

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. There are many invasive species that adversely affect the economy and human health, as well.



Two invasive plants commonly found in garden waste: Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) and Goutweed (*Aegopodium podagraria*)

Where do invasive species come from?

Many greenhouses and nurseries sell known invasive species to customers. Gardeners buy invasive species for a number of reasons: they make good groundcovers, they are aesthetically pleasing, or their growing requirements match their garden conditions. Most often invasive species are bought by unsuspecting gardeners that are unaware of the environmental damage invasive plants can cause. Once planted, the invasive plant may grow well for a couple of seasons. However, eventually it will begin to take over the garden and outcompete other species. Suddenly, a beautiful, diverse, garden is transformed into a vast monoculture, and the gardener is left with the task of removing the invasive plant.

Sometimes gardeners will simply pull out the unwanted plants and dump them in a neighboring vacant lot or in a nearby natural area. This is called **garden dumping**, and it is one pathway through which invasive species are spread.

DO

- **Plant only regional native species** Native species have naturally adapted to the local environment and are non-invasive.
- **Dispose of it properly** Remove all invasive plant material, kill all vegetative parts by leaving it in the sun to dry, and compost the remaining debris.
- **Contact local waste management facility** if you are unsure of how to handle the invasive plant materials.

DO NOT

- **Compost garden waste** Plant pieces and roots may sprout and begin growing in the new location
- **Burn garden waste** Seeds contained in the waste may persist and sprout a new plant
- **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. Native plants species may be choked out, and food and habitat sources for wildlife may be diminished.

This project was undertaken with the financial support of:
Ce projet a été réalisé avec l'appui financier de:



Environment
Canada

Environnement
Canada



Photos provided by and copyright
belongs to: Beth Hoar of Green
Thumb Photography & Jerzy Opiola