

Most Wanted: Top Invasive Plants to Remove from Your Yard



Japanese honeysuckle



Davidson Lands
Conservancy

Visit davidsonlands.org for information or to donate.

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Why remove invasive plants from your residence?

- Lack natural predators and diseases and thus out-compete native plants that support local wildlife
- Decrease overall plant diversity
- Grow excessively and shade out other plants and/or topple trees with extra weight
- Spread easily through roots and seeds to natural areas
- Are significant factor in 42% of U.S. threatened or endangered species

How to remove invasive plants from your yard?

- **Mechanical removal** – use a shovel and dig out bushes/trees. For vines, pull to remove all roots (easiest when soil is wet) or use weed eater/mower repeatedly. Be sure to bag and remove seeds to prevent spread. Requires persistence. Any stem, seed or root left behind, can potentially become another plant.
- **Chemical removal** – We recommend herbicide-free methods for most plants. Some, such as Tree of Heaven, are best managed with herbicides. For herbicide use, please refer to *A Management Guide for Invasive Plants in Southern Forests*, found on-line as a free pdf.

Where can I find more information?

- [NC Native Plant Society](#)
- [NC Forest Service](#)
- [NCSU – Invasive, Exotic Plants of the Southeast](#)

Common Invasive Plants

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Tree of Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*)

Aggressive invasive found along roadsides and disturbed sites. Reproduces by prolific root sprouting and seeds. An individual plant can produce several hundred thousand seeds per year. Easily confused with other trees. To identify, note the leaflets have smooth edges with a notched lobe at the base. When crushed the leaves smell like burnt peanut butter. Roots secrete a toxin that inhibit growth of other plants. It is important to remove this tree, as it attracts the Spotted Lanternfly, a threat to many of our native trees.



Note circled notch at base of leaflet and smooth leaf edges

Removal: Young seedlings can be pulled from moist soil. Larger trees can be removed July – October. Cut close to ground and apply a Triclopyr products using the hack-and-squirt method (See NC Forest Service website for description). Cutting alone or earlier, causes active resprouting from roots. Follow up removal often required.

Mimosa (*Albizia julibrissin*)

Sometimes planted as an ornamental. Quickly spreads via production of many long, pea-like seed pods with seeds that remain viable up to 50 years. Mimosa limbs are weak and easily broken. Each tree lives only about 30 years. Strong competitor to native trees in open areas or forest edges.



Mimosa leaves close at night

Removal: Cut down and continue to remove sprouts as they appear. Bag seed pods to prevent spread.

Sweet Autumn Clematis (*Clematis terniflora*)

Vine planted for abundant, fragrant white flowers. Spreads quickly to neighbors' yards and invades forest edges and stream banks. Will form dense growth, blocking sun to plants underneath. Toxic to dogs, cats, and horses.



Still actively sold by nurseries

Removal: Dig up main taproot. Bag plant to prevent spread of seeds.

Autumn Olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*) & **Thorny Olive** (*Elaeagnus pungens*)

Deciduous, woody shrub that can grow 20 feet tall and forms thickets in understory of woody areas. Leaf undersides are a shiny silver. Flowers are white and fragrant. Autumn olive blooms in the spring and thorny olive in the fall. Both threaten natural ecosystems by creating dense shade and interfering with natural plant succession and nutrient cycling.



Note silver sheen on upturned leaf

Removal: Cut off top at ground and remove roots. May require herbicide treatment of stump with Triclopyr products to prevent re-sprouting and for larger infestations.

English Ivy (*Hedera helix*)

Woody vine that creates a thick mat on the ground. Mature vines climb trees, and produce berries which are then spread by birds to new habitats. Climbing ivy can shade out tree leaves. It makes trees more susceptible to pests and extra weight can cause limb breakage.



Flowers and produces berries after climbing trees.

Removal: For tree vines, cut at base of tree. Leave vine on tree until it dies or you will damage bark. Pull up vines on ground being sure to get roots. Bag and dispose of all parts. Requires persistence.

