doing the organizing and cheerleading, we had three work parties on and things were underway.</p> <p>But things didn't stop there. I suggested to Carol that she and her neighbors talk the West Multnomah Conservation District</p>

	<p>into helping out. In a big way....by using the neighbor's sweat equity as match and having the district bring in crews to tackle some of the worst of the ivy.</p>
Carol's map	<p>Carole made maps to figure out whose land was whose and to note the amount of infestation on each property. She got permission from neighbors to have their ivy treated.</p>
Neighbor Tom Dee	<p>Meanwhile, neighbor Ninja Tommy Dee got to work on grant writing and got \$15,000 from Metro and \$25,000 from the conservation district to bring in paid crews. The neighbors were able to use their work party labor as match for the grant.</p> <p>Wow! Way to go Carol, Tommy and neighbors! We need to clone you! With neighbors like that, ivy doesn't stand a chance.</p>
JEFF	<p>So how do you find ninjas? Are they made, not born?</p> <p>I struggled with what to tell you about his. One thing just led to another in our neck of the woods.</p> <p>I think there are some lessons for you to take home, though.</p> <p>One of the repeating themes among these projects is that these people mostly aren't driving across town to treat ivy in someone else's park. They are being stewards of places where they love.....in their collective "back yards."</p> <p>They rallied because they cared. They care about these places more than you do. You have hundreds of places that clammer for your attention. They are focused.</p> <p>Second, almost all of them learned their ivy killing skills at traditional work parties. And then they got obsessed.</p>
SEAN	<p>How do you create ninjas?</p> <p>Trust and empowerment are key.</p> <p>Micromanaging and condescension will get you nowhere.</p> <p>Start out with traditional work parties, but look for highly motivated superstars. Groom them. Give them opportunities to supervise crew-lead other volunteers.</p>
Shawn	<p>Find out if there is a place they especially care about and encourage them to use SOLVE's Project Oregon to work on that</p>

	<p>place.</p> <p>Encourage them to set up their own work parties rather than waiting for you to have time to do it. Give them your permission and your blessing to work on your sites.</p> <p>Support them and encourage them, but once you have them up-to-speed, feel good about cutting the cord.</p>
	<p>I was asked to <b>talk a little about the technique</b>—about treating ivy without herbicides. The truth is, we actually use a Roundup stump treatment for much of our work, for reasons I’ll talk about in a minute.</p> <p>I’m well versed in working either way, though, I’ll tell you our techniques, and if you have any better ideas, I’d love to hear them.</p>
David	<p>The technique depends on the size of the vine. If has a diameter of a pencil up to a couple of inches, we cut the vine three or four feet above the ground and pull just to bottom part away from the tree. We then grub out all the roots in a circle around the tree.</p> <p>If the vine is too big to rip out the roots, then a stump treatment with herbicides is really the only way to not have it turn into a real mess when the ivy re-sprouts.</p>
Mark	<p>We’ve tried a lot of different methods with ground ivy, and again, it depends on how thick an infestation you are working with. If it’s just long tendrils running individually through the forest, you can just tug firmly and steadily, trying to keep it from snapping. You have to pull up the roots, though. Yes....those are ivy routes.</p>
Janie and Ken	<p><b>On more infested sites,</b> We find ivy that has criss-crossed layers over itself, sometimes with vines an inch or so thick in mats up to a foot deep. In these places, we have a different technique. It is a huge waste of energy to just start yanking.</p> <p>Instead, using nice, sharp hedge trimmers, to cut seams in the ivy through all the layers and partition it into 4 to 5 foot squares.</p>

