

Gardens at Risk from Invasive Species

INVASIVE SPECIES are taking over our green spaces, dramatically increasing maintenance and decreasing aesthetic value.

Fortunately, gardeners play a critical role in slowing the spread of invasive species!

WHAT GARDENERS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT INVASIVES

- Invasive species are those nonnative plants, animals, and diseases that can cause harm to the economy, environment, and human health.
- Most introduced plants do not cause problems; however, those that do have significant economic and environmental costs.
- Invasive species pose a threat to Wisconsin's urban forests which provide important environmental, social, and economic values such as reduced storm water run-off, improved air quality, energy conservation, improved public health, and increased property values.
- Invasive plants reproduce and grow quickly, easily invading adjacent green spaces, woodlands, and even landscaped areas.
- Invasive insects and diseases weaken and sometimes kill trees.

WHAT DOES THIS HAVE TO DO WITH GARDENERS?

- Invasive propagules, insects, and diseases can be introduced through plant swaps, farmers' markets, and yard sales.
- Invasive species displace, weaken, or kill desirable plants resulting in loss of diversity; degrade wildlife habitat; interfere with recreational activities; disrupt urban ecosystems; and divert millions of dollars for their control.
- Some of the worst plant invaders were introduced as ornamentals or herbs.
- Weeding time and cost can increase due to invasive plants.

HERE'S WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Do not plant invasive species.
- Use garden materials that are free of invasive species and propagules, including wood chips or compost.
- Do not distribute, purchase, or sell known invasive species.
- Garden using plant materials that are site appropriate and less susceptible to damaging pests and diseases.
- Learn about invasive species.
- Remove soil, seeds, and vegetative matter from shoes, clothing, and tools prior to leaving an area.
- Properly dispose of invasive species or materials that may harbor invasive plant seeds. For example, disposal includes bagging for the landfill.
- Backyard compost piles and bins do not reliably generate enough heat for a long enough period of time to destroy weed seeds.