

Goats



Tyler Arboretum

Frequently Asked Questions

Why do we want goats to come to Tyler?

We want goats at Tyler to use as sustainable meadow managers; the goats will help us get rid of invasive and successional plants in our meadows.

What do goats eat?

Goats are browsers—closer to deer than cows—which means they would rather eat brush and weeds than grass. Goats have a high mineral need (which is why they like twigs), and why they will eat the multi-flora rose, sapling trees, and the vines that have taken root in our meadows.

How long would the goats be at Tyler?

They would be here for the entire growing season—from the end of May until mid to late September—until there is nothing left for them to eat in our meadows.

Tyler will be using a long-season browsing strategy, (as opposed to ‘flash grazing’, which uses greater numbers of goats to browse small areas intensively in a short period of time). Our goats will browse in large paddocks over the entire growing season, continuously eating re-sprouted weeds and brush. Research has shown this strategy can effectively eradicate many undesirable plants in one season.



Where will they be?

The goats will be out on Tyler’s scenic loop (a short walk from the Visitor Center).

What kind of goats are they?

The Tyler herd are Nubian goats, made up of wethers, which are neutered males. They are hand-raised from birth and interact well with people, coming when called by their owners, Anne and Larry Cihanek. They spend the winter in Rhinebeck, NY, but travel up and down the east coast in summer for ‘grazing gigs’.

Why use goats instead of herbicide sprays?

The kind of herbicide applications necessary to control all the invasive growth in our meadows would also kill the plants we wish to keep. We need diversity in our meadows to support our abundant wildlife.

How else do goats help the land?

Goats are a broad-spectrum solution to weeds: they enhance the environment instead of harming it. They eat, they poop, and they move on. Goats will ignore many of our native meadow plants and grasses in preference to weeds, successional woody, and invasive plants. And goat droppings provide nutrient rich organic matter that improves the soil.



Will goats fix the invasive weeds in just one year?

Probably not. Controlling invasive and successional plants can be a lengthy process that sometimes takes several seasons. There is no permanent solution, no matter what form of control we choose.

What other meadow management strategies does Tyler use?

Tyler has used spot herbicide applications for difficult-to-control weeds such as mile-a-minute, and we also use mowing in the winter and summer, along with seasonally controlled burning.

Our goal in bringing goats to Tyler is to evaluate their success as low impact natural land managers in our meadows. This way, we'll learn whether to consider them as part of our longer term approach to invasive and successional plant control.

Is it true goats will eat tin cans?

Goats have the reputation of eating everything, but that isn't true. They love and will eat twigs and leaves first, and they largely ignore grass unless they are really hungry. Certain species of plants will make them sick. Goats have four chambers in their stomach: the rumen, reticulum, omasum, and abomasum. This allows them to get nutrients and energy from the weeds and twigs they eat.

What plants make them sick?

Many of the plants that would make us very sick also make goats very sick. These include: Rhododendrons, shrubs such as *Pieris* and Mountain Laurel; yew and wild cherry; perennials such as monkshood, *Datura*, and lily of the valley; burning bush, and milkweed are all plants that both you and goats should avoid eating.

What about goat hair?

Goats have hair, which grows continuously, rather than fur, which sheds seasonally. Mohair fiber comes from Angora goats, and cashmere comes from a variety of breeds grown mostly in mountainous regions in Asia. Angora goats have long hair that can be made into strong, beautiful yarns for luxurious fabrics. Cashmere comes from the soft undercoat of goats, and was first discovered in Kashmir, hence the name.

What are baby goats called?

Female goats are called does; male goats are called bucks. The babies are called kids. Most kids are born in early spring, from February to early April. Goats are highly social and get depressed if left alone.

What is goat milk used for?

There are six main breeds of dairy goat in the US, with milk production ranging from 2–3 gallons of milk a day, compared with 8 gallons for cows. Many people find goat milk is easier on their digestive system. Goat milk also makes fine soap!

Why do goats have such weird eyes?

Side-slanted eyes with horizontal pupils like a goat's belong to grazing prey animals. Round pupils, like ours, dogs, and large cats belong to day time predators. Sideways eyes produce a much wider field of vision, giving goats a greater ability to detect predators. The shape of their pupils also allows them to take in more light.

Thank you for helping us bring goats back to Tyler

