

INVASIVE PLANTS COUNCIL
Twenty-first Annual Report
December 28, 2023

The Honorable Rick Lopes
State of Connecticut
Senate Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

The Honorable Joseph P. Gresko
State of Connecticut
House of Representatives
Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Environment Committee Co-Chairs Senator Lopes and Representative Gresko, and members of the Environment Committee:

As Invasive Plants Council Chair, I respectfully submit this report on behalf of the Council for activities conducted in 2023.

The lack of funding for the Invasive Plant Outreach Coordinator position negatively impacted the activities and public outreach of the Invasive Plants Council (IPC)* since 2014. Fortunately, a mechanism to fund the Outreach Coordinator via Public Act 19-190, “The Invasive Species Sticker,” which requires an Invasive Species Stamp for the Operation of a Motorboat on the Waters of the State, is now in place. Combined with federal funding for control of aquatic invasive species, the DEEP finalized the agreement to fund the Invasive Plant Outreach Specialist position at the close of 2022. Interviews for this position are in process, and we expect it to be filled by January 1, 2024, with most effort directed on aquatic invasive plant species.

Victoria Wallace, the UConn CAHNR Dean Representative, served as chair for the 2023 term of the 9-member Invasive Plants Council. The council met three times in 2023 (February, June, and October).

In the U.S., invasive plants present a costly burden, particularly for agricultural, forested, and open space areas. Costs directly attributed to control of or loss and damage from invasive plants exceeded \$190 billion over the last four decades (Fantle-Lepczyk et al., 2022¹). Nationally, the annual cost of controlling aquatic invasive plants alone is estimated at \$100 million.

In Connecticut, invasive plants continue to cause environmental and economic injury to our communities, land, and waterways, as well as commercial agricultural industries. Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) and other significant invasive plants continue to pose genuine grave concern for Connecticut residents and businesses. In 2023, the Council has been concerned with emerging challenges such as:

- The rapid expansion of *Hydrilla* throughout the Connecticut River and other waterways and the need to prevent spread to additional waters of the state ([Invading the CT River – The Spread of Hydrilla - YouTube](#)).
- The increasing spread of water chestnut and the loss of resources (monetary and labor) dedicated toward control.
- The emergence of toxic algal blooms in many Connecticut lakes.
- The increasing spread of Callery pear (*Pyrus calleryana*) in terrestrial habitats.
- The loss of state-wide resources to address the spread of *Phragmites* in wetland habitat.
- Invasive species continue to impact public health (e.g., barberry-deer tick-Lyme disease relationship).

The 2021 and 2022 Annual IPC Report recommended that the status of Porcelainberry (*Ampelopsis brevipedunculata*) be changed to “prohibited” on the Connecticut Invasive Plants List. This plant remains problematic and is of no economic importance to the commercial plant industry in Connecticut. We also recommend that Mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*) be designated as “prohibited.”

Due to the increasing concern about emerging and challenging terrestrial invasives here in Connecticut, and the

¹ Fantle-Lepczyk, J. E., Haubrock, P. J., Kramer, A. M., Cuthbert, R. N., Turbelin, A. J., Crystal-Ornelas, R., Diagne, C., & Courchamp, F. (2022). Economic costs of biological invasions in the United States. *Science of the Total Environment*, 806, 151318. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scitotenv.2021.151318>

lack of an identified Invasive Plant Outreach Coordinator, the council discussed the need for an in-depth review of plants that have been raised to be problematic by special interest groups or the general public (requests for review can be submitted via a form at cipwg.uconn.edu). Chair Wallace reached out to Connecticut Invasive Plant Working Group (CIPWG) to participate and support in the review process. CIPWG is a consortium of individuals, organizations, and agencies that collaborates and shares information about invasive plant issues affecting Connecticut and the region.

