

Wrong Plant Wrong Place

Invasive Plant ID, Removal and
Replacement

Successful Gardener June 4, 2026

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Photos are mine unless otherwise noted

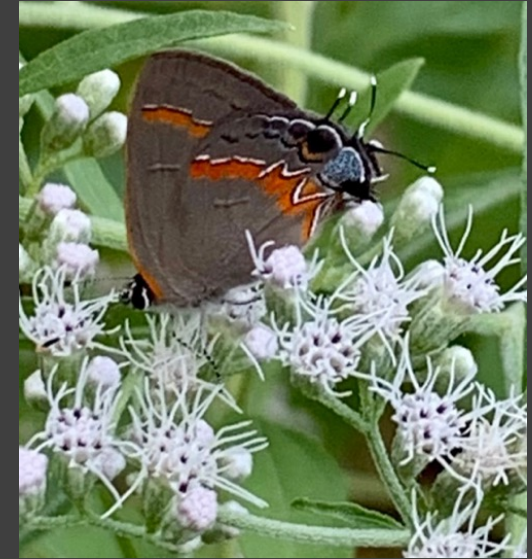


What's the Purpose of Plants?



The Purpose of Plants

- Plants are the foundation of the food web
- Provide food and oxygen
- Sequester carbon from the atmosphere
- Stabilize soil
- Purify water



Types of Plants?



Native vs Exotic (Non-Native)

- A plant is native if it has evolved and is adapted to local environmental conditions and is part of a natural community.
- A plant is non-native if it has been introduced into a new location by human activity, either intentionally or by accident. It may or may not be invasive in a particular location.

[Source: Cornell Botanic Gardens](#)

But/and natives can be aggressive and non-natives can be invasive.



What is an Invasive Plant?



What is an Invasive Plant?

An invasive plant is one that is capable of moving aggressively into a habitat and monopolizing resources such as light, nutrients, water, and space to the detriment of other species.

[Source: Cornell Botanic Gardens](#)

- "Invasive species" means an alien species whose introduction does or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health.

[Source: USDA Executive Order 13112](#)



**Wisteria and Multiflora Rose
competing for space**

What is an Invasive Plant?

- Invasive plants offer little to no eco-services outside of their native region and push out plants that do provide eco-services
- Creates a Food Desert
- Plants invasive here have natural consumers in their native location
- *Ligustrum sinensis*, Chinese Privet, for example has lots of insect predators...in China.



Who are these Bad Guys?

- [North Carolina Invasive Plant Council website](#)
- [NC-IPC Shun List anti-shopping list](#)
- [South Carolina Exotic Pest Plant Council website](#)
- [NCNPS Invasive Plant List](#)
- [Invasive Plant List NC Plant Toolbox](#)



North Carolina Invasive Plant Council

Autumn Olive

Elaeagnus umbellata



Bittersweet

Celastrus orbiculatus



Bradford Pear

Pyrus calleryana



Chinese Privet

Ligustrum sinense



Chinese Wisteria

Wisteria sinensis



Clematis

Clematis terniflora



English Ivy

Hedera helix var. *helix*



Japanese Honeysuckle

Lonicera japonica



Invasive Plant Threat Levels, NC-IPC

The NC Invasive Plants List is maintained by the North Carolina Invasive Plants Council (NC-IPC) and compiled with several agencies. Plants are ranked by level of threat.

1. **Extreme Threat:** Exotic plant species that display the highest degree of invasive characteristics and spread readily into NC native plant communities, displacing native vegetation.
2. **Significant Threat:** Exotic plant species that display a high degree of invasive characteristics, but do not currently appear to present as great a threat to native communities in NC as the species listed in Rank 1.
3. **Considerable Threat:** Exotic plant species that display invasive characteristics and are occasionally observed encroaching upon native plant communities in NC.
4. **Watch List A - Avoid:** Exotic plants that naturalize and may become a problem in the future; includes species that are or could become widespread in North Carolina.
5. **Watch List B - Beware:** Exotic plant species that cause problems in adjacent states but have not yet been reported to cause problems in NC.

