

Non-native Invasive Plant Species

Natural habitats are impacted by many threats including development, climate change, disease and parasites, and pollution among others. A threat that is less recognized and visible to many people, however, is the establishment of non-native invasive plant species. These plants originate in other countries and continents, and even some from North America. Once established in an area, they have few natural limitations in the form of disease, parasites or even animal species that eat them to restrain their growth and spread into native plant communities. Not all non-native plants are invasive. Non-native invasive plants are characterized by fast and aggressive growth, the ability to produce abundant seeds, have no natural predators or disease, and they are often pre-adapted to the area where they become established. Many of our most damaging non-native invasive species come from places in the world that have a similar climate, soils, and other properties that make it easy for these species to grow and flourish. Many shrubs and trees planted around West Virginia houses and neighborhoods such as Periwinkle, Norway Maple, Winged Euonymus, Barberry, and Bradford Pear have escaped into natural communities and are highly destructive.

Often these species are aggressive and are able to out-compete native plants, especially when native plant communities have been stressed by a disturbance. A native plant community acts like your skin that protects you from infection; it blocks the entry of disease-causing organisms. Once the skin is breached germs may enter and cause disease. Similarly, once native plants are destroyed non-native invasive plants may be introduced and will grow, often over-whelming existing plants. These invaders are not part of these new habitats, and may be only marginally part of the complex web of interactions within a native plant and animal community; they are a puzzle piece that fails to fit in the puzzle. As the number of non-native invasive plant species grow, and their populations grow, the connections among native species begin to fragment. The native community begins to fail to function properly. Overall, this situation is generally where West Virginia is currently, with some places with healthier native communities, and some places worse, depending on the amount of disturbance and numbers of non-native invasive species.

Below are common non-native invasive plants that are common in yards, along roads and trails, in fields and waste places. Do not encourage these species to grow on your property, plant them, or transplant them. Even if growing in a yard, seeds can be transported to other areas and cause problems. Be aware of seeds you may potentially transport to other areas on your footwear, on your dog, or on outdoor recreational equipment. Be a good steward of our native communities.

Scientific Name	Common Name	Type	Origin	Comment
Wildflowers				
<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	Common Yarrow	perennial	northern hemisphere	accidental introduction
<i>Ajuga reptans</i>	Blue Bugle	perennial	Europe	escaped from gardens
<i>Allaria petiolaris</i>	Garlic Mustard	annual	Europe/Asia	escaped agricultural cultivation
<i>Brassica nigra</i>	Black Mustard	annual	Europe/Asia	accidental or escaped cultivation
<i>Centaurea stoebe</i>	Spotted Knapweed	perennial	Europe/Asia	accidental introduction
<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	Canada Thistle	perennial	Europe/Asia	accidental introduction
<i>Coronilla varia</i>	Crownvetch	perennial	Europe/Asia/Africa	introduced for erosion control
<i>Daucus carota</i>	Queen Anne's-Lace	biennial	Europe/Asia	accidental and escaped cultivation
<i>Dianthus armeria</i>	Deptford Pink	annual/biennial	Europe	escaped from gardens
<i>Dipsacus fullonum</i>	Common Teasel	biennial	Europe	escaped agricultural cultivation
<i>Hieracium aurantiacum</i>	Orange Hawkweed	perennial	Europe	escaped from gardens
<i>Hieracium caespitosum</i>	Field Hawkweed	perennial	Europe	escaped from gardens
<i>Iris pseudacorus</i>	Yellow Flag Iris	perennial	Europe/Asia/Africa	escaped agricultural cultivation
<i>Lamium amplexicula</i>	Henbit	annual	Europe/Asia	accidental introduction

Selected West Virginia Native Trees and Shrubs useful for pollinator gardens and/or meadows.

Scientific Name	Common Name	Bloom Period	Flower Color	Comments
<i>Acer rubrum</i>	Red Maple	very early	Red	
<i>Amelanchier arborea</i>	Common Serviceberry	very early	White	
<i>Asimina triloba</i>	Pawpaw	very early	Purple	
<i>Cephalanthus occidentalis</i>	Buttonbush	late	White	
<i>Cercis canadensis</i>	Redbud	very early	Purple	
<i>Cornus alternifolia</i>	Alternate-leaved Dogwood	early	White	
<i>Cornus amomum</i>	Silky Dogwood	mid	White	
<i>Cornus florida</i>	Flowering Dogwood	early	White	
<i>Craeteagus species</i>	Hawthorn	early	White, Pink	Difficult to identify wild plants, species readily hybridize
<i>Diospyros virginiana</i>	Persimmon	early	Yellow	
<i>Galussacia baccata</i>	Black Huckleberry	mid	White	
<i>Hypericum species</i>	St. Johns Wort	mid	Yellow	
<i>Kalmia latifolia</i>	Sheep Laurel	early	Pink	
<i>Liriodendron tulipifera</i>	Tuliptree	mid	Yellow	
<i>Malus species</i>	crabapple, apple	early	White	
<i>Morus rubra</i>	Red Mulberry	early	Green	
<i>Nyssa sylvatica</i>	Black Gum	early	White	
<i>Oxydendrum arboreum</i>	Sourwood	late	White	
<i>Prunus americana</i>	American Plum	early	White	
<i>Prunus serotina</i>	Black Cherry	early	White	
<i>Rhododendron arborescens</i>	Smooth Azalea	mid	White	
<i>Rhododendron calendulaceum</i>	Flame Azalea	mid	Orange	
<i>Rhododendron maximum</i>	Great Laurel	mid	Pink	
<i>Robinia psuedoacacia</i>	Black Locust	mid	White	
<i>Rubus species</i>	blackberries, raspberries	early, mid	White	Usually aggressive in a garden, can be aggressive in a meadow, several are not native
<i>Salix nigra</i>	Black Willow	very early	Green	
<i>Salix species</i>	pussy willows	very early	Green	At least 9 WV willow species are shrubs; most prefer wet areas
<i>Sambucus nigra</i>	Black Elderberry	mid	White	Prefers wet areas
<i>Sambucus racemosa</i>	Red Elderberry	early	White	
<i>Spiraea alba</i>	White Meadowsweet	late	White	
<i>Spiraea tomentosa</i>	Steeplebush	late	Pink	
<i>Tilia americana</i>	American Basswood	mid	Yellow	
<i>Vaccinium corymbosum</i>	Highbush Blueberry	mid	White	
<i>Vaccinium pallidum</i>	Upland Low Blueberry	mid	White	
<i>Vaccinium stamineum</i>	Dewberry	mid	White	



Left: Shadbush blooming in Monongalia Co. Right: Mountain Laurel in bloom, Buffalo Lake, Monongahela National Forest, Pocahontas Co.