

## Where is Plum Creek?

Plum Creek is the main watercourse that runs through Oberlin, into which all municipal piped, ditched and surface waters drain. Plum Creek joins the west branch of the Black River east of town as it makes its way to Lake Erie. The natural flow of water across the landscape by which small watercourses join larger and larger waterways creates the boundaries of what is called a **watershed**. Plum Creek is in the Black River watershed.

## What is a riparian corridor?

The word riparian means “stream-side”, and refers to land that runs adjacent to streams, rivers and other watercourses. Riparian areas extend beyond the stream banks to include the land that is periodically flooded by storm water flow.



A healthy riparian buffer zone of natural vegetation

## Why are riparian areas important?

Land within the corridor of a watercourse that is of substantial width and managed in a natural vegetative cover (trees, shrubs, plants and grasses, etc.) is referred to as a **riparian buffer**. A healthy riparian buffer stabilizes the stream banks and limits erosion, better manages and reduces flood water flow and helps to filter and settle runoff pollutants before they enter the waterway.

Improving the buffers in the Plum Creek riparian corridor will help the City of Oberlin meet goals set

forth in its storm water management plan and, more importantly, improve the overall health, functionality and beauty of the Plum Creek corridor.

## What can you do?

If your property runs adjacent to or near Plum Creek, there are simple things you can do to make a positive and important impact on improving the healthy function of our riparian buffers. Making these important changes to the way we manage our stream-side environment will work to improve water quality in our waterways and will help us fulfill our positive contribution to the greater Black River and Lake Erie watersheds.

## Here are some things you can do:

**MOWING:** leave an un-mown area along the creek. An un-mown, natural vegetative buffer of just 10ft. to 20ft. wide (the wider the better) makes a big difference in the way the riparian environment performs its functions. This is probably the easiest and most important thing you can do—simply stop mowing close to the creek.

## **NATIVE PLANTING/INVASIVE CONTROL:**

The buffer can simply be left to grow up with what plants are already there; but an approach that will help ensure that the most useful plants establish themselves—as well as giving you, as a property owner, more control over the appearance of the buffer—is to plant/seed the buffer area with your choice of a combination of **native** grasses, plants and wildflowers.

The importance of using native plants to stock a riparian buffer is several-fold. For one, these plants have naturally adapted to survive in the river environments of our region, and will quickly establish themselves to begin performing their functions on your property. Secondly, it is important not to encourage the growth and spread of non-native, invasive plant species, and to help control them when possible. These invasive plants can choke out the growth of native plants in their own

environment, and can dominate and take over large areas of habitat—in this case, the riparian corridor along Plum Creek. Some of the **invasive plant species** that are currently a problem in the Plum Creek corridor are: *Japanese Knotweed*, *Japanese Honeysuckle*, *Garlic Mustard*, *Multiflora Rose*, and *Purple Loosestrife*, to name a few.

The City of Oberlin Public Works Dept.’s Riparian Corridor Restoration Project will hope to soon provide you with more information on recommended varieties and sources for native planting stock, as well as useful information about methods for removing the invasive plants that currently threaten the Plum Creek corridor.

## **REFUSE AND YARDWASTE:**

It is, of course, recommended that all trash and refuse items be kept away from Plum Creek, out of reach of even high flood water stages. This will help prevent excessive litter in the creek and along the corridor from becoming a nuisance and hazard to water quality, wildlife, and public recreation.



Debris jam with trash; Japanese Knotweed on the left

It is also recommended that yard wastes—such as leaves, branches and grass clippings—not be piled and stored too closely to the creek bed, within reach of substantial flood waters. Even though these natural materials should not be considered trash, if they find their way into the creek they increase the sediment, debris and nutrient loading that a

watercourse must bear. This increases occurrences of debris jams, which can exacerbate flooding.

Oberlin has seasonal curbside yard waste collection. Call the City of Oberlin at 775-7218 for the dates. These natural materials are taken to the municipal compost site. The City also sponsors a compost distribution program each spring, when you can receive, for your home use, the finished compost from past year's municipal leaf and yard waste collections.

### **You can help improve Plum Creek!**

By implementing these suggested recommendations, your actions can help improve and increase important natural and functional benefits in the Plum Creek corridor. In the end, this helps Oberlin do its part in working with other municipalities to improve the Black River watershed, thereby "fitting our piece into the puzzle" for promoting and nurturing the health and vibrancy of our Great Lakes region.

#### **Contact:**

For further information and any questions, comments and concerns regarding the Plum Creek Riparian Corridor Program, please contact:

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Oberlin College students removing Japanese Knotweed along Plum Creek



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## **City of Oberlin: Plum Creek Riparian Corridor Restoration Project**



**You can make a difference!**