

Invasive Plant Q/As: the Short-List

By Greg Sykes (greg@grsykes.com)

Q: Which plants are on the regional non-native invasive list?

A: For all of you wishing to positively impact the environment through what you plant in the yard, here is a convenient short-list of extremely problematic plants in Fairfax County. All of them have escaped into county parks, and an asterisk follows the confirmed species found in parklands neighboring KPW. This list includes Invasive Management Area (IMA) targets and certain species requiring professional eradication techniques (e.g., bamboo, mature trees).

Common Name	Scientific Name
Asian Wisteria *	<i>Wisteria floribunda</i> and <i>W. sinensis</i>
Bamboo *	<i>Bambusa</i> sp., <i>Phyllostachys</i> sp., and <i>Pseudosasa</i> sp.
Bradford Pear *	<i>Pyrus calleryana</i>
Bush or Amur Honeysuckle *	<i>Lonicera maackii</i>
Butterfly Bush	<i>Buddleja</i> sp.
English Ivy *	<i>Hedera helix</i>
Garlic Mustard *	<i>Alliaria petiolata</i>
Japanese Barberry *	<i>Berberis thunbergii</i>
Japanese Holly *	<i>Ilex crenata</i>
Japanese Honeysuckle *	<i>Lonicera japonica</i>
Japanese Knotweed	<i>Polygonum cuspidatum</i>
Japanese Spiraea	<i>Spiraea japonica</i>
Japanese Stiltgrass *	<i>Microstegium vimineum</i>
Kudzu	<i>Pueraria montana</i>
Leatherleaf Mahonia *	<i>Mahonia japonica</i> (<i>M. bealei</i>)
Lesser Celandine *	<i>Ranunculus ficaria</i>
Mile-a-Minute *	<i>Polygonum perfoliatum</i>

Common Name	Scientific Name
Mimosa *	<i>Albizia julibrissin</i>
Multiflora Rose *	<i>Rosa multiflora</i>
Nandina, Heavenly Bamboo *	<i>Nandina domestica</i>
Norway Maple*	<i>Acer platanoides</i>
Olive (Autumn* and Russian*)	<i>Elaeagnus umbellata</i> and <i>E. angustifolia</i>
Oriental Bittersweet *	<i>Celastrus orbiculata</i>
Pachysandra *	<i>Pachysandra terminalis</i>
Periwinkle *	<i>Vinca minor</i> and <i>V. major</i>
Porcelain-berry *	<i>Ampelopsis brevipedunculata</i>
Chinese Privet * and Wax-Leaf Privet *	<i>Ligustrum</i> sp.
Purple Loosestrife*	<i>Lythrum salicaria</i>
Rose-of-Sharon *	<i>Hibiscus syriacus</i>
Tree-of-Heaven *	<i>Ailanthus altissima</i>
Wineberry *	<i>Rubus phoenicolasius</i>
Winged Burning Bush *	<i>Euonymus alatus</i>
Wintercreeper *	<i>Euonymus fortunei</i>
Yellow Archangel *	<i>Lamium galeobdolon</i>

Nurseries, garden centers, hardware stores, and even department stores still sell many of these plants; only a couple of these species are either banned or lack commercial value (and are weeds in their homelands). The gardening industry lobbies against banning these selections due to customer demand, yet they flood the markets and push these plants onto customers thereby feeding sales! However, you and other educated consumers may bypass these plants thus reducing their profitability. Since many plants share the same common name, this list's Latin name will help clarify exactly what to avoid. The next time you shop for plants, bring a copy of these names with you.

If you hire a professional company to redesign your yard, hand them this list and say you do not want any of these plants. If you are in the landscaping industry, consider removing these plants from your inventory and promote environmentally responsible horticulture. Have your business stand out as a trend-setting role model for both aesthetically and ecologically beautiful results!

This list and following references empower conscientious gardeners to make informed selections. To learn more or view pictures of problem plants, visit:

<https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural-heritage/invspdflist>

<https://www.invasiveplantatlas.org/>

<https://www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/invasives/>

...or pick up a copy of these books:

Burrell, C. Colston. 2006. *Native Alternatives to Invasive Plants*. Brooklyn Botanical Garden. pp. 239.

Fairfax County. 2008 (March). *Non-Native Invasive ID and Control*. A Fairfax County, VA publication.

Q: Wow, that list of plants to avoid is pretty long. Which types are good for ecologically sound landscaping?

A: That list seems like a lot only because we are so over saturated with those varieties that we forget about the worthy ones to plant. Remember that for each plant listed, wonderful options exist. Instead of privet or Japanese holly (which most people mistake for boxwood), try inkberry (*Ilex glabra*); rather than rose of Sharon, check out hibiscus (*Hibiscus coccineus*) or marsh mallow (*H. moscheutos*); and, in place of English ivy or Japanese honeysuckle, use creeping phlox (*Phlox stolonifera*) and wild ginger (*Asarum canadense*) for ground cover or trumpet honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*) to climb trellises.

Why settle for a simple list of good plants when there are entire books and websites filled with wonderful options? While plants native to Virginia and the Chesapeake Bay watershed are the most ecologically friendly choices, there are even several excellent non-native plant selections which can help make the home landscape your own. Forgoing the above "short-list" species will put you on track to an ecologically sensitive yard. Here are a few superb resources to aid with your selections:

Slattery, Britt E., Kathryn Reshetiloff, and Susan M. Zwicker. 2003. *Native Plants for Wildlife Habitat and Conservation Landscaping: Chesapeake Bay Watershed*. U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Chesapeake Bay Field Office, Annapolis, MD. pp. 82. Download a free copy at

<http://www.nps.gov/plants/pubs/chesapeake/>

http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural_heritage/nativeplants.shtml

<http://www.wildflower.org/plants/>

<http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/gsgp/gardening.htm>

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