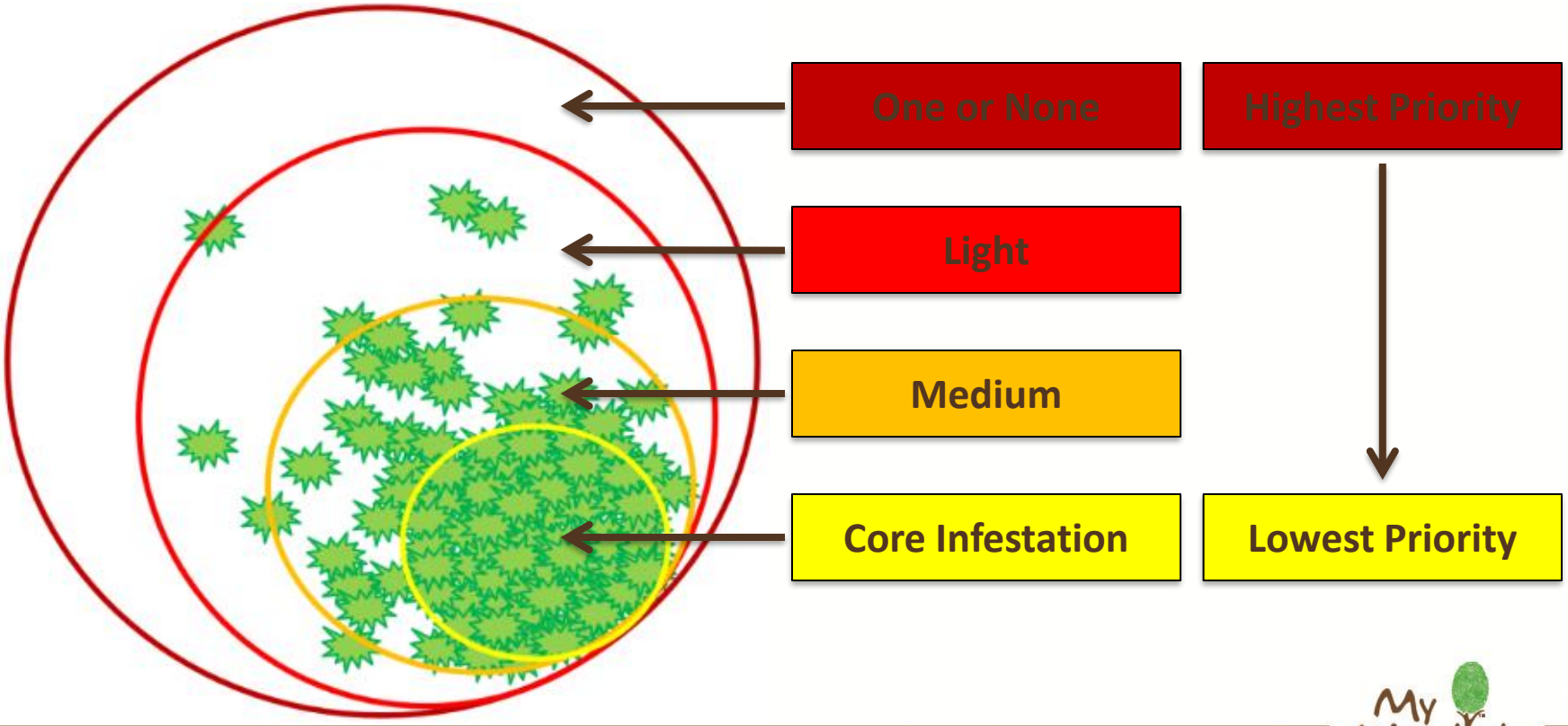
Prioritizing Invasive Plant Control

My Woodlot™

With so many invasive plants out there, the idea of controlling them on your property may seem over-whelming. Where should you even start? This slideshow gives you ideas of where to concentrate your effort to have the most impact.

