

# Deerfield Review

## GUEST ESSAY: Riverwoods proposal would threaten rare flower

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The village of Riverwoods is drafting an ordinance which will unfortunately degrade the quality of the woodlands in Riverwoods, and especially threaten the few remaining stands of Giant White Trillium (*Trillium grandiflorum*), an endangered wildflower, which for a time grew everywhere in Riverwoods.

I moved to Riverwoods in 1967 and was able to witness, first hand, the beauty of masses of Trillium in the early spring. The Trilliums were everywhere, in some cases appearing to be a sea of white gracing our woods.

Over the years, primarily due to over-browsing by the white tail deer, the Trillium began disappearing, gradually at first, and then very quickly. Trilliums are a favored food of white tail deer. Indeed if trilliums are available deer will seek these plants, to the exclusion of other plants. Many of the concerned homeowners noticed the loss of trillium and built "woodland protection fences" to exclude the deer from a portion of the village. In recent years the village of Riverwoods is experiencing an explosion of white tail deer, with counts indicating that the herd is four times larger than the area can support. The village is not willing to take any action to limit the size of the herd.

The picture included with this letter illustrates the stark difference between protected and unprotected woodland. This graphically illustrates the struggle between the pro-woodland residents and the pro-deer residents.

The proposed fence ordinance is oriented towards making Riverwoods a more friendly environment for the white tail deer. Woodland protection fences, if implemented, are to be limited to the normal building setbacks, seriously reducing the protected area provided by woodland protection fences (the ordinance calls these "deer fences"). The ordinance will open up large areas of currently protected woodlands for browsing, including areas where Trillium has made a comeback. Properties where the protected white trillium are close to a property line will be especially affected.

The ordinance also limits the size of a perimeter fence (a fence on the homeowner's property line) to a height of 6 feet, which the deer can easily jump.

As a concerned homeowner, I am asking that the village of Riverwoods reject the proposed fence ordinance and craft an ordinance that recognizes the degrading effects of deer over-browsing. I believe a compromise is in order. Firstly, the village should limit the size of the deer herd to reduce the environmental threat to the woodlands. This is an approach that is already practiced by the Ryerson Conservation Area. With less threat to the woodland, the woodland protection fences can be safely removed.