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Natural Resource Protection News
*From the Town of Canandaigua Environmental
Conservation Board*
A PLAGUE OF INVASIVE SPECIES

By: Edith Davey

Alien invasive species afflict the Town of Canandaigua as well as the county, state, nation and continent. These species are non-natives that damage the environment, the economy, and/or human health. Typically lacking predators to control their spread in a new area, they out-compete native life forms, spread prolifically, lack habitat value and cause crop and other economic losses. Following is a rogues gallery of a few of the more common terrestrial invasive plant species found in the Town.

Japanese Knotweed



Japanese knotweed spreads quickly, creating dense thickets that degrade wildlife habitats. It reduces plant biodiversity. Thick layers of decomposing stems and leaves on the ground prevent native plant species growth.

It has a strong root system that has been known to break through asphalt and concrete.

Populations are extremely persistent. Plants are able to survive severe floods and recolonize areas. It can establish along riverbanks, where pieces of roots can break off and float downstream to start new populations.

Giant Hogweed



Giant Hogweed is a very large, very toxic plant that can cause painful burns and permanent scarring if it is touched. Often found in riparian areas where birds have deposited the seeds, it can reach heights of 12-14 feet when mature. Each flower head contains approximately 20,000 seeds.

Do not touch this plant! Call DEC, [845-256-3111](tel:845-256-3111) to report the location of suspected hogweed or e-mail the location and photographs to confirm the identification. DEC will destroy the plants free of charge. Consult the [DEC website](#) for more information and to send e-mail reports.

Black Swallow-Wort



Black Swallow-wort is related to milkweed. Monarch butterflies lay eggs on the plant, but larvae that feed on the plant will die. As Monarchs and other butterflies are currently in sharp decline, removing black swallow-wort helps to preserve these valuable pollinators.

Japanese Barberry



Japanese Barberry is a preferred plant refuge for deer ticks. Multiple studies have shown that deer tick populations are particularly dense in areas of Japanese barberry infestation. The thick foliage casts heavy shade and prevents the growth of other understory plants. Introduced into the country as an ornamental plant, it has escaped managed care and become a serious problem.

Autumn Olive



Autumn Olive can change soil characteristics where it is established. Dense thickets alter succession patterns, and reduce bird and animal diversity.

It seeds prolifically and will produce viable seeds, easily spread by birds, after only 3-5 years.

Cutting or burning this plant – without herbicide follow-up – will stimulate sprouting and vigorous growth.

What can be done?

Prevention: Pay attention to what is growing on your property. If you notice an unusual plant, don't ignore it or assume it's harmless. Cooperative Extension, SWCD, DEC and online information can help you identify any plant. If you suspect Giant Hogweed, don't touch it!

Inspect firewood and stone for insect and egg mass hitchhikers. If you purchase plants from catalogs or online, research the characteristics for spreading rapidly. Disturbed ground is prime territory for invasives to colonize. Re-seed bare areas promptly and cover the area with straw or other substance

to prevent seeding of invasives.

Controls: Early intervention is essential. If a herbicide is recommended for control, read the label and use only the amounts and concentrations listed on the label. Cover exposed parts of your body and use a breathing mask if you are spraying a herbicide. Never forget that these chemicals are formulated to kill cells – and human DNA is surprisingly similar to plant DNA. None of us gets to choose our degree of sensitivity.