Invasive Plant Prioritization by Density

The most basic way to prioritize invasive plant control is based on how many invasives are there. Begin in spots where invasives are few, and work toward areas where they are plentiful. This approach allows you to prevent small infestations from becoming big ones.



Removing this lone Japanese barberry will prevent its spread. After removal, monitor the area regularly to make sure invasive plants don't return.

One or None

Highest Priority

Catching an infestation early makes control a lot easier. Here we see a few invasive plants in the background and one in the foreground. This is a great candidate site for control work.

Light

High Priority

Medium infestations include areas of both heavy and light invasive densities. As with your land overall, begin control where invasives are light and work into denser spots.

Medium

Medium Priority

Core infestations are difficult, expensive, and time-consuming to treat. Leave these challenging areas for last.

Core Infestation

Lowest Priority

Other Places to Focus Invasive Plant Control

Not all invasive plant infestations fit the density diagram well. For the rest of this slideshow, we'll point out other places on your land that are high priorities for invasive plant control.

Where You Have Invasive Vines

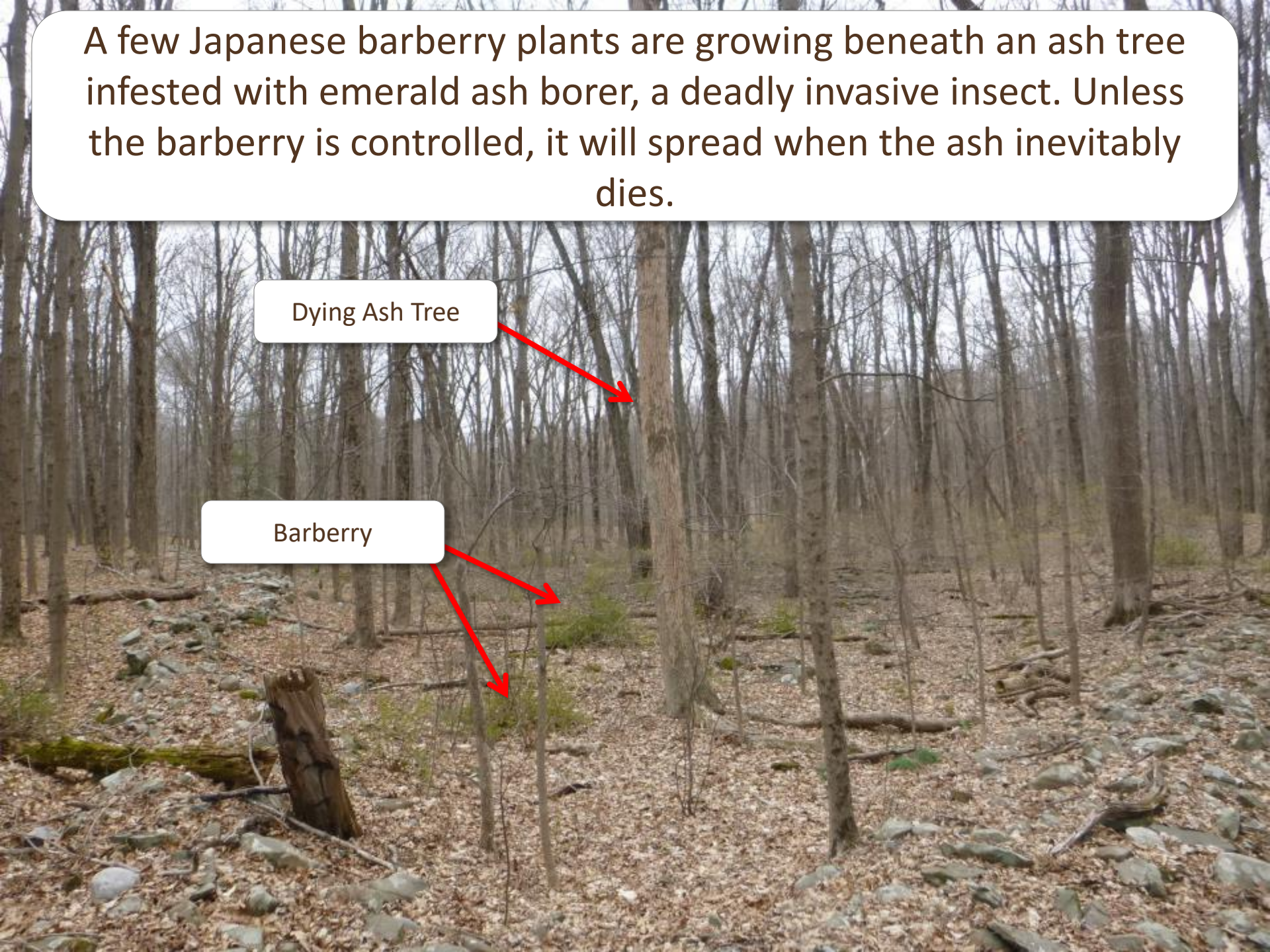
Cutting invasive vines is a great place to start control work. Invasive vines can kill trees, and when trees die, sunlight hits the forest floor and can promote other invasive plants to grow.

