

NEWS
Environment

Climate summit brings local high school students together

Two-day RE Sources event led by youth, for youth

August 6, 2023 at 5:00 a.m.



Logan Warriner, a volunteer with Whatcom Million Trees Project, holds a vine of English ivy Friday, Aug. 4 at Larrabee State Park. Over a dozen people came out for the RE Source's Youth Climate Summit day of service. *(Hailey Hoffman/Cascadia Daily News)*

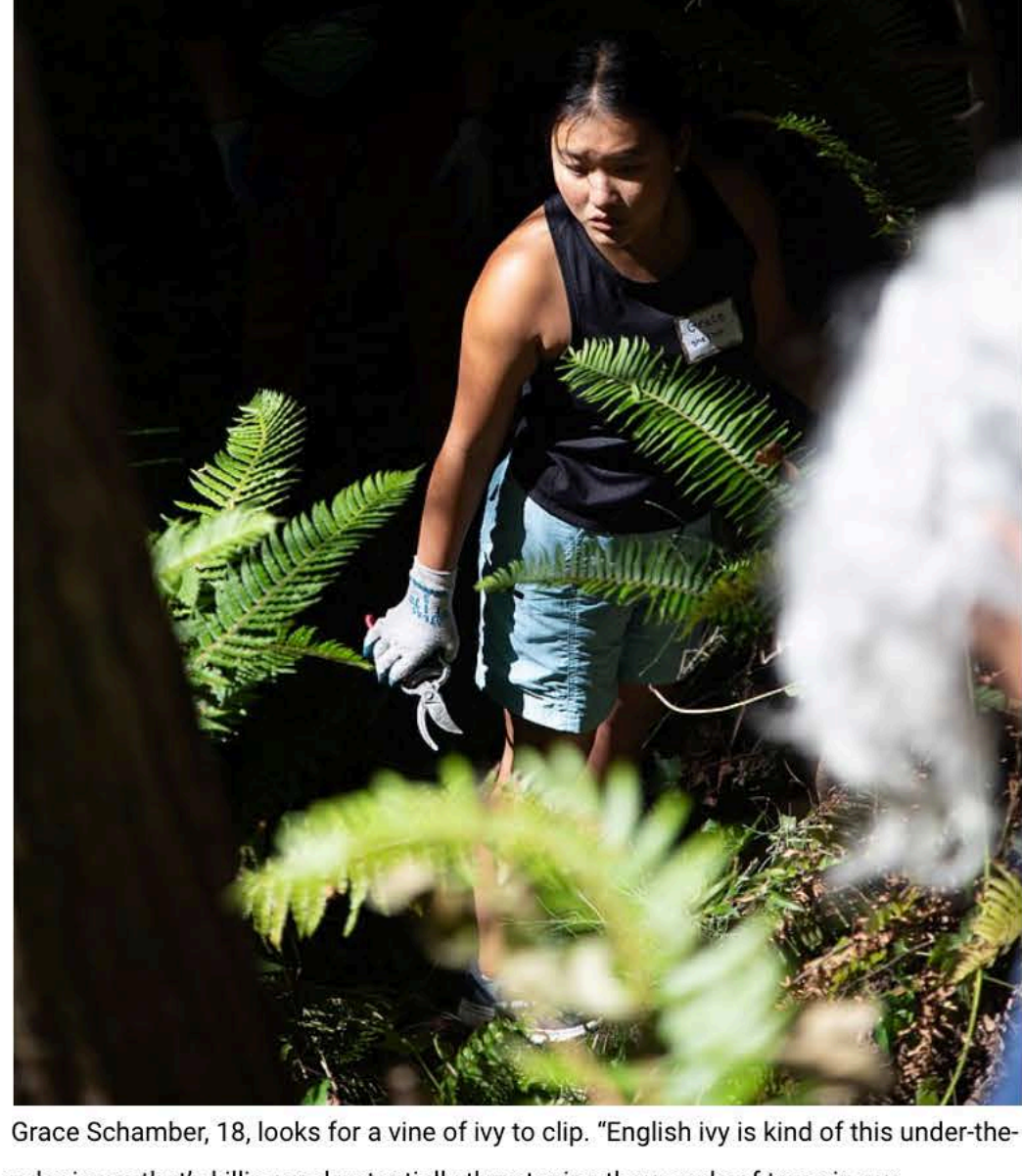
By **SIMONE HIGASHI**
Staff Reporter



Over a dozen participants, volunteers and passionate community members met at Larabee State Park Friday, Aug. 4 for day one of Whatcom County's first Youth Climate Summit. Together, they donned gardening gloves and climbed down a steep hill to cut and pull vines of invasive ivy from the trees.

