

INVASIVE PLANTS IN ONTARIO

We live in a world of global transport. We travel and ship goods to all corners of the earth, and often bring back items from other countries – intentionally or otherwise!

Since settlers first arrived in North America from Europe, people have brought seeds and plants from other continents. Some of these were introduced for food, some for beauty, and some have arrived as “hitchhikers” in shipments of grain or other goods in transit. Plants which are not native to southern Ontario (known by scientists as exotic, adventive or alien), can often co-exist very peacefully with the natural vegetation, but some have such aggressive tendencies that they are known as invasive exotic plants.



Invasive exotic plants spread so effectively that they choke out native plants, reducing biodiversity and destroying habitat. These bullies of the plant world often mature very quickly, produce copious crops of seeds every year, and can establish easily in disturbed or stressed sites. They can be extremely difficult to remove or control. While a few of these species (such as purple loosestrife) have received lots of media coverage, many others are less well known to gardeners. To protect our natural heritage, become familiar with the plants on the following list, and avoid introducing them into the landscape. If they are already present, think seriously about removing them to prevent spreading them further.

Purple loosestrife

In Stratford, several plants from the Ministry of Natural Resources Invasive Plants list may be found. Goutweed is often planted in gardens, Impatiens Glandulifera (also known as Himalayan Balsam or Policeman's Helmet), Yellow Flag Iris, and Purple Loosestrife are down by the river, and Garlic Mustard is wherever it can find a space. Try looking them up on the internet to get a really good look, or obtain information from the Library. Garlic Mustard, especially, is establishing itself in our woodlands, and choking out native plants. It needs to be persistently removed if at all possible (carefully, try not to drop seeds). There are many bare spots in Stratford where it has settled in, so don't be surprised to see it as a visitor in your garden. Garlic Mustard especially, and Himalayan Balsam may well appear. Tell them to leave!

Himalayan Balsam, in fact has a beautiful flower, but the seed pods explode like the well-known "Touch Me Nots." Seed pods from one plant will explosively discharge approximately 800 seeds- in all directions! This plant will form dense groupings and can reach six feet (up to 2m) in height. The plant originated in Asia, has become invasive in much of Europe, and was first imported into Canada in 1912. It is now considered invasive in three provinces, including Ontario.

Although not formally classed as an invasive plant by all sources, Giant Hogweed is in the T.J. Dolan wetlands. You are not likely to run into it, because the Stratford Community Services Department keeps it in check in travelled areas, but if you should come across it, steer clear. This plant can give severe rashes to those who touch it. It looks a bit like a GIANT Queen Anne's Lace, but giant is the word- It can be 15-20 ft high (3-5 m.).



Goutweed



Garlic Mustard



Giant Hogweed



Yellow Flag Iris



Himalayan Balsam

Checking the botanical names of plants before you purchase them will help you avoid introducing aggressive plants into your yard or community. The common names of plants can be misleading, since several different plants can be known by the same common name. For example, "Red Maple" is a name given to two entirely different trees. Our native red maple (*Acer rubrum*) is a tree with red twigs and buds, and leaves that often turn red in the fall. A popular tree in the horticultural world is also called "Red Maple," but it is a variety of Norway maple (*Acer platanoides*), an invasive exotic tree that often has reddish leaves in the spring.

More Information

You can also refer to several databases of invasive plants on the internet for larger images. The [Royal Botanical Garden in Hamilton](http://www.rbgn.org/) has an excellent one.

[http://www.rbgn.ca/cbcn/en/projects/invasives/i_list.html]

Learning to identify invasive exotic plants can be challenging, especially for a beginner. If you are uncertain about a plant you've found, try checking with other local gardeners, or access help. There are places to call, or to send a digital image with a request for help with identification and advice.

Community Services/Parks and Recreation/Cemetery (Parks Department):

(519) 271-0250 ext. 243

UTRCA Upper Thames River Conservation Authority:

519-451-2800 (infoline@thamesriver.on.ca)

Royal Botanical Gardens:

1-800-694-4769 (info@rbg.ca)

The following list has been compiled by the Natural Heritage Information Centre of the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. It includes the common name and the botanical name for plants which have the potential to seriously damage natural areas. In addition, due to their presence in Stratford, Impatiens Glandulifera, Yellow Flag Iris, and Giant Hogweed have been added.

Invasive Exotic Plants of Upland Areas:

Trees

Norway maple	Acer platanoides
Scots pine	Pinus sylvestris
Black locust	Robinia pseudoacacia
White poplar	Populus alba

Shrubs

Japanese barberry	Berberis thunbergii
Autumn olive	Elaeagnus umbellata
Tartarian honeysuckle	Lonicera tatarica
Showy bush-honeysuckle	Lonicera x bella
Multiflora rose	Rosa multiflora
Common buckthorn	Rhamnus cathartica

Herbaceous Plants

Hoary alyssum	Berteroa incana
Smooth brome	Bromus inermis
Spotted knapweed	Centaurea maculosa
Celandine	Chelidonium majus
Sand rocket	Diploaxis tenuifolia
Quack grass	Agropyron repens
Orange daylily	Hemerocallis fulva
Dame's rocket	Hesperis matronalis
Common St. John's wort	Hypericum perforatum
White sweet-clover	Melilotus alba

Wild parsnip	Pastinaca sativa
Bouncing Bet	Saponaria officinalis
Mossy stonecrop	Sedum acre
Hedge-parsley	Torilus japonica
White swallow-wort	Vincetoxicum rossicum

Invasive Exotic Plants of Mesic Areas (Moderate Moisture):

Trees

European white birch	Betula pendula
White mulberry	Morus alba
Crack willow	Salix fragilis

Shrubs

Glossy buckthorn	Rhamnus frangula
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Herbs

Goutweed	Aegopodium podagraria
Garlic mustard	Alliaria petiolata

Invasive Exotic Plants of Wetland or Aquatic Areas:

Trees

Willow	Salix x rubens
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Shrubs

Black alder	Alnus glutinosa
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Herbaceous Plants

Giant hogweed	Heracleum mantegazzianum
European frog's bit	Hydrocharis morsus-ranae
Himalayan balsam	Impatiens glandulifera
Yellow flag iris	Iris pseudacorus
Moneywort	Lysimachia nummularia
Purple loosestrife	Lythrum salicaria
European watermilfoil	Myriophyllum spicatum
Watercress	Nasturtium microphyllum
Pondweed	Potamogeton
Giant hogweed	Heracleum mantegazzianum

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Additional information at the Stratford Public Library!

19 St. Andrew Street (519-271-0220) (www.stratford.library.on.ca)