This black oak was heavily infested with oriental bittersweet, threatening its survival. Vine-cutting saved this tree's life.

Where Trees Are Expected to Die

Trees can die from more than just vines. Focusing control efforts in areas where you expect trees to die can help you get ahead of the invasives before they get extra sunlight.

A few Japanese barberry plants are growing beneath an ash tree infested with emerald ash borer, a deadly invasive insect. Unless the barberry is controlled, it will spread when the ash inevitably dies.



In Areas That Are Going to Be Logged

Timber harvesting will also let more sunlight onto the ground, potentially giving invasive plants growing there a boost. If you can, control invasive plants prior to harvesting trees on your land to help keep invasives from spreading afterward.

This landowner hired a crew to pull barberry prior to a timber harvest. While some barberry seeds left in the soil may sprout, the control effort has prevented this invasive shrub from taking over the post-logging undergrowth.

Around Your Home

Invasive plants often take root near structures, because they get more sunlight and often have nooks and crannies where plants can sprout. Pay attention especially to areas that are hard to mow, weed-whack, or brush-hog.

Stone walls, tree stumps, and rocky outcrops can all become invasive nurseries, because they're hard to mow near. This rock wall became home to Japanese honeysuckle, tree of heaven, and multi-flora rose.

Along Roads and Trails

Roads and trails often act as corridors for invasive plant spread, and when invasives get dense in these areas, they can interfere with both your view and outdoor activities.

The sides of this trail have been taken over by Japanese barberry. Controlling this invasive shrub here will help keep it from spreading throughout the property.

Near Your Favorite Places

Do you have a patch of wildflowers or grove of trees that you especially enjoy? Perhaps a water feature like a stream or pond? Targeting these areas for invasive plant control can help keep them from being taken over and having their natural beauty diminished.

This pond edge is mostly grass, but there was a lone autumn olive shrub growing nearby. Autumn olive is known for rapidly multiplying, so it was removed before it could block the landowner's view of the pond.

Where a Single-Species Infestation Might Become a Multi-Species One

Invasive plant control is hard enough when there's only one species to deal with. Control becomes much more complicated when multiple species take over the same spot. Even in dense infestations, targeting new invasive arrivals can help the situation from spiraling even more out of control.

This property has many invasive plants, but only one specimen of hairy joint grass. Controlling this grass will help keep this site from becoming harder to work with in the future.

Areas You've Already Controlled

Don't give up the ground you've gained! Once you've controlled invasive plants in an area, monitor that spot over time and remove any invasive plants that resprout.

This barberry was dug up in the fall of 2015. In the spring of 2016, it resprouted. If the landowner hadn't revisited this site and noticed the problem, the barberry would have regrown and taken over the area again.

This slideshow only gives a few examples of places to focus your invasive plant control. In reality there are combinations of the methods we listed, as well as techniques we didn't mention. If you have questions about which invasives on your property to treat first, consider posting your questions to the MyWoodlot forum.

My Woodlot™

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