

# INVASIVE PLANTS – What’s in My Yard

A public service of the Churchill Area Environmental Council (CAEC): 2022  
2300 William Penn Highway, Pittsburgh PA 15235

## Invasive Plants

The “*Pennsylvania Field Guide*”<sup>(1)</sup> provides the following definition:

“Invasive plant species are plants introduced from outside of an ecosystem with characteristics that help them dominate and limit the diversity of species within the invaded area. Their threat lies in an ability to spread aggressively and reproduce prolifically, easily out-competing native plants for light, space and nutrients.”

**What does this mean?** It means that the plant is *not native to the region* and has escaped the landscape and invaded natural spaces including your yard. These plants are adaptable, vigorous and outcompete the native plants that are critical to wildlife.

Some have come to us from other countries, either by design or mistake; they may have been believed to be helpful but have proven otherwise. Often our climates are similar, which promotes their growth.

To make the issue even more problematic, many garden shops, nurseries, landscapers, home improvement stores, and online suppliers still sell or use species of plants, shrubs and trees deemed invasive by conservationists.

## What’s in My Yard?

The guide, “*Invasive Plants of Pittsburgh*”<sup>(2)</sup>, provides a list of the plant that the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy considers invasive. The guide includes photos and detailed information about each.

**HERBS:** Bull thistle, burdock, Canada thistle, Chinese silvergrass, crown vetch, garlic mustard, giant hogweed, goutweed, Japanese knotweed, Japanese stiltgrass, mugwort, periwinkle, poison hemlock, white snakeroot, and purple loosestrife.

**SHRUBS:** Bush honeysuckle, common buckthorn, European privet, Japanese barberry, jetbead, multiflora rose, and winged burning bush.

**VINES:** English ivy, Japanese honeysuckle, mile-a-minute, oriental bittersweet, porcelainberry, wild grape, and winter creeper.

**TREES:** Callery pear, Norway maple, princess tree, Siberian elm, sycamore maple, and Tree of Heaven.

## Invasive Plants – Control

Disposal of invasive plants can be tricky.

Any that are pulled out or dug up with roots intact before blooming or going to seed should be left out of ground to dry completely. When fully dead, some may be added to compost piles. Do not, however, add them if plant materials are still alive or bearing seeds.

Some should not be composted at all because they have rhizomes or other parts that may survive in compost and spread to new locations when the compost is distributed. Use of these plants in brush piles is also not advisable unless a barrier is added to prevent them from contacting the ground and re-rooting. When they are completely dried out you can put in with regular trash.

Generally, commercial herbicides are not recommended and plants treated with herbicides may require special handling when disposing of them, since many are environmentally harmful.

## Native Plant Alternatives

Native plants are preferred though even some species of these can be difficult to control. Among favorites locally are: bee balm (*Monarda*, various varieties), bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*), phlox (various varieties), and brown-eyed susan (*Rudbeckia triloba*).

There are many nurseries that offer native plants. Check with a friend or a local garden club for a referral.

Another alternative is buying online and having them shipped to you, see “Where to Buy”<sup>(5)</sup>.

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(Continued<sup>a</sup>)

## Invasive Plants - References & Resources

Excellent information from a variety of Pennsylvania resources. Many of these contain photos, which will help identify the plants in your yard.

- 1) *“Pennsylvania Field Guide: Common Invasive Plants in Riparian Areas”*  
- from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection

[PA Field Guide](#)

[[https://www.dep.state.pa.us/dep/deputate/watermgmt/wc/subjects/streamreleaf/Docs/Invasive Plants.pdf](https://www.dep.state.pa.us/dep/deputate/watermgmt/wc/subjects/streamreleaf/Docs/Invasive%20Plants.pdf)]

- 2) *“Invasive Plants of Pittsburgh”*  
- from Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy

[Invasive Plants of Pittsburgh](#)

[<https://pittsburghparks.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/UrbanEcoStewards-invasiveplantsinpittsburgh.pdf>]

- 3) Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Resources (DCNR) Site:  
contains more information on Invasive Plants

[Wild Plants \(pa.gov\)](#)

[<https://www.dcnr.pa.gov/Conservation/WildPlants/Pages/default.aspx>]

[Invasive Plant Fact Sheets \(pa.gov\)](#)

[<https://www.dcnr.pa.gov/Conservation/WildPlants/InvasivePlants/InvasivePlantFactSheets/Pages/default.aspx>]

- 4) Churchill Area Environmental Council Advisory:  
*“Invasive Alien Weeds: ‘Right Here in River City’ – 2014”*

[Invasive Alien Weeds - 2014](#)

[<http://www.churchillborough.com/around-town/environment.aspx>]

- 5) Information about places throughout the state and locally that specialize in native species:

[Where to Buy Native Plants \(pa.gov\)](#)

[<https://www.dcnr.pa.gov/Conservation/WildPlants/LandscapingwithNativePlants/BuyNativePlants/Pages/default.aspx>]

[Native Plant Nursery at Beechwood Farms \(Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania\)](#)

[<http://aswp.org/pages/native-plant-nursery>]

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<sup>a</sup> Additional Copies of this Advisory are available at: <http://www.churchillborough.com/around-town/environment.aspx>