**What’s happening in Pinnacle Park?**

In 2022 non-native invasive plants were identified by Equinox Environmental, an Asheville-based ecological consulting firm, as a major threat to the native flora and fauna of Pinnacle Park. In response, the Town of Sylva hired an independent contractor, Michael Baker International, to remove these plants. Because some of the non-native invasive plant infestations are massive, herbicides are being used. As a result, visitors to the park may see dying or dead vegetation.

The herbicides being used have low toxicity to humans, animals and the environment. They can be purchased from online vendors or farm and garden stores by the public. Furthermore, applicators are careful to minimize herbicide application to native vegetation, water, and any non-target surface. Only herbicides registered by the EPA for use in water are applied around creeks and wetlands. Access to treated areas is restricted during and after herbicide application.

****What are non-native invasive plants?****

A **non-native plant** is a plant introduced by humans, either intentionally or by accident, to a region in which it does not occur naturally. A non-native plant that reproduces and spreads on its own and out-competes native plants in the wild is **invasive**.

****Why are non-native invasive plants bad?****

Since these plants are in a new environment, free from their usual predators, parasites, or competitors, they often spread aggressively and monopolize resources such as light, nutrients, and space. As a result, native habitats shrink or disappear and the diversity of both native plants and animals is reduced**. Invasion by non-native species (including plants, animals, and diseases) is second only to habitat destruction as the greatest threat to the natural ecosystems of the United States.**

In addition, some aggressive plant invaders can alter major ecological processes such as hydrological patterns, soil chemistry, forest succession, and fire regimes. Others harbor plant pathogens or are capable of hybridizing with native relatives, resulting in unnatural changes to the genetic makeup of native plant populations. Invasive plants cause great economic losses each year, measured in billions of dollars, for agriculture, forestry, rangelands and roadways management.

****How you can help control non-native invasive plants:****

The simplest and most important thing you can do is to prevent the introduction and establishment of non-native invasive plants. Use only native plants in your landscape to limit the chances that potentially invasive, non-native plant species will be introduced into the environment around your home. If you use non-native species in your landscape, choose species that are known not to spread.

Learn to identify and control non-native invasive plants, particularly those species that are not widespread yet. Control of small infestations is more effective and economical than trying to control a well-established, rapidly spreading infestation.

Spread the word about the harm caused by non-native invasive plants. Volunteer with natural resource agencies to help control invasive species.