

EUP Gardeners Can Join the Fight against Alien Plants

Most folks see the Upper Peninsula as a vast tract of beautiful wilderness of dense forests, lakes, and beaches where wildlife flourishes. While this is mostly accurate, there is also trouble brewing along our beautiful shorelines, deep in our woods, and right in our gardens.

Large tracts of beach, wetland, and woods are being inhabited by alien or invasive plants that crowd out native species of plants that are needed to feed our local wildlife, including birds, bears and butterflies. These villains include plants such as purple loosestrife, spotted knapweed, Japanese knotweed, and glossy buckthorn. These plants are not only alien to this region, but can easily spread to other areas by wind and animal droppings.

So let's be on the lookout! Some of these plants can and do end up in our gardens, often inadvertently. For example, some of the grasses suggested in articles on gardening, such as Eurasian phragmites, are alien species that will wreak havoc on the local ecology by crowding out native plants. Perennials, such as dame's rocket and baby's breath are pretty, but can also get out of control. Vines, including Japanese Honeysuckle and Oriental Bittersweet, are also troublesome plants and should be avoided at all cost.

EUP gardeners can do something about the spread of invasive plants by following some very simple guidelines this spring when they start shopping and swapping plants for their gardens:

1. Find out what species are invasive in this area. Pictures and information on troublesome plants can be obtained by contacting the local DNR office, or the sources listed below;

2. Plant noninvasive species of plants in your garden and around your home. If not sure if a plant is invasive or not, ask a knowledgeable plant person (a horticulturist or knowledgeable gardener);
3. Be careful trading plants with other gardeners. Plants, such as purple loosestrife are pretty, but can easily escape a garden and crowd out native plants in critical wetland areas;
4. Speak to garden center owners and express your concern over the invasive plant issue. If they're aware of the problem, so be it. If not, tell them you're concerned about the environment and request they don't sell invasive plants;
5. Spread the word! Don't let invasive species destroy what we've come to cherish here in the North Country: berry picking, bird watching, hunting and fishing.

Be on the Lookout!

Top 10 Invasive Plant Species in the EUP CWMA:

- Leafy spurge
- Garlic mustard
- Spotted knapweed
- Purple Loosestrife
- Phragmites
- Eurasian water milfoil
- Scots pine
- Japanese knotweed
- Glossy buckthorn
- Canada thistle

Source for more information on invasive species: Chippewa East Mackinac Conservation District and the Eastern Upper Peninsula Cooperative Weed Management Area, 2847 Ashmun St., Sault Ste.

Marie, MI 906-484-3031. (www.chipmackconservation.org/weedmanagement_2.asp).