

Goat Grazing and Invasive Species Removal – Goats were procured through a rental agreement with a contractor to bring the goats to graze on two areas of land within the City of Denton that total approximately 6 acres. These two areas are located where Spencer Road and Morse Road intersect with Mayhill Road. Currently, these plots of land are primarily inhabited by Post Oak trees that are currently troubled with a substantial growth of the invasive shrub Chinese Privet. Consequently, the trees are starting to show the kind of distress occasioned by Chinese Privet infestation as that invasive shrubbery prevents the free growth and reproduction of native trees and understory.

The goats prove particularly adept at clearing out vegetation, including Chinese privet, without causing any additional damage to trees that might occur if mechanical means were used to remove the invasive species. Additionally, goats eat poisonous plants and open clear lines of sight, making the land safer for work crews that will subsequently clear out all Chinese privet from these areas before this summer. This effort is in service of the Urban Forest Master Plan Goal 7 which indicates that staff should “adopt plant health care policies” that include “monitor[ing] invasive species,” including Chinese Privet.

The cost for this project was \$12k. This compares well to the estimated cost of \$15- 20K per acre of clearing the land of Chinese Privet by using a third-party forestry contractor and is comparable to the \$10k cost of using in-house crews to achieve the same purpose. As stated earlier, using goats in addition to work crews results in minimal damage to the existing native species of trees and makes human work much easier. Staff began using goats for grazing in October of 2019 and will continue to determine additional areas that are amenable to ruminant grazing. The use of goats in landscape maintenance is promoted actively by several agencies across Texas and the United States including the Texas Master Naturalist Program, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Texas A&M AgriLife, and Texas Native Plant Society.