

Project Title	Restoring the Past, Blooming the Future: A Pollinator Garden at the Parson's Home
Brief Summary	The historic Parson's site is undergoing a revitalization. Invasive species will be removed by a team of experts and a grazing herd of goats. The restored area will become an educational pollinator garden that is perfectly positioned next to an accessible parking lot
Estimated Start and Completion Date	5/28/2025-10/2025
Total amount requested	\$9,600

Friends of Rye Nature Center Goals:

1. Remove invasive plant life from the Parson's ruins in order to protect the surrounding forest ecosystems, a local Violet Wood Sorrel population, and the structure.
2. To create an educational experience centered around native pollinators.
3. To increase visibility of the Parson's ruins in order to create a community gathering space.

Overview:

The Friends of Rye Nature Center is a non-profit organization that manages the Rye Nature Center in Rye New York. The Nature Center is a forested 47 acre forest that hosts many educational programs, a conservation team, and community gathering spaces. The park was once home to the Parsons family that kept the space as largely lawn and ornamental gardens. The ruins of the Parson's family home have since become a gathering space. In the past few years, English Ivy along with numerous invasive plants, have overwhelmed the structure, requiring the space to be closed off to the public.

Friends of Rye Nature Center: Restoring the Past, Blooming the Future: A Pollinator Garden at the Parson's Home

Once home to the Parson's family, the Rye Nature Center embarked on removing invasive vine cover on the ruins of the once palatial home, now referred to as the ruins. The overall goals of this project were to reduce invasive plant growth atop the ruins that have spread to important ecological communities, increase visibility of the building, and create an educational community gathering space. Through partnerships involving a combination of innovative biological controls, professional treatment, and community volunteerism, we have transformed an invasive-choked site into a vibrant native habitat.

Phase I: Biological Control & Community Engagement

In May, the Nature Center hosted a herd of 28 goats from Fat and Sassy Goats. In just four days, these animals cleared 1.6 acres of dense invasive growth, including Japanese Wisteria, Wineberry, English Ivy, Angelica Tree, and Ornamental Bittersweet. This phase served as a powerful educational tool, drawing 110 visitors who attended to witness the restoration firsthand. During this time, Jenn Balch delivered three insightful talks to public groups and school groups, reaching a total of 355 students who learned about the vital role of prescribed grazing in local ecosystems. The physical work was supported by dedicated volunteers who contributed 56 hours to manually pull down high-climbing English Ivy, making it accessible for the goats. This effort also resonated digitally, as our "Nature News" posts regarding the goats achieved the highest viewership of 2025, while our Instagram content garnered over 175 interactions.

Phase II: Professional Remediation & Stewardship

Following the goat grazing, Forest Management Solutions applied a targeted herbicide treatment to the root systems to ensure permanent invasive removal. Throughout the summer, the FRNC conservation staff dedicated 336 hours to manually remove remaining and dying ivy from the tops of building walls and manage any emerging regrowth. To address the most difficult areas, Beaver Tree Company visited in August to complete the final phase of clearing. They removed ivy from inaccessible chimney tops and meticulously chipped all vine debris to prevent regrowth from cuttings, ensuring the building was structurally and ecologically clear.

Phase III: The Pollinator Culmination

In October the project reached its beautiful peak with a community-led planting event made possible by a donation from WestchesterED, which provided 5 cubic yards of high-quality compost to enrich the soil. The Little Garden Club of Rye and the Rye High School Garnet Club joined forces for the final installation, where 18 volunteers worked in tandem to put 135 native pollinator flowers into the ground. This final phase transformed the historic Ruins into a vibrant, essential habitat for local pollinators, ensuring the project leaves a lasting legacy of beauty and ecological health for the entire Rye community.

Overview:

Activity	Deliverable	Final Status
Removal of invasive plants 6ft and lower	Fat and Sassy Goats ate and removed invasive plants	28 goats removed 1.6 acres of invasive plants in three days time. As a result, all plant life was removed from the ground and building walls with remaining vines atop the ruins.

Educational Programming	Taught classes on goat usage for invasive removal. Posted social media on the topic and event.	110 community members visited the park to watch the goats in action. 355 Students, elementary to high school, learned from experts on the topic. Social media posts received 208 interactions for a total of 771 people educated.
Ensure permanent removal of invasive plants	Forest Management Solutions treated roots with herbicide	4 weeks after goat browsing, the roots of all English Ivy plants were cut and treated with a foliar application of 4.7% v/v 3A (triclopyr). There was no visible resurgence from roots following the treatment.
Removal of remaining vines atop the ruins	Volunteers, interns, and staff manually pulled vines.	25 interns, staff, and volunteers helped remove vines that were out of reach of goats for a total of 336 hours of work.
Removal of remaining vines atop the ruins	Beaver Tree Co. removed vines atop the chimneys that were out of reach for manual removal	Beaver Tree Co. spent two days removing remaining vines at 30-40ft high.
Planting preparation	Staff removed and chipped dead vines which were then used for trails. Staff removed debris.	Staff removed vine debris and chipped the woody material. This was used to surround the planting locations to hold in moisture. Building debris was also removed.
Planting preparation	WestchesterED donated compost which was then tilled into planting locations	5 Cubic yards delivered to enrich the soil for planting.
Planting	Volunteers planted native pollinator species	18 volunteers from the Little Garden Club of Rye and the Rye Highschool Garden Club planted 135 pollinator plants.
Concluding outreach	Nature Newsletter covered the whole process. Speaker event given to PRISM partners.	A final newsletter was sent out to the community discussing the history of the site and work conducted in 2025 to revitalize the ruins. Two 20 minute talk was given to the PRISM cohort on the