The summit was a two-day long event organized by RE Sources in partnership with Whatcom Million Trees Project, Youth for the Environment and People!, local college students, and youth volunteers. The first day, participants removed invasive English ivy; the second day, Saturday, Aug. 5, local activists and environmental groups hosted a series of workshops.

This year's theme was Local Climate Solutions. RE Sources plans to host similar summits in the future.



Grace Schamber, 18, looks for a vine of ivy to clip. "English ivy is kind of this under-the-radar issue that's killing and potentially threatening thousands of trees in our community," said Michael Feerer, executive director of Whatcom Million Trees Project. *(Hailey Hoffman/Cascadia Daily News)*

"We began really just thinking about, 'How can this event be as youth-led as possible?'" said Cambry Baker, the youth engagement coordinator at RE Sources. "So that ended up in us creating the Youth Advisory Council."

The Youth Advisory Council (YAC) is a group of high school students who worked together to create the summit.

Lydia Swets, 16, joined the council to get experience planning events and more involved in the environment. She and other members of the YAC not only worked with RE Sources to put the summit agenda together, but also helped lead the event.

Swets doesn't know exactly what she wants to do in the future, but she knows she wants to have a "positive impact on our Earth."

"It's really important to get your everyday person involved," Swets said. "Not just the people that are doing this as a career, but just kind of everyone to see that they can have an impact ... [on] their own community."



Evy Oldham, 18, rips an ivy vine from a tree. To properly remove English ivy from trees, the group was instructed to cut and peel the vines below shoulder height. *(Hailey Hoffman/Cascadia Daily News)*

Other YAC members, like Abigail Schenken, think that youth engagement in environmental issues is important for the future.

"Every day is the hottest day of the year or something like that," Schenken said. "It's getting more apocalyptic. So, it's either do nothing and watch the world fall apart, or be able to take action and survive."

The English ivy removal was led by the Whatcom Million Trees Project, a nonprofit organization that plants and protects trees around Whatcom County. Removing the ivy from trees — and local garden stores where the ivy is sold — is a goal they have been working toward for some time.

