

Don't Plant It in Your Landscape

Invasive and exotic plants that should not be grown in Pinellas County

This publication addresses the fact that Florida is experiencing a dramatic problem with invasive plants that alter our native ecosystems. The plants listed in this publication **should not** be planted in your landscape. Furthermore, if you already have any of these plants in your landscape we strongly encourage you to take steps to **remove them**. If you need replacement recommendations, then please refer to our other publications on plant selection for lists of desirable plants for use here.

What is an Invasive Plant

The past few decades have witnessed a tremendous growth in Florida's population. To meet the growing plant needs of new Florida homeowners, our pioneer nursery and landscape professionals hunted near and far for new plants that would adapt to our growing conditions. Many new Florida residents also bring some of their favorite plants with them from their home state or country. These plants may become invasive. Other, non-indigenous plants were introduced by the government to hopefully solve what they thought were environmental problems. Many of these introduced plants are of great benefit to agriculture (citrus, for example, are native to Southeast Asia). Many non-native plants are used in landscaping and do not become invasive (examples are our Pentas and Crape Myrtles).

What people didn't fully realize was that plants grow differently in our hot, humid climate; the

result in some cases was the uncontrollable aggressiveness of exotics such as the Brazilian Pepper-tree, Punk Tree, Water hyacinth, and Hydrilla. Such invasive exotics are undesirable because they disrupt natural processes such as water flow and displace native plants. Sometimes the invader creates extensive monocultures that ruin our native ecosystems. Millions of dollars have been spent on the control of invasive exotics; Brazilian pepper is known to infest *over one million acres* in our state, and hydrilla has displaced native aquatic plants in *over fifty percent* of Florida's water bodies. Punk trees (*Melaleuca quinquenervia*) now form monocultures in nearly 400,000 acres of wetlands, especially our Everglades.

Another problem with invasive plants is that they out-compete our natives. The insects, birds, fish, and other wildlife that depend on these natives begin to decline. Native wildlife are rarely able to utilize these Invasives for food or shelter.

It is important that people avoid buying or relocating any of these plants. Often individuals looking for inexpensive plants will take exotics from the wild and bring them into new areas of the state, thereby helping them to spread.

The following plants are taken from an extensive list developed by the Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council (FEPPC), a non-profit professional society founded in 1984 to build public awareness about the serious threat of invasive, non-native plants and to develop control methods for the

Member-Pinellas Partnership for a Drug Free Workplace

The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer authorized to provide research, educational information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function without regard to race color, sex, age, handicap, or national origin. For information on obtaining other extension publications, contact your county Cooperative Extension Service office, Florida Cooperative Extension Service/Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences/University of Florida/Larry Arrington, Dean

Any trade names mentioned in the publication are provided solely for informational purposes. The Pinellas county Extension does not endorse or guarantee the standard of the product, nor does it wish to discriminate against any products of a similar nature.

management and prevention of the spread of these plants. The

plants have been identified as destructive to Florida's ecosystems and generally undesirable as

garden plants in this region. Do not plant any of these species. If they are already in your landscape, remove and destroy them as soon as possible, as many of them are spreading at an alarming rate.

PLANTS TO AVOID

Species	Where It Grows	Comments
Air Potato <i>Dioscorea bulbifera</i>	Anywhere	Blankets native trees. Especially harmful to rare tropical hardwood hammocks.
Australian pine <i>Casuarina spp.</i>	Shorelines and inland	Extremely invasive. Crowds and shades out other plants. Produces dense, shallow root systems.
Bog-mat or Mud-Midget Wolffiella spp.	Floating plants	Extremely invasive, excluding all other plants. Sluggish waters.
Brazilian Pepper <i>Schinus terebinthifolius</i>	Anywhere, especially shorelines	Extremely invasive. Crowds and shades out other plants.
Camphor Tree <i>Cinnamomum camphora</i>	Anywhere	Seeds carried by birds and can become invasive
Carrotwood <i>Cupaniopsis anacardioides</i>	Everywhere	Quickly invades disturbed and undisturbed areas forming dense thickets and crowds out native plants.
Cat-tail <i>Typha spp.</i>	Shorelines and shallow water	Extremely invasive. Crowds out all other plants.
Chinaberry Tree <i>Melia azedarach</i>	Anywhere	Out competes native upland herbaceous and deciduous plant species. It is banned in four counties in Florida.
Chinese tallow <i>Sapium sebiferum</i>	Anywhere	Aggressively displaces native plants. Forms monotypic stands.
Cogon Grass <i>Imperata brasiliensis</i>	Roadside & disturbed sites	Forms immense monocultures and isn't eaten by wildlife
Duckweed <i>Lemna spp.</i>	Floating plant	Extremely invasive. Infests any quiet water and completely occludes all other plants.
Giant Duckweed <i>Spirodela spp.</i>	Floating plant	Extremely invasive occluding all other plants. Infests quiet water.
Hydrilla <i>Hydrilla verticillata</i>	Ponds and lakes	Unightly submersed plant that is the number one aquatic weed problem in the southeastern states.
Lead tree <i>Leucaena leucocephala</i>	Shoreline	Large, brittle tree. Seeds are produced on young trees and are very prolific.

Lofty fig <i>Ficus altissima</i>	Anywhere	Invades pine rock-land and hardwood forest ecosystems in southern Florida. Seeds sprout in trees or sidewalks.
Melaleuca, Punk tree, paper bark <i>Melaleuca quinquenervia</i>	Shoreline and shallow water	One of South Florida's most noxious woody pest plants. Crowding out the Everglade native vegetation.
Proliferating Spike rushes <i>Eleocharis spp</i>	Shorelines and shallow water	Very difficult to control and unsightly.
Rattlebox <i>Sesbania punicea</i>	Anywhere	Spreads rapidly from seed. Poisonous to livestock, fowl and man.
Rosary Pea / Crab eyes <i>Abrus precatorius</i>	Anywhere	Vining plant with compound leaves, overtakes and overgrows trees and shrubs
Skunk Vine <i>Paederia foetida</i>	Anywhere	Overtakes trees. Acts as a ladder for fire to reach tree canopies. Thick growth can kill under-story plants.
Torpedo Grass <i>Panicum repens</i>	Shoreline, shallow water, and wet areas	Rhizomes invade other plants crowding them out. Very difficult to control
Tropical Soda Apple <i>Solanum viarum</i>	Anywhere	Rapid spread, invades pasture land. Thorns are dangerous. Each plant can produce 40,000 to 50,000 seeds.
Water hyacinth <i>Eichhornia crassipes</i>	Floating plants	Introduced pest which can completely cover pond surface.
Waterlettuce <i>Pistia stratiotes</i>	Floating plants	Can completely cover surface of quiet or slow moving water.
Water-meal <i>Wolffia spp.</i>	Floating plants	Forms solid layer on water surface. Sluggish water.
Water Spangles, Water Fern <i>Salvinia minima</i>	Shoreline and Floating Fern	Infests quiet or sluggish water. Can completely cover pond surface.