	<p>Then we roll the ivy off of each square.</p>
Removing ivy	<p>Disposal of ivy after we've pulled it is always an issue. We aren't always as fortunate as we were at the grange hall to have a dumptruck haul the ivy away.</p> <p>If we have to leave a pile of ivy on location, we try to leave it in plain sight so we can check on it later to make sure that it isn't resprouting. One of the benefits of working on ivy close to home is that we can easily <b>check back on places we've treated.</b></p> <p>When we are working in a place where the ivy hasn't completely taken over, and there are just a few tendrils going off here and there, one of my favorite disposal techniques is to stuff vines up into a nearby tree with roots dangling into the air. The vines hate that.</p>
	<p>I have to say something, though, about <b>why I don't really believe in treating big vines without using herbicides, like ninja Shawn has just done in this photo..</b></p> <p>We have worked on some remote sites where ivy has never been treated, and the ivy acts very differently than in sites where it has previously been hacked on.</p> <p>In remote areas, we see sites where a bird pooped out an ivy seed at the base of a tree and years later, when we arrive on the scene, there is just one or just a few enormous vines going up the tree. There is no ivy on the ground.</p> <p>We've seen similar sites were someone came along and cut a large vine, without treating the stump to kill the roots, and the scene is very different. It's as if the vine decided that since it was blocked from going up that tree, it would sprout from the roots to go up the next tree and the next one and then next one. And then there is ivy all over the ground and all through the forest. At that point, LOTS of herbicide is needed to get a good kill.</p> <p>So we just pack in a little squirt bottle---the kind made for use with chemicals-- of half undiluted Roundup and half water, with a little dye in it so I can see what I've done and haven't done. And as we cut vines, we give the cut area a squirt.</p>



Ivy slope	I think it's important, before I finish and sit down, to touch on three <b>instances where we ninjas draw the line at doing ivy work as volunteers and where we think you should draw a line for volunteers as well.</b>
	---The first---Steep slopes—We do some tree ivy work scrambling around on steep slopes, but for some of them we would need to be roped up. PLUS, we want to make sure we don't destabilize any slopes and cause landslides. ! We don't want to be responsible!
Hornets	--Secondly, we don't work around hornets. We will work all winter in rain and blustering wind. But we won't work in September and October when the hornets get angry at us for getting too near their nests. We just take a couple of months off.  If you are scheduling volunteer work parties, I strongly suggest you skip the early fall as well...or at least scout the site yourself before you send out volunteers.
Poison oak	Third is ---working around Poison Oak. We don't always see it until it's too late, so getting those itchy ouzy rashes is an occupational hazard. But we stay out of it when we can. When we see poison oak vines that are as big as the ivy vines, we run the other way. There are plenty of ivy -infested places to work in that don't have it.
Technu	A pause for a brief commercial about three products we all keep in our ivy warrior tool box these days, and that you might want to provide for your volunteers as well. You probably all have Technu in your glove compartment. If you don't, you should. It's's for scrubbing places that might have been exposed.
Zanefel and Ivy X	But have grown fond of two other products we've discovered that we've had to order over the internet. IvyX is a pre-treatment, a prophalactic so to speak, that we rub onto our faces and those vulnerable places on our wrists—where our gloves and our long sleeves don't quite meet BEFORE we head out into places that might have poison oak.  If you are working with volunteers, or even paid crews, you might want to have it available on the table where people check in. It works.  Another product, Zanefel, is the only over-the-counter product

	<p>we've found that works on the rash once it's itching and oozing.</p>
	<p>That's all I have to tell you . Good luck. Hope you find lots of ninja. Any questions.</p>
	<p>I want to talk about one other group: Rogue weed warriors I'm part of the 4-county CWMA group's education and outreach committee. Last year, we had a couple of discussions about just this audience. These are the people who walk their dogs through the park and rip out ivy and leave it on the trail. They likely wouldn't sign up for a traditional work party, but like the rest of us, just can't stand to see ivy invading their favorite places.</p>
	<p>I've always wanted to post signs at trailheads to enlist these people in more concerted efforts. To have a training with cookies for them and biscuits for their dogs to point out what we want them to pull and what we want them to leave.</p>

# Minions, soldiers and ninjas:

The ivy-killing power of volunteers

Jane Hartline, Sauvie Island Habitat Partnership





















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### Featured Project: Ma Olsen's Garden Annex

Rob Lee is the unassuming guy behind the slope side restoration project called Ma Olsen's Garden Annex. This SOLVE event site, located off busy Route 30 running

