



Invasive Plants

What is an invasive plant?

- A plant that has been moved to an area in which it is not native, becomes established and then spreads through the new area. Unlike 'weeds,' they are able to invade undisturbed areas.

Why is it important to control invasive plants?

- Invasive plants are one of the greatest threats to native ecosystems such as prairies and oak savannas.
- Invasive plants often lack natural predators and competition in their new habitats. As a result, invasive plants can quickly overgrow an area and out-compete native species.
- As invasive plants alter the ecosystem and potentially eliminate native plants from habitats, wildlife species that are dependent upon native plants for survival will also be affected. In some cases, wildlife species could decline in number, thereby reducing opportunities for wildlife viewing or hunting. Invasive species can also be difficult for hunters or hikers to walk through.
- In the United States, an estimated \$137 billion per year is lost to ecological damage and control of invasive species (including plants, animals and pathogens). This includes losses to agriculture, forestry, and fisheries. These costs continue to increase each year.
- Some invasive plants harm humans, such as Wild parsnip, which causes burns and blisters when it comes into contact with skin and sunlight.
- Habitats lose their diversity of native plants and animals as invasive species rapidly multiply and take over. Ecosystems function best when they are balanced, with each species providing a service to the ecosystem. One plant species may increase the amount of nitrogen, which is necessary for plant growth, in the soil, while another species may help to break down dead plant materials, making nutrients available for other plants. Over time, each species grew to depend on the other species within the ecosystem for their survival. As biodiversity is lost, the ecosystem loses its balance as some of the necessary functions are no longer being performed, and survival of additional species could be jeopardized as a result. Additionally, biologically diverse habitats are better able to recover from major disturbances such as disease outbreaks or wildfires.

When is the best time to control invasive plants?

- "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." Noticing the presence of invasive species early, and starting control efforts shortly after the invasion begins, can greatly reduce the cost and effort of control measures while also increasing effectiveness. For example, controlling well-established invasive buckthorn, which can prevent the

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regeneration of native trees, can cost \$500 - \$2,000 per acre for a single treatment! In some cases, multiple treatments may be necessary to fully control buckthorn. Preventing the establishment would save costs of treatment and damages to timber resources. The longer you wait, the more time, effort, and money is needed to control a species.

- Different control actions can be implemented throughout the year depending on the species. For example, in winter, larger invasive shrubs, such as buckthorn, can be removed with chainsaws and their stumps treated with herbicides. In spring, garlic mustard can be pulled by hand and removed from the site in bags. In summer, sweet clover and wild parsnip can be mowed after the flowers start to bud, but prior to developing seeds.

How can I help prevent the spread of invasive plants?

- Become familiar with invasive plants in your area so you can recognize them on your property. Information is available at:
 - Invasive Plants Assoc of WI: <http://www.ipaw.org>
 - WI Dept of Natural Resources: <http://dnr.wi.gov/invasives>
- If invasive plants are found, survey the situation to develop a plan of attack. Efforts should be focused on areas with the highest chance of success. Begin control measures on the areas with the fewest invasive plants.
- Be sure to use the best control techniques for the particular species.
- “Slow the Spread by Sole and Tread.” The spread of invasive plant seeds and other reproductive parts can be reduced by cleaning boots, vehicles, equipment, and tire treads prior to moving from an infested area to an uninfested area.
- Relocate deer stands or trails that are located in heavily-invaded areas.
- Mow to prevent seed set of invasive plants.
- Prioritize the removal of fruit-bearing invasive trees and shrubs; the non-fruiting ones can wait until you have time and resources to get to them later.

Where can I find help for controlling invasive species on my property?

- If you have native habitat, conservation non-profit groups such as The Prairie Enthusiasts may be able to help, either with volunteer work parties or by applying for land stewardship funding on your behalf.
- Apply for a grant from the State or Federal government to hire a contractor to control invasive plants on your property.
- If you have an MFL contract, funding assistance may be available for invasive plant control; check with your regional WDNR Forester.
- A list of ‘restoration contractors’ who specialize in invasive plant removal can be found at: <http://dnr.wi.gov/invasives/nurseries.htm#consult>.
- Seek help from local hunting groups to enhance and protect wildlife habitat.
- Talk to neighbors with similar problems and pool your resources.

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