[NC-IPC Plant List Ranked by Threat Level](#)



Still for Sale in NC

all are Level 1 or 2

- *Hedera helix*, English Ivy 1
- *Ligustrum* spp., Privet 1
- *Elaeagnus* spp., Autumn 1, Thorny 2, Russian Olive 2
- *Wisteria sinensis* and *Wisteria floribunda*, Chinese and Japanese Wisteria 1
- *Nandina domestica*, Nandina 2
- *Buddleia davidii*, Butterfly Bush 2
- *Vinca major* and *Vinca minor*, Periwinkle 2
- *Miscanthus sinensis*, Chinese Silvergrass 2
- *Albizzia julibrissin*, Mimosa 1
- *Pyrus calleryana*, Callery/Bradford Pear 1
- *Berberis* spp., Mahonia 2

AND MORE!!! More info at NCNPS
[Invasive Plant Flyer and Replacements](#)



Other Common Invasives

- *Microstegium vimineum*, Stilt grass 1
- *Youngia japonica*, Oriental False Hawksbeard 1
- *Lonicera japonica*, Japanese Honeysuckle 1
- *Rosa multiflora*, Multiflora Rose 1
- *Ailanthus altissima*, Tree of Heaven 1
- *Paulownia tomentosa*, Princess Tree 1
- *Melia azedarach*, Chinaberry 3
- *Liriope muscari*, Monkey Grass 3



Youngia japonica



Ailanthus altissima



Microstegium vimineum

So what can you do?



Control Methods

- DO NOT PURCHASE! [NC-IPC Shun List](#)
- Keep it from spreading
- REMOVE and TRASH Berries, seeds, flowers



Japanese Honeysuckle berries
Bizmith97 [CC BY-NC 4.0](#)



Privet berries



Nandina Berries
Jim Robbins [CC BY-NC-ND 4.0](#)

THE NC-IPC SHUN LIST
Do Your Customers and Neighbors a Favor! **DON'T SELL OR PLANT THESE!**

Invasive in the: Mountains Piedmont Coastal Plain

Invasives: Meadows Forests Waterways/ Riparian areas Dunes Ponds/ Wetlands

TREES		Common Name	
<i>Albizia julibrissin</i>		Mimosa	
<i>Pyrus calleryana</i>		Bradford Pear	
<i>Triadica sebifera</i>		Chinese Tallow Tree	

HABITAT BUILDERS

Control Methods - Kill It

- Pull
- Smother with Cardboard and Mulch
- Cut...and cut and cut
- Cut and Paint with herbicide
- Hack and Squirt (herbicide)
- Spray with herbicide

[Methods Detailed](#)



Big Picture Methods, NC Botanical Gardens

Habit	Duration	Spring	Summer	Fall	Winter
Tree	Deciduous	P seedlings	CP, GD, HS, P	CP, GD, HS, P	P
	Evergreen	P seedlings	CP, GD, HS, P	CP, GD, HS, P	CP, GD, HS, P
Shrub	Deciduous	P	CP, P, S	CP, P, S	P
	Evergreen	P	CP, P, S	CP, P, S	CP, P, S
Herb	Annual	C, P, S	C, P, S	C, P, S	N/A
	Perennial	C, P	C, P, S	C, P, S	CM, P
Vine	Deciduous	C, CP, P	C, CP, P, S	C, CP, P, S	P
	Evergreen	C, CP, P	C, CP, P, S	C, CP, P, S	C, CM, P, S

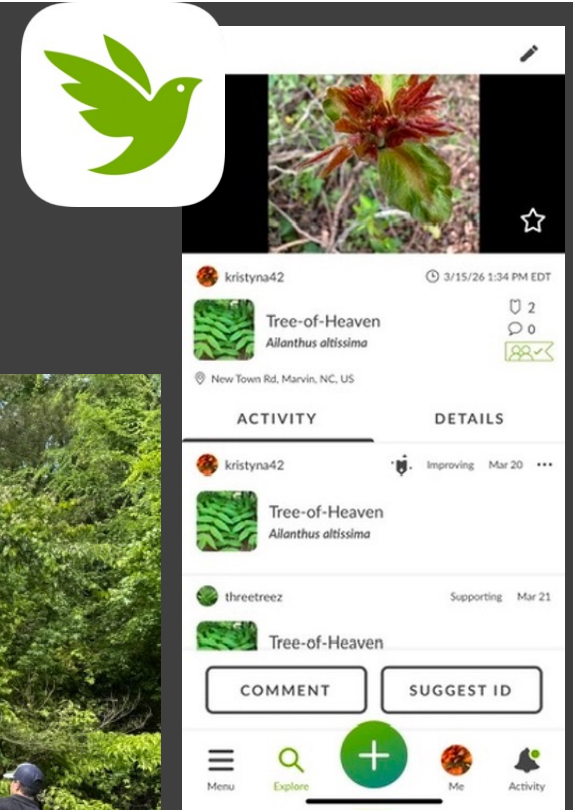
C = Cut, CM = Cardboard & mulch, CP = Cut & paint, GD = Girdle
 HS = Hack & squirt, P = Pull, S = Spray

