

INVASIVE PLANTS COUNCIL  
Twenty-second Annual Report  
December 20, 2024

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

The Honorable Joseph 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 (IPC) Chair, I respectfully submit this report on behalf of the Council for activities conducted in 2024.

Victoria Wallace, UConn Extension Educator and UConn CAHNR Dean Representative, served as chair for the 2024 term of the 9-member Invasive Plants Council. The council met three times in 2024 (February, June and October). Dr. Bryan Connolly joined The Invasive Plants Council as the Invasive Plant Atlas of New England (IPANE) representative, replacing Dr. John Silander. Dr. Connolly is a Biology and Botany professor at Eastern Connecticut State University. He conducts invasive plant field surveys and hosts undergraduate students on invasive plant removal projects. He is also active on subcommittees for the Connecticut Invasive Plant Working Group (CIPWG).

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., 2022<sup>1</sup>). 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. Invasive plants pose genuine concern for Connecticut residents and businesses.

Over the past 20 years, UConn Extension, CAES, CT DEEP, and the Department of Agriculture (DoAg) have taken up the charge of responding to invasive plant issues by utilizing the resources and networks provided by the IPC. Ongoing loss of critical staff positions has dramatically limited the ability of these agencies to process invasive plant management permits and control invasive species.

In January 2024, Dr. Lauren Kurtz was hired as the UConn Invasive Species Outreach Specialist. Complementing her efforts on early detection and communication coordination from the CAES OAIS office, Dr. Kurtz's job duties included being appointed as secretary for the Connecticut IPC. As Council secretary, she prepared agendas, took and distributed minutes, posted minutes on the IPC website, and responded to requests for information and tasks from the Council. She also

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<sup>1</sup> 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>

reviewed literature and invasive plant lists from other states, making recommendations to update the Connecticut Invasive Plant List. Additionally, Dr. Kurtz maintained the Connecticut Invasive Plants List, maintained a list of council members, and compiled the IPC annual report. Her position supported the IPC's recommendations and guided aquatic invasive plant education through public outreach, education, and training. Dr. Kurtz made a significant impact by connecting with numerous towns and non-profit associations, and assisting UConn, CT DEEP, CAES, and DoAg with invasive plant efforts. She was an invited speaker at numerous conferences and supported substantial outreach to Connecticut residents, while also performing the described essential administrative responsibilities for the Invasive Plants Council.

A mechanism to fund the Outreach Specialist via Public Act 19-190, “The Invasive Species Sticker,” which required an Invasive Species Stamp for the Operation of a Motorboat on the Waters of the State, was put in place to fund the position. Combined with federal funding for control of aquatic invasive species, the CT DEEP finalized the agreement to fund the Invasive Plant Outreach Specialist position at the close of 2022. The structure of the “Invasive Species Stamp” changed in 2023, and at the end of November 2024, after less than a full year of funding, we learned that DEEP will no longer fund this critical position after December 30, 2024. For the past two weeks, upon learning of DEEP’s decision not to fund this position, UConn has been attempting to preserve this position and secure alternate emergency funding for 2025, so that momentum gained this past year to support invasive plant education is not lost.

**The IPC wishes to extend our sincere appreciation for your swift action and passage of HB 5225**, in response to recommendations made in the 2023 IPC annual report. The bill includes five additional plants on the Invasive Plant List: Callery pear (*Pyrus calleryana*), Quackgrass (*Elymus repens*), Japanese angelica tree (*Aralia elata*), Japanese wisteria (*Wisteria floribunda*), and Chinese wisteria (*Wisteria sinensis*); and Porcelainberry (*Ampelopsis brevipedunculata*) and Mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*) to be prohibited from sale. Following testimony in support of the bill from IPC members, the CT Invasive Plant Working Group (CIPWG) members, other green industry associations stakeholders, and CT residents, the bill was passed, and the CT Invasive Plant List was amended.