Chinese Privet (*Ligustrum sinense*) & Japanese Privet (*L. japonicum*)

Woody shrubs introduced as ornamental hedge plants. Feature fragrant white flower clusters that produce toxic berries. Spreads easily via root sprouts and by seed dispersal. Privets form dense stands in the understory of forests, altering wildlife habitat.



Pictured is the Chinese species

Removal: Cut back and remove root ball. Watch for resprouting over time. Bag and remove berries to reduce spread.

Honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica*)

Produces sweet smelling flowers. Vine rapidly takes over yards and natural areas. Vine twines around other plants for vertical support and can kill shrubs and saplings by girdling stems. There is a native honeysuckle that is not invasive. (*L. sempervirens*)

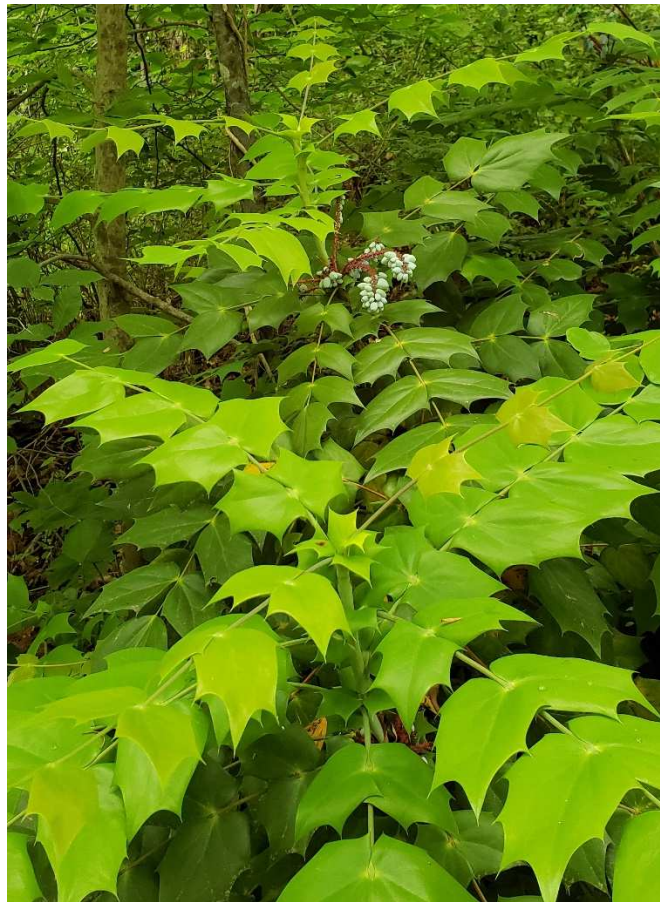


Flowers may be yellow or white

Removal: Young plants can be pulled from moist soil. Larger plants require digging. Be sure to get all roots.

Oregon Grape (*Mahonia aquifolium*)

Evergreen shrub, can grow 5-10 feet tall with holly-like leaflets. Flowers in late winter and green berries that turn bluish black. Birds eat seed and spread to other areas. Can form dense thickets and is unliked by deer.

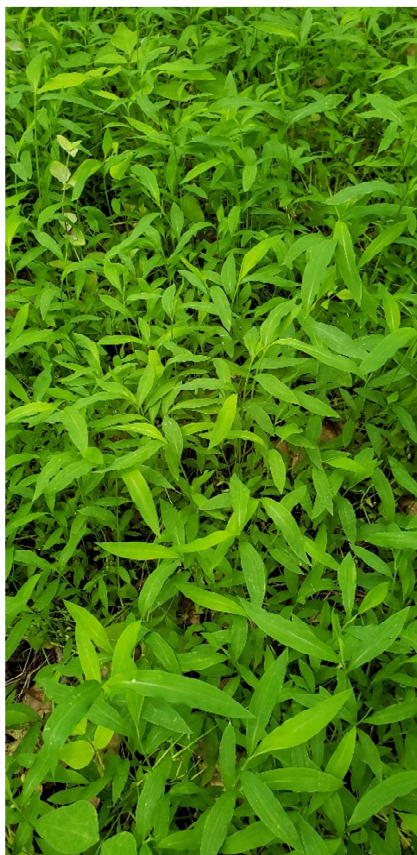


Berries will darken over time

Removal: Must be dug up including roots and watched for resprouting. Bag and remove seeds.

