



# Action is Urgently Needed to Curb the Spread of Invasive Plant Species in Canada

## Prevention is the Key

The increasing numbers of invasive plants entering Canada each year are having serious ecological and socio-economic consequences. Invasive non-native species spread quickly and the cost for their removal escalates over time making management nearly impossible. Preventing their introduction and establishment in our environment with legislation is the most logical and cost-effective course of action.

## We Can No Longer Afford to Ignore the Consequences

Hundreds of millions of dollars are spent to control invasive plants in Canada. In British Columbia, just six species of invasive plants cost an estimated \$65 million in 2008, with a projected cost of \$129 million by 2020. Additionally, there are the inestimable costs to our natural environment — our life support system.

<b>Ecological</b>	<b>Social and Health</b>	<b>Economic</b>
Disruption of essential ecosystem functions (e.g. decomposition, nutrient cycling, energy flow, productivity)	Increased hazards to human health (e.g. toxins, ticks and lyme disease)	Costs for removal or control
Changes in the availability and quality of resources such as water	Threats to food production (e.g. agriculture and fisheries)	Negative impacts on agriculture, forestry and fisheries
Suppression, displacement or local extinctions of native plant species	Impacts on hunting and fishing	Loss of revenue from tourism, hunting, fishing and recreation
Degradation or loss of native habitats	Diminished recreational opportunities (e.g. bird watching, hiking, camping)	Increased risks of fire, erosion, and property damage
Disruption of essential food webs	Loss of our unique natural legacy (e.g. indigenous cultural heritage, maple sugar production, beauty of Canadian landscapes)	Damage to infrastructure (e.g. drainage systems, transportation corridors)
Impacts on wildlife (loss of insects, birds and species at risk)		Reduced property values
Loss of local genetic diversity due to cross breeding and concomitant loss of global diversity		



## How Invasive Plants Arrive in Canada

According to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), the [horticultural trade is the largest pathway for the introduction of invasive plant species](#). Many invasive plants arrive as garden ornamentals and are sold to consumers who are unaware of their negative impacts.

Measures to prevent the spread of ornamental invasive plants at provincial or territorial borders are inconsistent or non-existent. Ontario is the only province that employs an explicit *Invasive Species* statute. Other provinces have regulatory tools, such as Alberta's *Weed Control Act* and Manitoba's *Water Protection Amendment Act*. A very small number of invasive plants in the horticultural trade are currently regulated.

## The Time to Act is Now!!

National legislation and policies are urgently required to ensure that Canadians are equitably protected and there is a level playing field across the horticultural trades. Measures to close invasive plant pathways require:

- **The development of a national risk assessment database that can be shared. Plant risk assessments would include potential threats to the environment and public health. They would be conducted by scientists in consultation with stakeholders.**
- **Bans on the sale and movement of high-risk invasive plant species**
- **Labelling to identify and educate the public about lower-risk invasive plants**
- **Public education including alternatives to invasive plants**
- **Encouragements for the horticultural trades to adopt the current national [Code of Conduct](#). This would prevent the introduction and spread of invasive plants.**

## A Growing Opportunity

While restrictions on invasive plants may be disruptive in the short term, there are opportunities for innovation – including potential for expanding local markets.

Innovative nursery growers can capitalize on regional botanical uniqueness. Importers and breeders should focus on non-invasive plants that support our native pollinators, wildlife and or food production. This process can be transformative for the industry and ultimately benefit all Canadians and global biodiversity.

We must work together to stem the tide of invasive plant species. **Legislation is needed now** to reduce the escalating costs of management and protect our unique and precious heritage. By protecting our natural heritage from degradation, present and future generations can continue to enjoy the economic, social, and cultural opportunities a healthy environment provides.

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