A CIPWG Subcommittee met five times this year to review CIPWG’s Research Plant List, a non-regulatory list maintained by CIPWG to monitor plants about which more information is required to determine invasiveness risk. The subcommittee determined the following recommendations, based on current research about these species and CT legislative criteria for including plants on the Connecticut invasive or potentially invasive list (cipwg.uconn.edu/criteria-for-listing):

Species evaluated:		Recommendation:
<i>Actinidia arguta</i>	Hardy kiwi	Do not meet the criteria required to be included on the invasive plant list. No recommendation for the IPC in 2023.
<i>Phellodendron Amorese</i>	Amur corktree	
<i>Wisteria floribunda</i>	Japanese wisteria	Meet criteria 1-5 and one or more of criteria 6-9. Recommend the IPC vote to move these plants to the Potentially Invasive Plant list.
<i>Wisteria sinensis</i>	Chinese wisteria	
<i>Aralia elata</i>	Japanese angelica tree	Meet all nine criteria required to be included on the invasive plant list. Recommend the IPC vote to move these plants to the Invasive Plant list.
<i>Elymus repens</i>	Quackgrass	
<i>Pyrus calleryana</i>	Callery pear	

Based on the CIPWG presentation reported to the IPC the IPC then voted to approve the following recommendations:

- Callery pear (*Pyrus calleryana*) is recommended to be added to the CT **invasive plant list**. CNLA representative Dustyn Nelson relayed that the nursery industry would support the removal of Callery pear from their inventory with a **3-year phase out period**.
- Quackgrass (*Elymus repens*) and Japanese angelica tree (*Aralia elata*) are recommended to be added to the **invasive plant list** with no phase out period.
- Japanese wisteria (*Wisteria floribunda*) and Chinese wisteria (*Wisteria sinensis*) are recommended to be added to the **potentially invasive plant list** with no phase out period.

Therefore, the IPC strongly urges the Environment Committee vote to take immediate action to approve and adopt the above three IPC recommendations, as well as approve the previous 2022 recommendation:

- Designate Porcelainberry (*Ampelopsis brevipedunculata*) and Mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*) as “prohibited from sale.”
- Add Callery pear (*Pyrus calleryana*) to the invasive plant list with a 3-year phase out period.
- Add Quackgrass (*Elymus repens*) and Japanese angelica tree (*Aralia elata*) to the invasive plant list with no phase out period.
- Add Japanese wisteria (*Wisteria floribunda*) and Chinese wisteria (*Wisteria sinensis*) to the potentially invasive plant list with no phase out period.

We hope these recommendations will be given serious consideration by the Environment Committee and voted on by the legislature early in 2024.

Additionally, the statute prohibiting individual municipalities from adopting an ordinance regarding the trade in invasive plants **expired in 2014**. The IPC believes it is **critical** that this prohibition, maintaining jurisdiction at the state level, be reinstated to avoid confusion among municipalities and nursery and landscape businesses. [see *Sec. 22a-381d. Prohibited actions re certain invasive plants. Exceptions. Municipal ordinances prohibited. Penalty. (e) From July 1, 2009, until October 1, 2014, no municipality shall adopt any ordinance regarding the retail sale or purchase of any invasive plant*]. **We hope earnest consideration be given to reinstate the expired statute by**

the Environment Committee and voted on by the legislature early in 2024.

As environmental and economic damage by increasing populations of invasive plants continues to accelerate, requests from communities, businesses, private landowners, and public land managers for advice and solutions for managing these problematic, non-native species continues. Since removal of invasive species from natural areas is extremely costly, the state is best served by programs that prevent future invasions through education, training, and the targeting of resources toward early detection and eradication campaigns. Prevention and early detection, coupled with public education and training, represent the most efficient, timely, and effective responses to emerging invasions and merit increased emphasis and legislative financial support, not passive neglect. The IPC supports research, educational outreach, and training by UConn, CAES, and CIPWG. The CIPWG annual report, which documents training and outreach to combat invasive species, can be viewed at cipwg.uconn.edu.