[Invasive Control Options Table](#)



But First, Please Identify

- Identification Options
 - iNaturalist, other plant apps
 - [NC-IPC Database](#)
 - [SC-EPPC Publication](#)
 - [NCNPS Identification Listing](#)
- Join an invasive plant removal workshop: [HabitatBuilders.org](#), [Union County Wildlife Chapter](#), [NCWF.org](#)



But First, Please Identify

- Some plants are easier to ID in Winter:
 - *Ligustrum* (Privet)
 - *Elaeagnus* (Olive)
 - *Lonicera japonica* (Exotic Honeysuckle)
 - *Youngia japonica* (Hawksbeard)
 - *Hedera helix* (English Ivy)
- Some are not:
 - *Microstegium vimineum* (Stilt grass)
 - *Pyrus calleryana* (Bradford/Callery Pear)
 - *Ailanthus altissima* (Tree of Heaven)
 - *Paulownia tomentosa* (Princess Tree)
 - *Melia azedarach* (Chinaberry)
 - *Albizzia julibrissin* (Mimosa)
 - *Wisteria sinensis*, *W. floribunda* (exotic Wisteria)



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January 7, 2026

Let's Talk About Removal



Evergreen Vine Removal: English Ivy

Hedera helix

- Don't buy it, don't plant it
- Remove it from trees, walls, vertical things
 - Cut the vine 3-5' up the tree
 - Pull the vine off the tree below the cut
 - Leave the rest of the vine in the tree, it will die off
- Remove from the ground
 - Pull and cut
 - Cut and paint
 - Smother with cardboard and deep (heavy) mulch
- Remove all cut material, potential for rooting
- Timing: can remove year around



Deciduous Vine Removal: Exotic Wisteria

- Don't buy it, don't plant it
- Remove it from trees, walls, vertical things
 - Cut the vine 3-5' up the tree
 - Pull the vine off the tree below the cut
 - Leave the rest of the vine in the tree, it will die off
 - Pull the vine up as far as you can then cut or cut and paint
- Pull out runners and cut or cut and paint
- Cut or Cut and Paint larger plants
- Remove excess material
- Timing
 - Fall is best for herbicide treatment
 - Spring/Summer may have to reapply herbicide in Fall
 - Winter deciduous plants are dormant, cut but don't waste herbicide, do that later



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Shrub Removal: Privet, Olive, Nandina, Multiflora Rose

- Don't buy it, don't plant it
- Pull out small plants
- Remove berries to trash
- Cut or Cut and Paint larger ones
- Excess material shouldn't root
- Timing
 - Fall is best for herbicide treatment
 - Spring/Summer may have to reapply herbicide in Fall
 - Winter deciduous plants are dormant, cut back high but don't waste herbicide, do that later



Ligustrum



Nandina

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Elaeagnus

Tree Removal: Mimosa, Tree of Heaven, Callery/Bradford Pear

- Don't buy them, don't plant them
- Pull out small plants
- Remove berries/seeds to trash
- Cut, Cut and Paint or Hack and Squirt larger ones
- Excess material shouldn't root
- Timing
 - Fall is best for herbicide treatment
 - Spring/Summer may have to reapply herbicide in Fall
 - Winter deciduous plants are dormant, cut back high but don't waste herbicide, do that later



Ailanthus altissima



Albizzia julibrissin



Pyrus Calleryana Jim Robbins [CC BY-NC-ND 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/)

Annual Grass Removal: Stilt Grass

- Dense mono-culture?
 - Weed-eat/mow it just before it blooms (difficult to time)
 - Weed-eat/mow low and often
 - Spray with low concentration herbicide 0.25%-0.5% glyphosate
 - Cardboard and mulch?
- Interspersed with other plants?
 - “surgical weeding” pull it lightly and leave it
- In bloom or seeding? Remove to trash
- Consider *Muhlenbergia schreberi*, Nimblewill



General Rules for What to do When

- Removal now is always better than later.
- Spring/Summer: smother, pull, cut, cut and paint but herbicide is less effective on perennials. Early spring is a great time to mark/remove Bradford Pear trees.
- Fall is the best time to use methods involving herbicide.
- Winter is a good time to remove berries, seeds, and plants and pull Japanese Honeysuckle. Herbicide is less useful on deciduous plants but works ok on evergreens.