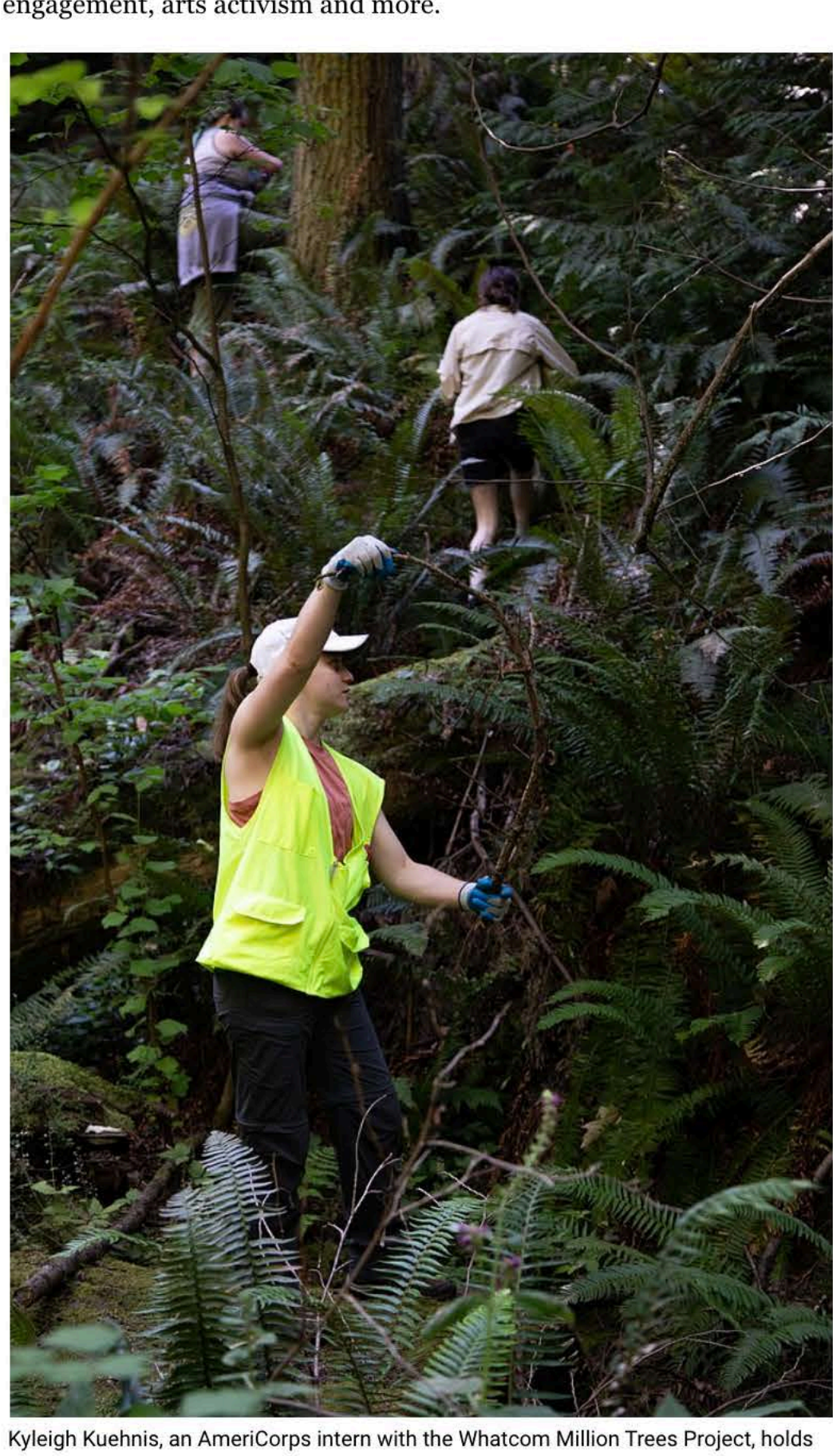


Participants in the RE Source's Youth Climate Summit spent day one removing English ivy and other invasive species at Larrabee State Park. *(Hailey Hoffman/Cascadia Daily News)*

"English ivy is kind of this under-the-radar issue that's killing and potentially threatening thousands of trees in our community," said Michael Feerer, executive director of Whatcom Million Trees Project.

To properly remove English ivy from trees, the group was instructed to cut and peel the vines below shoulder height. From there, they cleared the trees of any ivy in a 6-foot radius and left the vines in places where they would eventually decompose.

The second day of the summit took place from 9:45 a.m. to 4 p.m. on the Western Washington University campus. The workshops covered a variety of topics and issues including climate change science, political engagement, arts activism and more.



Kyeigh Kuehnis, an AmeriCorps intern with the Whatcom Million Trees Project, holds up a branch. *(Hailey Hoffman/Cascadia Daily News)*

One of the major goals of the summit is for students to leave with resources to stay involved in environmental solutions on an individual, local and global level.

"A lot of times students are just left out of the conversations around what we're going to do about climate change, or their voice isn't given equal value as adults," Baker said. "So the important part of this space is just that their voice is given really high value."

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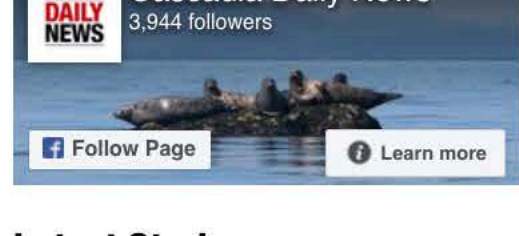
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