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Riverview street sign

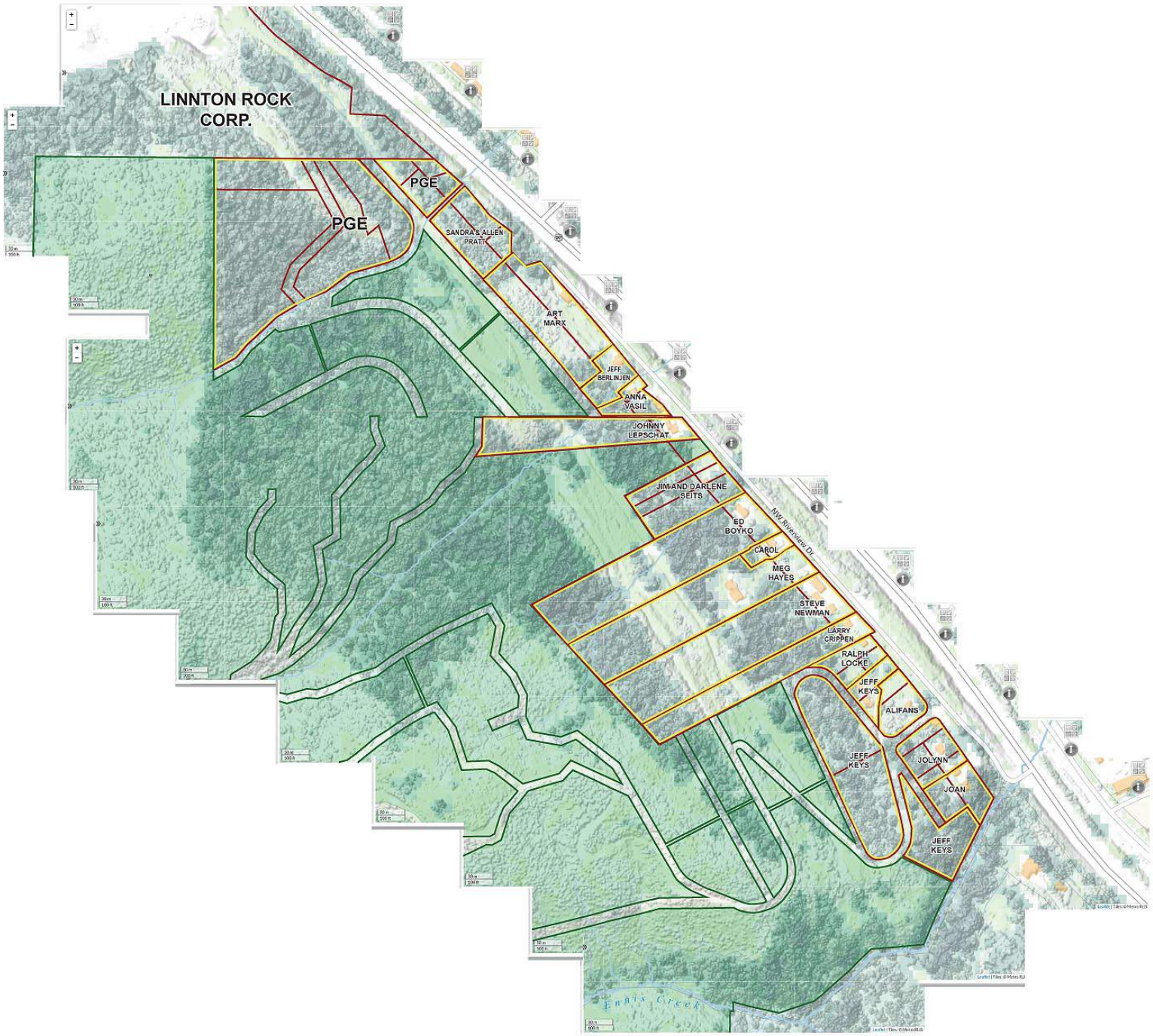




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CORP.

PGE

PGE

SANDRA'S ALLEN  
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VASIL

JOHNNY  
LEPSCHAT

JIM AND DARLENE  
SEITS

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ALIFANS

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KEYS

JOLYNN

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## Poison oak – An occupational hazard





