

INVASIVE PLANT FACTS FOR GARDENERS AND HOMEOWNERS



Despite its reputation as a grassland invader, pampas grass is still being sold. Even so-called sterile varieties have the potential to be invasive

Invasive Plants are a Threat to:

- **Public parklands**
- **Farms and ranchlands**
- **Creeks and rivers**
- **Bays and estuaries**
- **Fire safety**
- **Native plants**
- **Wildlife**
- **Woodlands
and wetlands**

What Every Gardener and Homeowner Needs to Know About Invasive Plants

Invasive plants are wreaking havoc in our public lands, natural and agricultural areas. Gardeners can play a critical role in stopping their spread.

About half of the invasive plant species in California have escaped from our yards and gardens. Some plants do not stay where we put them. A few species, such as pampas grass, ivy, periwinkle, and broom have escaped into natural areas where they displace native species. Their seeds are carried to neighboring lands and waters by wind, water, and wildlife. New populations become established that degrade the environment.

Next to habitat destruction from development, the greatest threat to our native species comes from invasive species.

Thousands of plant species have been brought to North America in the past three centuries. Most are well-behaved, rarely invading natural areas.

A few, however, are able to spread aggressively, and are able to outcompete our native plants, even deep in forests and wetlands. Various called weeds, introduced, or exotic, these non-native plants are highly invasive.

Understanding the Problem

Invasive plants pose a long-term threat to biodiversity, ecosystem stability, and the balance of nature on which all species depend.

Invasive plants spread into natural areas where they crowd out native plants and the wildlife that depend on them. These weeds disrupt ecosystem patterns and processes, such as hydrology, natural succession, soil chemistry, and fire frequency. Almost every ecosystem in California is threatened by this biological pollution.

Invasive plants damage trees and shrubs in our yards and parklands. They interfere with outdoor recreation by crowding out the diverse blend of plants and wildlife that people come to see and enjoy.

On farms and ranchlands, weeds reduce crop yields and forage. In our bays and estuaries, invasive plant damage habitat for fish and shellfish.

Along public roads and highways, invasive plants can restrict visibility, increase roadside maintenance costs, and increase fire hazard.

Eradication costs and the potential risks to the environment increase significantly when eradication efforts are delayed.

By reducing biological diversity, posing public health risks, and burdening agriculture, tourism, fisheries, and outdoor recreation industries, invasive plants are inflicting serious economic and ecological damage in California.

The Marin Sonoma Weed Management Area (MSWMA) was formed by county, state, federal, city agencies, non-profit organizations, private industry and individuals concerned about invasive plant species in Marin and Sonoma counties.

For additional information on invasives and their alternatives for landscaping please visit:

www.marinsonomaweed-management.org
(no hyphen)

or contact:

Marin County Ag
Commissioner's Office
415-499-6700

Sonoma County Ag
Commissioner's Office
707-565-2371

Marin County U.C.
Cooperative Extension
415-499-4204

Sonoma County U.C.
Cooperative Extension
707-565-2621

Invasive Plant Websites

www.cal-ipc.org

www.tncweeds.ucdavis.edu

Ten Easy Ways to Combat Invasive Plants

You can help **stop** the spread of **invasive plants** by following these **ten easy guidelines**:

1. Ask for only non-invasive species when you acquire plants. Request nurseries and garden centers sell only non-invasive plants.
2. Seek information on invasive plants. Sources include botanical gardens, horticulturists, conservationists, and government agencies. Also see links in sidebar.
3. Remove invasive plants from your land so their seeds and pollen don't spread to other places. If plants can't be removed, at least prevent them from going to seed.
4. Over-fertilizing encourages weeds.
5. Don't release aquarium plants into the wild.
6. Volunteer to assist ongoing efforts to diminish the threat of invasive plants. Contact the organizations listed here to find out what's going on in your area.
7. Help educate your community through personal contacts and in such settings as garden clubs and civic groups.
8. Invite speakers to speak to garden clubs, master gardeners, schools, and other community groups.
9. Support public policies and programs to control invasive plants.
10. **Thank nurseries that don't sell invasives and reward them with your patronage!**

Alternatives to Invasive Plants*

Invaders

Alternatives

Trees

Chinese tallow tree, silk tree, mayten, Russian olive, privet, acacia, myoporum, salt cedar, blue gum.

Strawberry tree, madrone, native oaks, box elder, big leaf maple, red bud, bay laurel, crape myrtle, bald cypress.

Shrubs - Ground Cover

Scarlet wisteria, brooms, cotoneaster, hawthorn, Pride of Madera, Himalayan blackberry, English or Algerian ivy, periwinkle (vinca), pennyroyal, iceplant (Hottentot fig).

Forsythia, winter jasmine, Jerusalem sage, dogwood, toyon, pineapple guava, bush germander, purple sage, pachysandra, Serbian bellflower, star jasmine, willow, golden currant, wild ginger, Fremontodendron.

Grasses

Pampas, and jubata grass, fountain grass, arundo (giant reed), Mexican feather grass.

Deer (muhly) grass, Cape thatching reed, nolina, native grasses, sedges, willows.

* This is a partial list of invaders found in some nurseries and non-invasive alternatives for your garden. Some invasive plant varieties above are labeled as sterile. However, we recommend choosing alternative plants to avoid the potential for some of their seeds being viable. Happy gardening!