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## Nature Conservation As a Way of Life

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November 19, 2023

To Councilors Burnley, Jr., Wilson, Davis, Pineda Neufeld, and Ewen-Campen,

We are so pleased to see item ID #23-1600, *“that the Director of the Office of Sustainability and Environment work with this Council and Green and Open Somerville to consider the creation of an Invasive Species Czar position to spearhead outreach, education, and citywide invasive plant species removal”* on the agenda for the next Open Space, Environment and Energy Committee meeting.

[Earthwise Aware](#) (EwA) will be a partner with Green and Open Somerville in this collaborative effort.

As we stated in a previous letter sent to the City Council on September 29, our community needs help on a larger scale to create a management strategy and gain control over this problem. This is a critical issue for our green space initiatives and we are appreciative of this committee’s action to encourage the city to lead on this issue.

The threat posed by invasive species is a relatively recent problem, and one that is often overlooked. The [Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services \(IPBES\)](#) has recently published the results of its four-year Assessment of Invasive Alien Species and their Control. *“Invasive alien species are a major threat to biodiversity and can cause irreversible damage to nature, including local and global species extinctions, and also threaten human wellbeing”*.

This assessment identified invasives as one of the five main direct drivers of biodiversity loss, with 1 million species of plants and animals across the globe now at risk of extinction. This impact can be mitigated with appropriate and effective management strategies.

EwA manages and curates the [Invasive Flora Patrol project](#), a protocol that allows participants to gather important data on the occurrence of invasive species observed in their communities. This data allows us to record plant species, life stage, distribution, and coverage. The project is open-access and visualizable, and data is already shedding light onto the extent and abundance of invasive plants in the city, as demonstrated by this [map](#). Using this data can help inform city staff, an appointed working group, and/ or an external consultant on management strategies and control actions.

We look forward to continuing this conversation and working together on this issue.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Clifford  
Participatory Science Program Leader | Collaborator  
Earthwise Aware

Claire O'Neill  
President | Biodiversity & Climate Program Director  
Earthwise Aware