Replacement Options



For Privacy (or a Nice Shrub) Replace Privet and Olive with:

- Evergreen options
 - *Myrica cerifera* (Wax Myrtle)
 - *Ilex vomitoria* (Yaupon Holly)
 - *Ilex glauca* (Inkberry)
 - *Ilex opaca* (American Holly)
 - *Illicium parviflorum* (Anise Tree)
 - *Illicium floridanum* (Florida Anise)
 - *Magnolia grandiflora* (Southern Magnolia)
 - *Magnolia virginiana* (Sweetbay Magnolia)
 - *Juniperus virginiana* (Eastern Red Cedar)
- Mix with deciduous plants
 - *Ilex verticillata* (Winterberry),
 - *Ilex decidua* (possumhaw Holly)
 - Native *Viburnum*
 - *Physocarpus opulifolius* (Ninebark)
 - *Rhododendron* spp. (Native Azaleas)
 - *Calycanthus floridus* (Carolina allspice)
 - *Callicarpa americana* (Beautyberry)
- Or try native vines on a trellis
 - *Lonicera sempervirens* (Coral Honeysuckle)
 - *Gelsemium sempervirens* (Carolina Jessamine)





Gelsemium sempervirens Jim Robbins [CC BY-NC-ND 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/)



For Berries (or a Nice Shrub) Replace Nandina or Mahonia with:

- *Ilex glauca* (Inkberry)
- *Ilex opaca* (American Holly)
- *Ilex verticillata* (Winterberry)
- *Ilex decidua* (Possumhaw Holly)
- *Aronia arbutifolia* (Red Chokeberry)
- *Lindera benzoin* (Spicebush)
- *Native Vaccinium* (Blueberry)

Ilex verticillata Cathy Dewitt [CC BY 4.0](#)



Trees:

Replace Bradford Pear and Mimosa with:

Chionanthus virginicus

- *Chionanthus virginicus* (Fringe Tree)
- *Amelanchier* spp. (Serviceberry)
- *Chionanthus virginicus* (Eastern Redbud)
- *Cornus florida* (American Dogwood)
- *Oxydendrum arboretum* (Sourwood)
- *Prunus americana* (American Plum)
- *Prunus serotina* (Wild Black Cherry)
- Native *Magnolia* spp.
- Native *Ilex* spp. (Holly)



Grasses:

Replace Miscanthus, Liriope and others with:

- *Panicum virgatum* (Panic Grass)
- *Sorghastrum nutans* (Indian Grass)
- *Schizachyrium scoparium* (Little Bluestem)
- *Muhlenbergia capillaris* (Muhly Grass)
- *Juncus effusus* (Common Rush)
- *Sporobolus heterolepis* (Prairie Dropseed)
- *Eragrostis spectabilis* (Purple Lovegrass)
- *Native Carex spp.*

Panicum virgatum



Vines:

Replace Wisteria and Ivy with:

- *Lonicera sempervirens* (Coral Honeysuckle)
- *Gelsemium sempervirens* (Carolina Jessamine)
- *Wisteria frutescens* (American Wisteria)
- *Ampelaster caroliniana* (Climbing Aster)
- *Bignonia capreolata* (Cross Vine)
- *Parthenocissus quinquefolia* (Virginia Creeper)
- Check out [Plant This Instead](#). Created for Coastal NC but many of the substitutions work in the Piedmont



Lonicera sempervirens



Bignonia capreolata

Resources

- DO NOT PURCHASE! [NC-IPC Shun List](#)
- [Invasive Plant List from NC-IPC](#)
- [Invasive Plant List from SC-IPC](#)
- [NCNPS Invasive Plant List](#)
- [NC Botanic Gardens Controlling Invasive Plants](#)
- [Do NOT Plant List Pocket Guide Western NC](#) works fine for Piedmont too
- [North American Invasive Species Management Association](#) NAISMA
- [Herbicide Applicator](#) from NAISMA
- [Plant This Instead](#) for Coastal NC but much works for Piedmont
- [NC Plant ToolBox](#)





QUESTION TIME

Contact me at
info@habitatbuilders.org

More info at
www.habitatbuilders.org

