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Four-legged clean-up crew set for Dot Park

By Isabel Lord, Reporter Correspondent
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Cole and Chester “goatscaping.” Photo courtesy of Boston Parks and Recreation Dept.

Hold on to your hocks, Dorchester — four furry four-legged munchers will be coming to the neighborhood this week to help clean up Dorchester Park. This is the latest local development in the ongoing trend of “goatscaping,” or using the animals to landscape spaces that are difficult for their human counterparts to work in.

Sponsored by the Dorchester Park Association (DPA), these goats will take up residency in the park as soon as this Friday (Aug. 10), and will be tasked with eating overgrowth and invasive plants such as poison ivy and knotweed. With a planned installment period of one month, they will be enclosed within a solar-powered electric fence, which will help keep coyotes – and curious people — out and goats in.

“They love poison ivy and brambles and thorny things,” said Lisa Ahern, who made the initial proposal to the Boston Parks and Recreation Department on behalf of the DPA. “The more unappetizing it seems to us, the better it is for them.”

By eating plants that would otherwise require pesticides or heavy labor to remove, goats are an eco-friendly alternative to traditional landscaping. They can also be remarkably cheaper: The Goatscaping Co. in Plymouth charges around \$100 per goat, per week. Said Ahern, “Goats are the way!”

These munchers’ first task will be to nibble in the area surrounding the park’s playground, so that “kids can go back in the woods and play hide-and-seek, and not worry about poison ivy,” said David Mareira, another neighbor and organizer of the goatscaping initiative.

The DPA is also looking to clear the areas behind the tennis court and the back baseball field, he said, as well as the boulders that many lifelong residents remember fondly but are now covered in poison ivy.

This program will be the first time since 2015 that goats have been used to clear a Boston park, after initial efforts in Hyde Park proved too expensive. Landscaping by goat grew in popularity to the point where the supplying company raised its rates, and prices tripled.

For Dorchester Park, this clean-up work is the first step in a greater plan to return the space to its original design.

Constructed in 1891 to plans drawn up by the legendary Frederick Law Olmsted, the park is on the National Register of Historic Places and is part of Olmsted’s Emerald Necklace, a collection of around parks that ring the city. With access to Olmsted’s original designs, which include information on what kind of trees should be planted and where, the DPA hopes that actions like this will encourage new membership, funding, and increase its ability to restore the park to its former beauty.

“Olmsted designed the park to help people in the city go and enjoy a wooded area,” said Ahern. “It was meant for the public’s enjoyment, and we want to keep it clean and beautiful.”

To donate to the goatscaping, a [GoFundMe account](#) is now up and running. All funds will help the

goats to do their jobs.

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Irene Hayes

Great memories.

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Peachie Doherty Fitzgerald

These goats do a great job on poison ivy. We had them here last year on the grounds of our condo unit in Braintree. They were not only productive, they were cute too!

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Kathleen Ryan

Lisa Ahern is a Dorchester treasure!

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Frederick Murphy

I agree! Thanks Lisa & the whole DPA!

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Carol Evans

Learned something new WoW! Can the goats really handle eating poison ivy and thorns too Wow?

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