WHAT MAKES A PLANT INVASIVE?

Invasive plants have been introduced into an environment in which they did not originate. They lack natural enemies, grow and reproduce quickly, and are able to thrive in a wide variety of conditions. These characteristics allow plants to invade new habitats and out-compete natives, resulting in dense thickets of a single plant species.

HABITAT

Dense thickets of invasive plants limit native plant diversity which reduces food and shelter for wildlife. Invasive plants are the second leading cause of species extinction.

WATER QUALITY

Many invasive plants have shallow root systems that provide limited erosion control. Invasive plants also shade out native seedlings resulting in fewer trees. Less shade creates higher water temperatures, reducing oxygen for fish and other aquatic animals. Reduced tree cover also reduces stormwater interception.

**Plants**

- **Morning Glory** - Calystegia sepium
  - Perennial vine, likes sunny sites
  - Seed remains viable for 50 years

- **Lesser Celandine** - Ranunculus ficaria
  - Deciduous, aggressive ground cover
  - Shiny leaves and flowers

- **Pokeweed** - Phytolacca americana
  - Perennial
  - White flower, red berries toxic to humans

- **English Ivy** - Hedera helix
  - Evergreen woody vine
  - Has 2 different leaf shapes, can pull down trees

- **Scotch Broom** - Cytisus scoparius
  - Semievergreen shrub
  - Yellow pea flowers turning to black seed pods

- **Purple Loosestrife** - Lythrum salicaria
  - Aggressive perennial
  - Dark pink flowers with square stems

- **Traveler’s Joy** - Clematis vitalba
  - Deciduous twining vine
  - White spring flowers, fluffy seedheads in winter

- **English Holly** - Ilex aquifolium
  - Evergreen thicket-forming to 50 feet tall
  - Prickly leaves

- **Knotweeds** - Polygonum cuspidatum
  - Perennial with heart-shaped leaves
  - Creates large thickets 10 feet tall

- **Spurge Laurel** - Daphne laureola
  - Evergreen shrub
  - Pale green flowers in March, berries and sap are toxic

- **Tree of Heaven** - Ailanthus altissima
  - Deciduous tree to 80 feet
  - Yellow flower, resembles black walnut

- **Butterfly Bush** - Buddleia davidii
  - Deciduous shrub to 10 feet tall
  - Arching branches have long flower heads

- **Himalayan Blackberry** - Rubus armeniacus
  - Semi-evergreen, thorny canes
  - 5 leaflets per leaf, more oval than native blackberry

- **English Laurel** - Prunus laurocerasus
  - Evergreen shrub to 30 feet hedge
  - Glossy tough leaves

- **Yellow Flag Iris** - Iris pseudacorus
  - Perennial to 4 feet tall
  - Dense mats in riparian areas, flowering in wetlands

- **Garlic Mustard** - Allaria petiolata
  - Biennial with flowers and seeds in second year
  - Basal rosette leaves
Invasive plants crowd out native plants and trees, and displace natural habitat. These invasive plants easily spread by seeds or roots. A plant in your yard can easily escape and get out of control.

Removing Invasive Plants

Manual and mechanical removal are best for small patches of invasive plants. Infestations of more than half an acre may require manual and mechanical methods combined with other weed control techniques.

Invasive plants can reproduce from roots and underground stems (rhizomes), which must be removed for effective control. Removal is most effective when the soil is moist, but be careful not to disturb any nearby native species.

English holly and English laurel – Cut with a chainsaw or loppers. Periodically cut re-sprouting plants. Applying herbicides on waxy leaves is not effective, but a cut stump herbicide* treatment can control re-sprouting from the base. For more information, see yourkingcounty.gov/library/water-and-landweeds/Brochures/English-Holly-Fact-Sheet.pdf.

English and Irish ivy – Removing berries prevents birds from spreading seeds. Pulling ivy and removing roots is effective for small areas. Repeated pulling may be necessary. Cut vines all the way around a tree trunk to 4.5 feet from the ground to kill ivy in the upper branches. Clear ivy from a six-foot radius around the base of a tree. For information about large scale ivy eradication, go to www.nps.gov/plants/alien/fact.htm.