Japanese Stiltgrass (*Microstegium vimineum*)

Annual grass that aggressively forms dense mats, displacing native species. Often found along wooded trails and spread by hikers when seeds attach to shoes and pants. Each plant can produce up to 1,000 seeds which remain viable in the soil for up to 5 years. Deer may aid in its dispersal by eating native plants and avoiding the stiltgrass.



Spreads quickly in disturbed areas

Removal: Has a weak root system so easily pulled from the soil. Can also mow/weed-eat. Best done mid-August to September before it starts to drop seeds.

Heavenly Bamboo (*Nandina domestica*)

Evergreen woody shrub that resembles bamboo. Still sold as an ornamental by garden centers. Can be found in disturbed areas and forms thickets in woods. Berries, red when mature, and can be toxic to birds and animals.



Berries turn red in the winter

Removal: Dig up being careful to remove all roots. Bag berries to prevent their spread and consumption.

Bradford Pear Tree (*Pyrus calleryana*)

Popular in developments because of early spring bloom of white flowers. Grows quickly, displacing native plants. Does not support wildlife. Short-lived (20-25 years) and trunk easily splits. Spreads underground via root suckers and by seed. Recently banned in South Carolina.



The spring flowers smell terrible

Removal: Must cut down and remove stump.

Multiflora Rose (*Rosa multiflora*)

Prickly, climbing shrub that can reach 10 feet. Each leaf typically has 5 to 11 leaflets. Individual plants may produce as many as 500,000 seeds per year. Can form impenetrable thorny thickets that choke out native species. Can tolerate a variety of light conditions.



This rose is not sweet to ecosystems

Removal: Dig up plants and remove all roots. Watch for thorns. Repeated mowing over several years also effective.

Periwinkle (*Vinca major* and *V. minor*)

Periwinkle is an evergreen, perennial vine with glossy lanced shaped leaves and blue-violet flowers. Periwinkle grows vigorously and forms thick mats along the forest floor, displacing native species.



Still sold at plant nurseries despite invasiveness

Removal: Can be pulled by hand. Be sure to remove roots and bag and dispose of all plant parts. Alternatively, mow/weed-eat repeatedly, especially in spring.

Wisteria

Chinese (*W. sinensis*), and **Japanese** (*W. floribunda*)

Woody vine with lavender, grape-like clusters of spring flowers. Rapidly invades natural areas killing native plants. Vines will climb trees, damaging or killing them by shading leaves and adding extra weight to trunk.



Wisteria spreads quickly over landscapes and trees

Removal: Sever vine at the base of tree and remove roots. Pull or dig up younger vines from wet soil.

Native Plant Alternatives

Scientific Name

Common Name

Ground Covers

Asarum canadense

Common Wild Ginger

Chrysogonum virginianum

Green and Gold

Dennstaedtia punctilobula

Eastern Hay-Scented Fern

Thelypteris noveboracensis

New York Fern

Shrubs

Cornus amomum

Silky Dogwood

Corylus americana

American Hazelnut

Itea virginica

Virginia Sweetspire

Viburnum dentatum

Southern Arrowwood

Small Trees

Carpinus caroliniana

Hornbeam

Cercis canadensis

Eastern Redbud

Chionanthus virginicus

Fringe Tree

Viburnum prunifolium

Black Haw Viburnum

Large Trees

Acer saccharum

Sugar Maple

Fagus grandifolia

Beech

Ilex opaca

American Holly

Quercus Alba

White Oak

For more suggestions see the NC Native Plant Society website.