

What are invasive species and why are they a problem?

Invasive alien species (IAS) are species that are introduced to an area outside of their native range. They can be introduced intentionally or unintentionally. Once they establish, invasive plants can reproduce quickly because they have no natural predators or pathogens to keep them in check, and they often become the dominant species in an ecosystem. This can have devastating effects on the environment. Invasive species can displace native plants by monopolizing space, light, water and other resources needed for growth. They can completely alter native plant communities and drastically lower biodiversity. Invasive species can adversely affect the economy, human health and interfere with recreational activities, as well.

Where do invasive species come from?

Invasive species can be introduced intentionally or unintentionally. Some are intentionally planted as agricultural crops or garden ornamentals, but their invasive nature has led them to escape over the years. Some are transported, unknowingly, to new locations by seeds or other plant materials attaching to shoes, clothing, or vehicles. Invasive species may also be introduced to an area by natural means. Birds and other wildlife can carry seeds and plant materials to new areas; and seeds that enter stream systems may be carried great distances from a source population.



A purple loosestrife population invading a waterfront property in Summerside, Prince Edward Island

How do highways and road construction contribute to the problem?



Highways are major pathways for the spread of invasive alien species

Highway rights-of-way are widely recognized as major pathways for the spread of invasive species and they are often the origin of infestations in adjacent fields and natural areas. There are several reasons why highways are regarded in this way. An immense number of vehicles travel via highways every day. Plant debris and seeds can attach to vehicles quite easily, especially on rainy days when the ground is wet. Statistically speaking, if there are more cars travelling on a highway or road, there is an increased chance of an invasive species being introduced. This chance increases further if there is construction taking place on a highway.



Many infested areas arise as a result of road construction

Construction often requires disturbance of roadsides and clearing of vegetation. These practices can create opportunities for invasive plants to establish. Removing native vegetation means that competition is removed and invasive plants have a greater chance of surviving there. Equipment and materials used for construction may contain invasive plant materials or seeds. If tractors, excavators, dump trucks, etc. are not washed after accessing a site containing invasive plants, they may be spread to the next work site. In addition, gravel and other construction materials may be contaminated with invasive plant materials or seeds.

Transportation and Construction

DO

- **Learn** to identify invasive plant species found on PEI
- **Document and report** any invasive or suspicious looking plants to the PEI Invasive Species Council
- **Minimize disturbance**—Only disturb an area if it is absolutely necessary. Disturbed areas are more vulnerable to invasive species
- **Retain native vegetation wherever possible**—It will provide competition for invasive species, making it harder for them to establish
- **Keep equipment clean**—Avoid parking, turning around, or entering areas infested with invasive plant species. Wash equipment once it is returned to the storage yard
- **Inspect and clean** vehicles and equipment before entering a weed free area and before leaving an infested area
- **Inspect gravel and other materials used** for invasive species
- **Mow any invasive species** found in ditches near construction site

DO NOT

- **Park, turn around or drive through** areas infested with invasive species
- **Dump invasive plants in vacant lots or natural areas**—If a plant is invasive in a garden, it will most likely be invasive in a natural area
- **Mow invasive plants after they have gone to seed**— Mowing an invasive plant after it has gone to seed will only help the plant disperse seed and spread further
- **Use contaminated materials**— Gravel, sand, soil, and other materials used in construction should be inspected for invasive species before use



How to report:

If you have seen an invasive alien species on Prince Edward Island, please report your sighting to Island Nature Trust via phone or e-mail

Phone: (902) 892-7513

Email: intrust@eastlink.ca



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