In 2024, the IPC has been concerned with emerging challenges, including:

- Fifteen (15) plants listed on the Connecticut Invasive Plant list are not prohibited from sale.
- The lack of funding available in Connecticut for organizations to effectively manage invasive species on public and private land and inland waterbodies.
- The disposal of invasive plants that have been removed from private property.
- Invasive species continue to impact public health (e.g., barberry-deer tick-Lyme disease relationship).
- The growing number of plants on the CIPWG Research List that could become invasive in the future, especially due to climate change.
- The rapid expansion of *Hydrilla* throughout the Connecticut River and other waterways and the need to prevent spread to additional waters of the state.
- The emergence of toxic algal blooms in many Connecticut lakes.
- The loss of state-wide resources to address the spread of *Phragmites* in wetland habitat.

Following passage of HB 5225, the IPC maintained its momentum to address invasive plant

concerns in CT. The IPC considered recommendations regarding the status of Japanese barberry and Burning bush, two invasive plants not prohibited from sale that were identified as needing IPC attention during the legislative session earlier this year. In advance of the October IPC meeting, a CIPWG Subcommittee met three times this year to review the 15 invasive plants that are not prohibited from sale, including Japanese barberry and burning bush. Representatives from the CIPWG steering committee presented their recommendations to the IPC at the October IPC meeting. At the conclusion of this presentation **the IPC voted to approve the following recommendations to the Environment Committee to amend the CT Invasive Plant List as follows:**

- **Immediate prohibition; no phase out period:**  
Star of Bethlehem (*Ornithogalum umbellatum*)
- **Prohibition with 3-year phase out period:**  
Glossy buckthorn/European buckthorn (*Frangula alnus (Rhamnus frangula)*)  
Reed canary grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*)  
Winged euonymus (*Euonymus alatus*) \*\*with possible allowance for sterile cultivars  
European privet (*Ligustrum vulgare*)  
Black locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia*)  
Miscanthus (*Miscanthus sinensis*) \*with possible allowance for sterile cultivars  
Japanese barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*) \*with possible allowance for sterile cultivars
- **Prohibition with 5-year phase out period:**  
Norway maple (*Acer platanoides*) \*with possible allowance for sterile cultivars

**No action/change recommended at this time:** California privet (*Ligustrum ovafolium*); Rugosa rose (*Rosa rugosa*); Creeping jenny (*Lysimachia nummularia*); Amur maple (*Acer ginnala*); Common water-hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*); Water lettuce (*Pistia stratiotes*).

\* The IPC also discussed the need to initiate conversation to develop regulation recommendations regarding action related to the sale of sterile plants no later than January 2028 (before the end of the recommended 3 yr phase out period), to allow for the import, movement, sale, purchase, transplant, cultivation, or distribution of sterile cultivars of invasive plants.

\*\* Since the October IPC meeting, a sterile cultivar of winged euonymus was announced to the green industry and will be sold in CT by Prides Corner Farms under the Proven Winners Label.

**Therefore, the IPC strongly recommends the Environment Committee take immediate action to approve and adopt the above IPC recommendations.**

**We hope these recommendations will be given serious consideration by the Environment Committee and voted on by the legislature early in 2025.**

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]. As stated in previous annual reports, the IPC hopes the Environment Committee and legislature reinstates the expired statute. We request that the statute is reinstated with no end date or simply strike out the end date on the existing statute.*

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 continue. 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](http://cipwg.uconn.edu).

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](mailto:victoria.wallace@uconn.edu) if questions arise. See [cipwg.uconn.edu/ipc](http://cipwg.uconn.edu/ipc) for IPC minutes and more information from the IPC and affiliated groups.

Sincerely,

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

William Moorhead  
CT Dept. of Energy and Environmental  
Protection

Dr. Jatinder Aulakh  
Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station

Darryl Newman  
Planters' Choice Nursery  
Representing a commercial plant business

Dustyn Nelson  
CT Nursery and Landscape Association

Constance L. Trolle  
President of Bantam Lake Protective Association

Dr. Bryan Connolly  
Eastern Connecticut State University  
IPANE

Denise Savageau  
Connecticut Association of Conservation  
Districts

Eileen Underwood  
CT Dept. of Agriculture

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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.

<sup>i</sup> **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;
- (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.**