INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT

Grades 4 & 5 Curriculum

Invasive Plants Picture Card Set

Donna R. Ellis, University of Connecticut

Autumn Olive

Autumn olive was introduced purposefully in the mid 1800's from Asia to improve wildlife habitat and to replant disturbed habitats. Since then it has expanded its range to encompass all eastern states from Maine to Virginia as well as the western states of Wisconsin, Illinois, and Missouri. The plant was dispersed naturally by animals who ate the fruit and further spread by man when it began to be used by nurseries for landscapes and gardens. The plant grows well in any open well-drained area, resprouts easily even when burned, and is drought tolerant. Native plants are suppressed in areas where autumn olive flourishes because it creates abundant shade and can reach heights of 20 feet.

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Steve Dewey, Utah State University, www.invasive.org

Common Reed

Found on every continent except Antarctica and every state of the United States, common reed grows best in wet marshy areas and the areas between wetlands and upland. In the latter, it forms large thick walls of vegetation that compete with native species for sunlight, water, and space. In wetland areas, common reed forms massive stands of plants in a monoculture that spread for acres and encroach upon native, and sometimes rare native, wetland species.

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Linda Haugen, USDA Forest Service, www.invasive.org

Garlic Mustard

A native of Europe, this plant was introduced to our country in the 1800's as a seasoning and medicine. Today it inhabits areas from New England to South Carolina and has invaded the Central and Western states as well. Although it prefers moist shaded areas, garlic mustard can do well along roadsides, at forest edges, and even in vacant lots and back yards. Not only does this invasive threaten native plant neighbors by competing for sunlight and space, it also threatens the growth of hardwood trees because it prevents a fungus that hardwoods need to grow. In addition, garlic mustard tends to outgrow native host plants for butterflies.

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Giant Hogweed

Introduced as a curiosity garden plant in the early twentieth century, this noxious weed now inhabits 15 states in the U.S., including many northeastern and northwestern states and all states in New England. Giant hogweed grows best in semi-shaded moist rich soils. Because its sap produces blisters, severe burns, and sun sensitivity, giant hogweed is on the federal list of noxious weeds and many state invasive plant lists.

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Chris Evans, The University of Georgia, www.invasive.org

Japanese Honeysuckle

During the Civil War years, Japanese honeysuckle was introduced in the U.S. from Asia as an ornamental garden plant. Birds spread it from gardens to the natural environment of all but the northern plains and northwest coastal states. Because it spreads rapidly and can survive in a variety of environments, Japanese honeysuckle threatens native plants wherever it becomes established. The sheer weight of the woody vines can topple trees. The density of the semi-evergreen leaves, which continue to produce food and allow growth for a longer growing season, blankets the understory vegetation and prevents seedlings of trees from growing. This invasive is a major problem in the eastern, southern, and southwestern states in the U.S.

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Leslie J. Mehrhoff, University of Connecticut, www.invasive.org

Japanese Knotweed

A very adaptive plant, Japanese knotweed tolerates full sun or moderate shade, land that is wet or dry, and temperatures that are sultry or cool. It can be readily found in every New England state and most other states in the U.S. This Far East native was first introduced as an ornamental in the late 1800's. By the time its tendency to outcompete native plants and take over an area in which it was planted was recognized, it was too late! Although frost will appear to "kill off" Japanese knotweed plants, the persistent roots of this perennial invasive will send up new shoots in the spring, when plant growth resumes with a vengeance.

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Mile-a-minute Vine

Its very name sums up the problem. Mile-a-minute vine is native to eastern Asia and was accidentally introduced in the late 1800's in the northwestern U.S., but ultimately became established in the mid-Atlantic region (DE, MD, NJ, NY, OH, PA, and WV) and, more recently, Connecticut and Rhode Island. The aggresive vines invade open areas, abandoned agricultural fields, edges of streams, wet meadows, early forests, and roadsides. Give it an inch and it will take a mile, choking out native plant and shrub species and damaging area trees by the sheer weight of its vines! Mile-a-minute vines have sharp barbs, and plant leaves are triangular in shape. Small clusters of fruit ripen to a bright blue color that attract birds and other animals, further adding to its spread.

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Multiflora Rose

The planting of multiflora rose was encouraged by the U.S. government since the 1880's as a deterrent to erosion, a food source for wildlife, and a root stock for cultivated roses. Today, this invasive thorny shrub grows throughout the country because it was able to adapt to a variety of environments. It is a native of Japan, and lacking natural enemies quickly establishes itself to form dense thickets and outgrow native species. This invasive takes over pastures and lowers crop yields in cultivated fields. Multiflora rose spreads rapidly because in addition to seed dispersal by animals, the plants send up new shoots whenever a stem comes in contact with the ground.

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Leslie J. Mehrhoff, University of Connecticut,
www.invasive.org

Oriental Bittersweet

Introduced from China to the South as an ornamental planting during the Civil War, Oriental bittersweet vines spread north and west over the next half century. The woody invasive vines can be found in woodlands and salt marshes, roadways and rail yards, suburban hedges, and along fences. In short, it grows almost anywhere, and overgrows anything in its path! The fast growing vine girdles trees, choking off their food and water supply. The heavy weight of the vines breaks branches of the sturdiest trees while its dense growth robs sunlight from smaller plants. The ornamental appeal of Oriental bittersweet fruit is the primary reason that these invaders are spreading so rapidly. Unsuspecting homeowners decorate their homes in the fall with bittersweet vines laden with bright yellow and red fruit. Disposal of these wreaths and floral arrangements in compost piles helps disperse the invasive seeds and spread the vines to new areas.

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Purple Loosestrife

This non-native flowering plant was first brought to U.S. shores in the early 1800's by ships from Europe. Its spread continued by gardeners who saw the purple blooms as a lovely addition to their color palette. Today, purple loosestrife has invaded every state except Hawaii and has overgrown hundreds of thousands of wetland acres. It clogs our waterways, overgrows native wetland plants, discourages the wildlife that nests and seeks protection in native vegetation, and threatens food chains in the process. This plant is truly an example of beauty disguising danger!

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