Himalayan blackberry – Hand-pull or mechanically remove the canes, then dig out the roots. Even very small root fragments can re-sprout as new plants.

Knotweed – Knotweed reproduces from rhizomes, which must be dug up for effective control. Mowing and cutting are not sufficient. This plant also reproduces from cut stem fragments so do not leave cut stems on the ground. For more information about removing large infestations, see yourkingcounty.gov/library/water-and-landweeds/Brochures/knotweed-biology-and-control.pdf.

Morning glory (bindweed) – Hand pull small plants or new infestations. For larger infestations, dig up the entire plant, including rhizomes below ground. This plant reproduces from stem and rhizome fragments. Followup treatment will be necessary.

Purple loosestrife – This plant reproduces from root fragments so the entire root system must be removed. Pull plants before seed set because each plant can produce 100,000 seeds. For large infestations, see additional control methods at www.nps.gov/plants/alien/fact5ys1.htm.

Scotch broom – For plants less than three feet tall, pull up the roots. You can cut the stems of larger plants near the ground, but about half of them will re-grow from cut stumps, so followup treatments may be necessary. Cut or pull plants before seed set from July to September because mature plants can produce 300 seeds per bush and seeds persist in the soil for up to 80 years.

Wild clematis – Cut vines from tree canopies and dig up roots at the base of the vine. Tracing the vine back to the basal clump is easier in winter. For older plants too large to dig, a cut stump herbicide treatment may control re-sprouting from the base.

Butterfly bush – Pull small plants and be sure to remove the roots. You can cut back large plants, but many will re-sprout from cut stumps. Use a woody plant puller in moist soils to remove the entire root system. For older and larger specimens, a cut stump herbicide* treatment may control re-sprouting from the base.

Lesser celandine – Effective digging requires the removal of all bulblets; some resources suggest soil screening. Pulling plants should be bagged and thrown in the trash and NOT be composted or put in yard debris. Herbicide application can be effective but requires care. Do not swap, trade or give away this plant.

Eykeweed – Cut back the plant and dig out the large taproot (which can be as large as a bowling ball). Followup treatments if plants resprouts from root. For older, larger specimens, a cut stump herbicide* may control resprouting from the base.

Tree of heaven – Hand pull seedlings and dig out sapling roots. Cut down larger trees and grind out the stump. A cut stump herbicide* treatment can prevent re-sprouting from the roots.

Spurge laurel – Wear gloves and long sleeves during removal because the plant sap and berries are toxic. Hand pull small plants when soil is moist to maximize root removal. Use a woody plant puller on larger plants to remove the root. This plant will re-grow from root remnants and suckers.

Yellow flag iris – Remove flowers or immature seed pods to limit seed dispersal by water. Continued pulling can exhaust the rhizome, but digging out plants will likely lead to followup treatments because removing rhizomes leaves fragments that re-sprout. For alternative control methods, see www.co.thurston.wa.us/tcw/weeds/fact-sheets/YellowFlagIris.pdf.

Garlic mustard – Remove garlic mustard when it’s flowering from April to June, and before seed matures in the summer (typically July). Removing plants with brown seed pods is likely to spread the mature seeds. Plants can be pulled, but be sure to remove the roots because they can re-sprout. The root is bent so pull slowly and gently in moist soils for best results.

* Inappropriate use of herbicides can be hazardous. Always read labels, and follow safety precautions, or hire a professional.

Check www.portlandonline.com/bes/invasives for updated information on invasive plant disposal methods. For help controlling and removing invasive plants in the City of Portland, call 503-823-2989.

Find out how to help remove invasive plants in Portland Parks Natural Areas at www.portlandonline.com/parks/volunteer. Contact the No Ivy League at nolvyleague@gmail.com or 503-823-3681.

These are just a few of the hundreds of invasive plants affecting Oregon. For more information on the weeds threatening our environment see information resources.