Over the past 20 years, DEEP, UConn, CAES, and DoAg have taken up the responsibility of responding to invasive plant issues by utilizing the resources and networks that the Council provides. Ongoing loss of critical staff positions has dramatically limited these agencies' ability to process invasive plant management permits and control invasive species. The activities of the future Connecticut Invasive Plants Outreach Specialist will support recommendations of the IPC and help to guide invasive plant education through public outreach, education, and training. We look forward to working with the Invasive Plant Outreach Specialist in 2024.

I and other Council members are available to answer questions and provide advice as needed. Please contact me via email at victoria.wallace@uconn.edu if questions arise. See cipwg.uconn.edu/ipc for IPC minutes and more information from the IPC and affiliated groups.

Sincerely,

Victoria Wallace

Victoria Wallace
Connecticut Invasive Plants Council, Chair
Dept. of Extension
University of Connecticut

William Moorhead
CT Dept. of Energy and Environmental Protection

Darryl Newman
Planters' Choice Nursery
Representing a commercial plant business

Dustyn Nelson
CT Nursery and Landscape Association

Denise Savageau
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Dr. Jatinder Aulakh
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Dr. John Silander, Jr.
Professor Emeritus, Dept. of Ecology and
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* As established in 2003, the Invasive Plants Council operates pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes §22a-381 through §22a-381d and is responsible for developing programs and materials to educate the public on issues related to invasive plants, developing recommendations for controlling and abating the dissemination of invasive species, updating and publishing a list of invasive plants, supporting agencies charged with conducting research on invasive plant control, supporting the development of non-invasive varieties, and making recommendations to the General Assembly for the prohibition of any plant determined to be invasive.

ⁱ In Connecticut, plants must demonstrate nine specific criteria to be listed on the state's list of Invasive Plants. These criteria are defined in Sec. 22a-381b of the CT General Statutes as follows:

(a) In publishing and updating the list of invasive plants required under section 22a-381a, the Invasive Plants Council shall determine that a plant possesses the following characteristics before it is included on such list:

(1) The plant is nonindigenous to the state;

(2) the plant is naturalized or has the potential to become naturalized or occurring without the aid and benefit of cultivation in an area where the plant is nonindigenous;

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- (3) under average conditions, the plant has the biological potential for rapid and widespread dispersion and establishment in the state or region within the state;
- (4) under average conditions, the plant has the biological potential for excessive dispersion over habitats of varying sizes that are similar or dissimilar to the site of the plant's introduction into the state;
- (5) under average conditions, the plant has the biological potential for existing in high numbers outside of habitats that are intensely managed;
- (6) the plant occurs widely in a region of the state or a particular habitat within the state;
- (7) the plant has numerous individuals within many populations;
- (8) the plant is able to out-compete other species in the same natural plant community; and
- (9) the plant has the potential for rapid growth, high seed production and dissemination and establishment in natural plant communities.
- (b) In publishing and updating the list of potentially invasive plants required under section 22a-381a, before including a plant on such list the Invasive Plants Council shall determine that a plant: (1) Possesses each of the characteristics set forth in subdivisions (1) to (5), inclusive, of subsection (a) of this section; and (2) possesses at least one of the characteristics set forth in subdivisions (6) to (9), inclusive, of subsection (a) of this section.
- (c) Upon a finding that a plant meets the criteria for listing as an invasive plant under subsection (a) of this section, or as a potentially invasive plant under subsection (b) of this section, prior to listing such plant as invasive or potentially invasive, as applicable, the majority of the council's membership shall approve of such listing. On the request of two or more members of the council, the council shall hold a meeting, open to the public, not later than thirty days prior to the publication of the initial invasive plant list or the addition of any plant to the invasive plant list, as applicable.
- (d) In listing a plant as invasive or potentially invasive, the council may make recommendations on how to discourage the sale and import of such plants in the state and identify alternative plants to the listed plant for growing purposes.
- In order to be listed as invasive, a plant must meet all 9 criteria. In order to be listed as potentially invasive, a plant must meet criteria 1-5 and anyone of criteria 6-9.**