



For More Information:

Westchester County  
Soil and Water Conservation District  
[www.westchestergov.com/planning](http://www.westchestergov.com/planning)

National Invasive Species Information Center  
[www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov](http://www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov)

Natural Resources Conservation Service  
Plant Database  
<http://plants.usda.gov>

New York Invasive Plant Council  
(518) 690-7871  
[www.ipcnys.org](http://www.ipcnys.org)

New York State  
Department of Environmental Conservation  
[www.dec.ny.gov](http://www.dec.ny.gov)

University of Connecticut  
Plant Database  
[www.hort.uconn.edu/Plants](http://www.hort.uconn.edu/Plants)

### Partners

 Westchester County Department of Parks,  
Recreation and Conservation  
[www.westchestergov.com/parks](http://www.westchestergov.com/parks)

 Cornell Cooperative Extension Service  
<http://www.cce.cornell.edu>

 Westchester County Native Plant Center  
<http://www.nativeplantcenter.org>

WESTCHESTER COUNTY  
SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT  
AND DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING

148 Martine Avenue, Room 432  
White Plains, NY 10601



Andrew J. Spano, Westchester County Executive  
County Board of Legislators

# A GROWING CONCERN:

## Westchester County's Most INVASIVE Plants



DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING  
Gerard E. Mulligan, AICP, Commissioner

## WHAT IS AN INVASIVE PLANT?

An invasive plant is one that has a negative impact on the habitat in which it becomes established. Many invasive species are not native to Westchester, originating from Asia, Europe, or other parts of the United States. They dominate areas where they become established. They are commonly found along roadsides, the edges of lawns and forests, in open areas, and in many other areas where native vegetation has been disturbed. Some invasive species, such as Burning Bush, Japanese Barberry, and English Ivy, are often sold as ornamental plants for use in landscaping.

Non-native invasive plants, whether accidentally introduced or purposefully used in gardening, aggressively push out native plants because there are no naturally occurring predators, insects and/or diseases to control their populations.

If invasive plants are growing around your home, removing them can help prevent their taking over your yard, or spreading further. It is important to recognize invasive plants and avoid planting them, because when they "escape" from gardens, they may alter the natural ecosystem or cause other harm.

## WHY ARE INVASIVE PLANTS A GROWING CONCERN?

**Unintended Consequences.** Disturbed areas, such as where soil has been tilled, drainage altered or trees removed, may inadvertently help invasive plants grow and spread. Many invasive plants thrive in these areas because their unique adaptations enable them to quickly colonize and then out-compete other plants.

**Rapid Spread.** Invasive plants spread quickly with the help of animal and human movements, wind and water, which efficiently disperse plant seeds and regenerative stems and roots. Invasive plants can take over areas before native plants become established.

**Harm to Wildlife.** Wildlife often relies on specific native plants and is negatively impacted when native species decline or disappear. Invasive plants also pose problems to farmers and park managers because they compete with crops and desirable native plants.

## HELPFUL REMOVAL HINTS

**Frequent mowing.** Some invasive plants cannot tolerate frequent mowing or cutting during the growing season, especially if it occurs over a period of two to five years.

**Pulling plants out by the roots.** Many plants, especially young ones, can easily be pulled out of the ground, roots and all. Others are easily dug out with a shovel or other tool.

**Cutting flowers before seeds develop.** Plants that spread by seed can be controlled by eliminating their seed production by clipping buds and flowers.

**Use native plant alternatives in your garden or around your home!** It is much harder for invasive plants to take over an area where native plants are already strongly established.

**The application of systemic herbicide to leaves and stems.** Herbicide can be applied to leaves and stems during the active growing season, or to the surface of a cut plant immediately after it has been cut. Be certain to follow manufacturers' directions or defer to the expertise of a licensed applicator, especially when using herbicides close to, or in, streams, ponds, etc.

Want to "Go Native?"

The Westchester County Department of Parks, Recreation and Conservation has published a native plant brochure that lists plant varieties native to Westchester. The brochure features the growing conditions of each species.



# Trees

## Norway Maple (*Acer platanoides*)

**Profile:** tall tree, deciduous, similar to the native Sugar Maple (when the stems of leaves are broken off branches of Norway Maple, milky sap leaks from stem; clear sap leaks from Sugar Maple); commonly sold in nurseries but is prolific seed producer and emits chemical that inhibits growth of other plants under and around them.



P. Wray, Iowa State University, Bugwood.org

# Shrubs

## Tartarian Honeysuckle (*Lonicera tatarica*)



C. Evans, River to River CWMA, Bugwood.org

**Profile:** tall shrub, deciduous; hollow stems and twigs; pink flowers and red berries; sold in nurseries but escapes to wild to dominate in both sunny and shaded conditions.

## Japanese Barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*)

**Profile:** medium height; dense branches; thorns; reddish brown branches; green or reddish purple leaves; red berries; sold in nurseries but escapes to woodlands and meadows to dominate due to ability to grown in sun or shade.



