

Goatscaping Brings Hope in Restoring Native Ecosystem

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What is an eco-friendly solution to invasive species and weeds growing on difficult terrain?

The answer is goatscaping or target grazing. There are environmental, economical, biological reasons for using goats in place of landscaping machinery and herbicides to remove invasive species to support the growth of native plants. Environmentally, goats require water, shade, and predator protection to graze, not fossil fuels.

Goats do not give off pollutants like carbon. Their droppings are a natural fertilizer for the soil while their hooves aerate the soil. With goatscaping the use of herbicides that may harm other organisms is not necessary. By eating the leaves and woody stems of the invasive plants, the goats allow more light and air to get to the native plants and grasses, enhancing their growth. Also, as they eat these invasive plants, they sterilize the seeds and plant-reproductive material during digestion, eventually breaking the re-growth cycle of the invasive plants.

Goats preserve the habitats of the wildlife in a grazing area by eating around bird nests, avoiding leaves and twigs having cocoons and chrysalises, and letting small creatures (turtles, toads, and small mammals) move out of their way. Economically, goatscaping is a viable option, and cost effective compared to labor, equipment, and chemical expenses of traditional methods of invasive plant removal.

Lastly, goats are biological. Compared to chemical solutions, goats produce no toxins or pollutants. Boer goats, Kiko goats, and Nigerian Dwarf goats all well suited for target grazing. Goats are natural browsers preferring broad leaved and woody stemmed plants. These ruminates will eat invasive plants like buckthorn, multi flora rose, bittersweet, English ivy, kudzu, honey suckle, burning nettle, poison ivy, or poison sumac. The grazing of goats is a testament to God creating plants and animals to coexist. Goats eat around goldenrod saving it for the pollinators. They will not eat milkweed which is the only food Monarch caterpillars eat. Goats eat most invasive plants up to 7 feet high leaving the lower portions still in the ground. This protects the goats from worms and other parasites found on the plants closer to the ground. These remaining stems will need to be pulled out manually. As goats will eat non-invasive plants like blueberries, these plants need to be protected during goatscaping. These ruminates do stay clear of Rhododendron which is highly toxic to them. Being prey, they need to be protected and herded by dogs, donkeys, or people or a fencing system.

In NY, you can rent a goat from <https://www.letsgoatbuffalo.com/>

These adorable grazers bring hope to recreating native ecosystems by their natural browsing. By reducing the growth of invasive species of plants, creating fertile soil, and providing more light and air for the growth of native plants, goats can once again bring to life a natural habitat for many of God's creatures to coexist together.

