



10 MOST TROUBLESOME PLANTS

They look harmless, even beautiful. *These plants can take over a landscape, ruin a habitat, or turn a yard into an ecological mess.*

We are not defenseless. For treatments, the United States Department of Agriculture is an excellent source: invasivespeciesinfo.gov

JAN SAMANEK, PHYTOSANITARY ADMIN., Bugwood.org



JAPANESE KNOTWEED—This noxious invasive starts as small red shoots but by mid-summer could be more than 15 feet high, supported on thick bamboo-like stalks. Leaves are heart-shape, indented at the stem. It is well-known for structural damage and will invade the tiniest crack, destroying siding and even foundations. Left unchecked it will become an infestation.



PAUL WRAY, IOWA STATE U., Bugwood.org

COMMON BUCKTHORN—A small deciduous shrub or tree as tall as 20 feet often found in thickets and hedgerows, along roads, and on ravine slopes in a wide variety of soils. Leaves are ovoid edged with small serrations; branches are tipped with a thorn; blackish berries ripen around summer's end. Grows quickly from seeds or stump; viable seeds can be dormant for five years.

RICHARD GARDNER, Bugwood.org



TREE OF HEAVEN—This native of Asia is a favorite sidewalk tree. It thrives almost anywhere and needs little water. Growth of 15 feet a year is not uncommon. It spreads rapidly through suckers, which can emerge 50 feet away. Any part of the tree can cause skin irritation. It kills other vegetation by emitting chemicals, yet hosts the spotted lanternfly. The leaves can smell like a wet gym sock.



LESUE J. MEHRHOFF, U. CONN, Bugwood.com

MULTIFLORA ROSE—This invasive forms clumps of monoculture in fields and forests, overwhelming native habitat. The drooping branches of this beautiful but noxious bush are woody and full of spikes. They reroot and can grow one to two feet a week in summer, quickly forming dense thickets. Eradication of a mature bush requires removing the entire root structure using heavy labor or machines.

INVASIVES SHOULD BE CONSIDERED A THREAT TO NATURAL HABITATS—AND AN ESCAPE RISK.

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RICHARD GARDNER, Bugwood, com



GARLIC MUSTARD—This fast-growing stemmed plant is a severe threat to biodiversity. It sprouts earlier than most native seeds, blocking light to the forest floor, and its roots alter soil chemistry, inhibiting other root growth. It has only a two-year life cycle but one plant produces 7,000 seeds. They spread easily in the wind, so garlic mustard propagates rapidly far and wide.



PINTEREST.COM

JAPANESE HONEYSUCKLE—This flowering, sweet-smelling, woody perennial, mostly semi-evergreen in the Northeastern US, grows vigorously just about everywhere. While the plant provides shelter and berries for wildlife, it can quickly smother undergrowth, strangle juvenile trees, and climb into the overstory, where its dense mass breaks branches, blocks light and rainfall.



PURPLE LOOSESTRIFE—This tall, spiky plant with reddish-purple summer flowers grows thickly in shallow water and on wet banks, crowding out native plants and converting the habitat to a near monoculture suitable for few forms of wildlife. Plants have multiple square or hexagonal woody stems. Four species of beetles have provided good control since 1992.



LESIE J. MEHRHOFF, U. CONN, Bugwood.com

JAPANESE BARBERRY—This dense, 4-foot bush is notable for spines with tips sharper than a hypodermic needle. It produces small, thick, paddle-shaped leaves in spring, which turn rust-red in fall. Tart, red autumn berries are beloved by birds, who spread the species. Berries survive winter. A bush expands via drooping branches; it forms dense thickets impervious to anything smaller than a bulldozer.

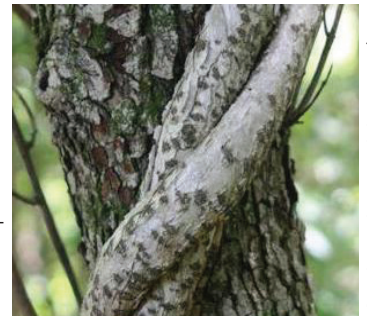
REBEKAH P. WALLACE, U. GEORGIA, Bugwood.com



JAPANESE STILTGRASS—This voracious invader has weak stalks and a spindly root system but can cover a forest floor in a season. Its small, narrow, widely spaced leaves are pointed at both ends. It prefers damp soil and some shade, can grow 3 feet high but the flimsy stalk won't support much more. It flowers in late summer, producing small, lower branches covered in exposed seeds.



Vermont Dept. of Forests and Parks



CHRIS EVANS, U. ILLINOIS, Bugwood.com

ASIATIC BITTERSWEET—You don't want this woody twining vine nearby. It invades, digs deep, and uproots trees and buildings. It strangles other plants with the relentless strength of an Anaconda. Propagating through seed, stem, and traveling root, it can regenerate from even a tiny fragment and climb up to 60 feet high in trees. If the Alien series of films added a scary plant, this would be the one.