

What is an invasive plant?

Invasive plants are usually non-native species that have been introduced intentionally or by accident and spread from human settings into natural areas with negative effects to our economy, environment or health. Free from the plant-eaters and parasites that

keep them in check in their native ranges, they reproduce rapidly and spread aggressively, taking over natural areas and altering biological communities. Invasive plants have been referred to as a form of biological pollution.

Why should you be concerned?

Invasive species are one of the top threats to our natural heritage, along with habitat loss and degradation. Invasive plants can displace native species, eliminate food and habitat for wildlife, alter natural fire regimes and nutrient cycling in soils, and inhibit native-plant regeneration. In the U.S. alone, invasive species cost over \$120 billion annually in damage and control, and the cost they inflict on our natural heritage is

immeasurable. Whether you are acting as a steward for your own property, a local park, or a far away natural area, invasive plants are likely to be a problem. In the face of such global threats to biodiversity as habitat destruction and climate change, we can each make a difference by preventing and controlling the spread of invasive species.

Learn how to identify invasive plants

For a start, unfold this brochure to the inside section, where you will learn how to identify 10 of the most prevalent and problematic invasive plants in our region and how to control them. You can also participate in plant walks, weed control workdays, and invasive species trainings offered by local groups.

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Illustrations by Rachel Rogge

Spread the word, not the weed

Seeds of invasive plants are well adapted to spreading and easily “hitch-hike” to new environments. Weed seeds can be carried in soil trapped in shoe or tire treads, in the soil of transplanted plants, in hay or straw used to stop erosion or feed animals, or even on your pant legs. Please help prevent new invasions by cleaning soil from your shoes and the tires of vehicles that may be driven into natural areas.

Become an educated consumer

Don't purchase or transplant invasive plants. Ask plant sellers before you buy, to be sure the plant you want is not invasive, and ask for alternatives if it is. Take the “Recommended Landscape Alternatives to Invasive Plants” wallet guide from this brochure with you to your nurseries and show them some examples.

Other types of invasive organisms in the area

A variety of plants and animals has invaded our forests, fields and waters.

- Invasive aquatic plants like water chestnut and giant salvinia choke our lakes and ponds, interfering with boating and other recreation.
- Invasive animals like the snakehead fish and virile crayfish compete with and displace native species, harming the diversity and health of our rivers and streams.
- Invasive insects like the emerald ash borer, Japanese beetle and hemlock woolly adelgid kill millions of native trees each year.

**Recommended
Landscape Alternatives to
Invasive
Plants**
**of the Potomac River
Watershed and
Surrounding Region**



To download this brochure or the
“Recommended Landscape
Alternatives to Invasive Plants”
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