

Information Sheet for Invasive Species Clearance on Winter Hill
Wednesday 21st September and Sunday 20th November 2022

Why it's worthwhile:

Winter Hill is the large peatland moor north of Bolton. Ravaged by a moorland fire in 2018, the burnt peat is now being colonised by Molinia grass and Rhododendrons. Although attractive to look at, rhododendrons are an invasive species, which outcompete all native plants, so nothing grows underneath, reducing biodiversity. With heavy rain the bare peat underneath washes away, adding to erosion, reducing quality of drinking water and increasing flood risk. We want to keep the peat on the hill where it stores huge amounts of carbon.

Removing rhododendrons will benefit nature, reduce flood risk, improve our water quality and help fight climate change.

When:

Join us in this invasive species clearance project on:

Wednesday 21st September and/or Sunday 20th November 2022

Meeting point and start time

About 1km SE of Belmont, meet at small parking area through metal farm gates off the south side of the main road A675 (Grid reference SD680153). The entrance is difficult to see, but is about 100m outside the 30mph speed signs into Belmont and next to the public footpath. It is probably easier to go into the parking space approaching **from** Belmont, and turning right. Space is limited to about 6 cars so please do park carefully.

IF THE PARKING SPACE IS FULL THEN WE ARE ALLOWED TO PARK ON THE LOWER PARKING AREA OF **LOTTIES CAFÉ**, BELMONT ROAD BL7 9QT WHICH IS ONLY A SHORT 5 MINUTE WALK FROM THE MEETING POINT. AS THE GROUND IS OFTEN WET THIS IS A GOOD OPTION FOR PARKING.

Meet at 9.45am for 10.00am start. There are no facilities at the start point but Lottie's Café does a good coffee and breakfast if you are there early. We aim to be finished by 3.00pm.

PLEASE DO TAKE CARE WHEN TURNING INTO AND LEAVING THE PARKING AREA AS THE MAIN ROAD A675, ALTHOUGH NOT BUSY, DOES HAVE CARS GOING AT SPEED.

What will the work involve?

We will walk a short distance, about 1km to the work area. Spending around 4 to 5 hours, working as part of a small team, we will remove the smaller rhododendron plants from an area of about one square kilometre on the north eastern slopes of Winter Hill (circa SD674148). Under guidance from United Utilities, the landowner, and Natural England we will dispose of the plants initially by gathering into heaps, for later removal.

What to bring

Participants will be expected to wear or carry weather resistant clothing (including gloves and headwear) suitable for the conditions prevailing on the day which may be cold, wet and windy (meaning warm clothing and waterproofs). Footwear should be warm solid boots

with grippy soles. The distance to walk is short, and the moor may be wet, so good comfortable Wellington boots with warm socks is a valid option. Carry sufficient food and fluid (a thermos with hot drink is good at this time of year) for a full-day hill walk. There will not be any opportunities to buy refreshments during the day so bring everything you want with you.

The event is planned to finish well within the hours of available daylight, but daylight hours at this time of year are short so participants **must** bring a small torch/head torch in case an emergency results in a very severe delay to the event.

For the plant removal work please bring gardening gloves (in cold weather old winter gloves ideal), secateurs and garden spade if you have them. If not, don't worry, these can be supplied! However please do bring if you can, to make things easier to organise.

NOTE: REMOVING RHODODENDRON PLANTS IS NOT FOR THE FAINT-HEARTED AND THEY CAN BE VERY DIFFICULT TO REMOVE, EVEN APPARENTLY SMALL PLANTS, AND THERE IS A RISK OF BACK INJURY FROM BENDING AND DIGGING OUT PLANTS. WE WILL BE GIVING SOME SAFETY TIPS AT THE BEGINNING OF THE SESSION BUT BE CAREFUL WITH YOUR FOOTING, ESPECIALLY ON STEEP SLOPES AND HAVE A "SPOTTER". DON'T OVER EXERT YOURSELF AND MAKE SURE YOU ARE WORKING WITHIN YOUR PHYSICAL LIMITS.

Uneven ground in this area, mainly from the molinia grass tussocks, is another major hazard and their growth can hide small holes, gullies, etc. The tussocks are a significant trip hazard, can cause sprained ankles (though suitable footwear mitigates this).

Who can come

This walk is open to BMC members and accompanying friends, over 18.
All participants must book a place in advance. No dogs.

How do I join in?

You must register, stating which day(s) you wish to attend with the event, together with full name, email address, mobile phone number and whether you have your own gardening gloves, secateurs and garden spade, to organiser Steve Charles on stevecharles25@gmail.com ASAP. Numbers are limited.

Even allowing for the relaxation of Covid regs sharing of food and equipment between party members is strongly discouraged (as doing so can lead to virus transmission) so we ask you to bring hand sanitiser for your own use (those with at least 70% alcohol are currently favoured), and an individual first aid kit (a few plasters and antiseptic wipes to allow self-application). The leader will have an emergency survival shelter. Feel free to bring your own survival shelter if this is in your rucksack anyway!. In addition please bring a face mask or face covering (a buff will do as a minimum), just in case. While we do not intend that participants wear such coverings during our walk, should an emergency occur then you will have a face covering available to use as an additional precaution (and you'll have it handy for any post-walk pub/café visits if required).

You should consider not attending this walk if:

- you have any of the recognised symptoms of respiratory infections including COVID-19, which are:
 - continuous cough
 - high temperature, fever or chills
 - shortness of breath
 - loss of, or change in, your normal sense of taste or smell
 - unexplained tiredness, lack of energy
 - muscle aches or pains that are not due to exercise
 - not wanting to eat or not feeling hungry
 - headache that is unusual or longer lasting than usual
 - sore throat, stuffy or runny nose
 - diarrhoea, feeling sick or being sick
- you have been diagnosed with COVID-19 recently or have reason to suspect that you are presently suffering from COVID-19.

You MUST let us know you are coming

As part of the conditions for allowing an event such as this to take place during the pandemic it is a BMC requirement that we have the names (and a contact telephone number) for all participants in advance. If you have not already supplied these then please send to Steve Charles via **stevecharles25@gmail.com** straight away. These details will be held securely for 21 days after the event and will be given to NHS or local authority track and trace services should we are required to do so.

BMC approval has been sought for this event.

Links about about Rhododendron ponticum as invasive species

Short article, gives costs of rhododendron eradication

<https://insideecology.com/2017/09/06/invasive-non-native-species-uk-rhododendron-ponticum/>

Very good article giving details of the toxic nature of the plant.

<http://www.countrysideinfo.co.uk/rhododen.htm>