L.J. Mehrhoff, University of Connecticut, Bugwood.org

## Multiflora Rose (*Rosa multiflora*)



J.H. Miller, USDA Forest Service, Bugwood.org

**Profile:** medium height; deciduous shrub with arching and scrambling branches; sharp thorns; white fragrant flowers; small red to purplish berries; extremely aggressive in woodlands due to shade tolerance but also does well in sun; one of earliest woodland plants to develop leaves.

## Winged Euonymus (*Euanymus alatus*)

(a.k.a. Burning Bush)

**Profile:** moderate height, deciduous shrub; bright red leaves in fall; corky



J. H. Miller, USDA Forest Service, Bugwood.org

wings along stem; smooth, reddish fruit; widely sold in nurseries but escapes not only into the wild but also other landscape plantings; grows in sun and shade and tolerates variety of soil conditions.



J. H. Miller, USDA Forest Service, Bugwood.org

## Autumn Olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*)

**Profile:** tall, deciduous shrub; dark green leaves on top with silvery- to rusty-colored scales underneath; stems and buds also covered in silvery-white to rusty scales; light yellow flowers; small reddish pink berries; found at edge of habitats, roads, etc. ; prefers sun; thrives in variety of soils.



L.J. Mehrhoff, U. of Connecticut, Bugwood.org

# Vines

## Porcelain-Berry (*Ampelopsis brevipedunculata*)

**Profile:** woody, deciduous vine; twigs have course hairs;



J.H. Miller, USDA Forest Service, Bugwood.org

yellow to greenish white flowers; hard yellow, green, or lilac fruits ripen then turn bright blue, white or marbled; climbs and smothers existing plants. **Note:** leaves and young fruit similar to the grape vine (*Vitis sp.*), which also is invasive and smothers existing plants

## Oriental Bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*)

**Profile:** woody, deciduous vine, but sometimes a low, trailing shrub; stems brown to grey; small, greenish flowers;



J.R. Allison, Georgia Dept. of Natural Resources, Bugwood.org

yellow-orange and red fruit; strong climber in sun; wraps around shrubs and trees, girdling them; used for wreaths, which helps spread seeds.



C. Evans, River to River CWMA, Bugwood.com

# Herbs

## Purple Loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*)



J.D. Byrd, Mississippi State University, Bugwood.org

**Profile:** tall wetland perennial; lance-shaped leaves; hairy stems; easily identified mid to late summer by numerous magenta flowers in clusters; colonizes disturbed sites but also invades wetlands, where it may dominate.

## Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*)

**Profile:** perennial (to ten feet in height); similar to bamboo with hollow stems; white or greenish flowers and heart-shaped leaves; dense growth where dominant; found along streams but due to shallow roots, it poorly stabilizes banks; can grow to full-size plant from small cuttings, so care needed to prevent stem dispersal when mowing.



C. Evans, River to River CWMA, Bugwood.org



R. Old, XID Services, Inc., Bugwood.org

## Mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*)

(a.k.a. Common Wormwood)

**Profile:** tall, stiff-stemmed perennial; leaves have many "fingers;" underside of leaves whitish and covered in woolly hairs; white flowers in mid to late summer; grows in moist to dry soils but does best on disturbed sites and in sun.



## Garlic Mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*)



Elizabeth Sellers/NBILGov

**Profile:** biennial (two-year life cycle) with garlic odor when leaves crushed; triangular leaves; clusters of small white flowers in early spring developing into long, slender seed pods during the second year of growth; especially prevalent in moist and shaded areas.



C. Evans, River to River CWMA, Bugwood.com

# Grasses

## Common Reed (*Phragmites sp.*)



L.J. Mehrhoff, U. of Connecticut, Bugwood.org

**Profile:** very tall grass found in and around moist sites of both fresh and salt waters, often colonizing disturbed sites; silky flower heads at the top of a long stalk; dead stalks from previous growing season persist through winter, next spring; largely spread by below-ground roots, forming dense colonies; native but the more aggressive European variety is now dominating Northeast.

## Japanese Stilt Grass (*Microstegium vimineum*)

**Profile:** annual grass typically forms dense, low mats, but stems may grow up to four feet tall; leaves lance-shaped with white veins and smooth or slightly hairy; flowering in late summer and seed heads form in the fall; especially well-adapted to low-light conditions (not dense shade).



D. J. Moorhead, University of Georgia, Bugwood.org

## ADDITIONAL INVASIVE PLANTS TO WATCH FOR AND AVOID IN WESTCHESTER



Trees

Black Locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia*)  
Tree of Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*)



Shrubs

Japanese Wineberry (*Rubus phoenicolasius*)  
Japanese Viburnum (*Viburnum japonicum*)



Vines

Mile-a-Minute (*Persicaria perfoliata*)  
Japanese Honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica*)  
Black Swallow-wart (*Cynanchum louiseae*)  
Pale Swallow-wart (*Cynanchum rossicum*)



Herbaceous

Giant Hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*)



Aquatics

Eurasian Milfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*)  
Water Chestnut (*Trapa natans*)