

# Invasive Plants

Invasive plants are plants which grow quickly and aggressively, spreading and displacing other plants. Invasive plants are usually introduced by people either accidentally or on purpose, into a region far from their native habitat. Invasive plants are often referred to as "exotic," "alien," introduced" or "non-native" species. When introduced into an area where these limitations are absent, some species (even native) have the ability to become invasive. Identifying invasive plants and understanding the potential damage they can cause is essential to stopping their spread and protecting native vegetation. Invasive plants tend to appear on disturbed ground. Download DCNR's brochure [Invasive Plants in Pennsylvania](#). To learn more about invasive plants in Pennsylvania and how they can be controlled, visit [www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/plants/invasiveplants/index.htm](http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/plants/invasiveplants/index.htm). A listing of invasives provided by DCNR [www.dcnr.state.pa.us/cs/groups/public/documents/document/dcnr\\_20026634.pdf](http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/cs/groups/public/documents/document/dcnr_20026634.pdf)

## What Can You Do About Invasive Plants? (DCNR)

**Minimize landscape disturbance.** Invasive plants thrive on bare soil and disturbed ground where the native plant community has been displaced. The key to controlling invasives is to protect healthy native plant communities.

**Use fertilizers wisely.** Proper site preparation begins with a soil test before applying fertilizer. High nitrogen levels sometimes give an advantage to invasive species that are better adapted to using plentiful nutrients for explosive growth. For soil fertility, try using organic, slow-decomposing compost and mulches

**Have a land management plan for maintenance over time.** It makes sense when designing a property to plan for future maintenance. Lawns are maintained by weekly mowing, while gardens are often hand-weeded. Meadows in Pennsylvania may need to be mowed every year. Woodlands are probably the lowest-maintenance landscape, but they too will need to be monitored and invasive plants removed.

**Scout your property annually for invasives or other problems.** The best way to control invasives is prevention, and prevention can only happen through vigilance. Listed on this web site are resources to help property owners.

**Remove invasives before they are a problem.** Effective scouting or monitoring means that problems are found while they are still small and easily controllable. For instance, do not let invasive plants go to seed. Mechanical removal through digging or cutting is preferred. Large populations of invasives may need to be stopped chemically with spot applications of herbicide by trained individuals or by homeowners carefully following label instructions.

**Replace invasive plants with native or noninvasive species.** Invasives are good at exploiting bare soil and empty niches. When you remove an invasive plant, unless there is another plant substituted, the invasive will tend to come right back. What grows in the future depends largely on what is there now; so it is important to fill that niche with a desirable plant that will provide seed for the future.

**Remove invasives as they appear while their densities are low.** This gives the most immediate success because invasive plant control works best where there is a functioning native plant community still in place which can move right into the empty niche.