

Email to Victoria Mulvale, Director of Marketing at Sheridan Nurseries

22/05/2023

Dear Victoria Mulvale

We were surprised to see your response to the question regarding the sales of invasive plants at Sheridan nursery, reported by Jack Landau in the recent [BlogTO article](#):

*When asked about its sale of invasive but otherwise legal plants, including creeping jenny, Victoria Mulvale, Director of Marketing at Sheridan Nurseries, contends that 'the plant in question is readily available across Ontario,' and adds that the company 'is committed to not selling any plant that is classified as restricted or prohibited by the Ontario Invasive Plant Council.'*

We would like to share several concerns about your statements.

First, the question asked was about the sale of invasive plants. The fact that a plant "is readily available across Ontario" is not a reason to sell invasive plants to unsuspecting consumers.

Second, while it may be legal to sell invasive plants, it is not ethical. "Invasive alien species are those harmful alien species whose introduction or spread threatens the environment, the economy, or society, including human health" (Gov. of Canada, *An Invasive Alien Species Strategy for Canada*, [2004](#)). By choosing to sell plants on this list, you are choosing to spread plants that are known to do harm.

Third, the [Ontario Invasive Plant Council](#) (OIPC) is not a regulatory body and does not classify plants as restricted or prohibited. They have identified an extensive [list of invasive plants](#) in Ontario.

In Canada, the responsibility for invasive plant regulation falls to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and is done under the *Plant Protection Act*. In Ontario, the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry is responsible for designating invasive species under the *Invasive Plant Act*. Very few invasive plants in the horticultural trades are regulated in Ontario or in Canada.

Fourth, the ornamental plant trade is **the largest pathway for the introduction of invasive plants** in Canada. Each time a vendor sells an invasive plant, invasive success increases. Please read the new white paper "[Reducing the sales of invasive plants in Canada: to safeguard biodiversity and human health](#)" published by the Canadian Coalition for Invasive Plant Regulation (CCIPR) to learn more about the regulatory processes and their shortcomings.

Fifth, in the recent "Value-for-Money Audit: Management of Invasive Species," the [Office of the Auditor General of Ontario](#) named these 28 plants that **should not be sold or shared in Ontario, and recommends that they should be regulated under the *Invasive Species Act***.

1. Amur maple (*Acer tatarica* ssp *ginnala*)
2. Autumn Olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*)
3. Creeping jenny (*Lysimachia nummularia*)
4. Dame's rocket (*Hesperis matronalis*)
5. Daylily (*Hemerocallis fulva*)
6. English ivy (*Hedera helix*)
7. Glossy buckthorn (*Frangula alnus*)
8. Goutweed (*Aegopodium podagraria*)
9. Italian honeysuckle (*Lonicera caprifolium*)
10. Japanese barberry (*Berberis japonica*)
11. Japanese honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica*)
12. Pachysandra, Japanese spurge (*Pachysandra terminalis*)
13. Lily of the valley (*Convallaria majalis*)
14. Manitoba maple, box elder (*Acer negundo*)
15. Miscanthus, silvergrass (*Miscanthus sacchariflorus* and *M. sinensis*)
16. Multiflora rose (*Rosa multiflora*)
17. Norway maple (*Acer platanoides*)
18. Oriental bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*)
19. Ornamental honeysuckles including: Tatarian (*Lonicera tatarica*), Amur (*L. maackii*), Morrow, (*L. morrowii*) and Bells (*L.xbella*) honeysuckles.
20. Periwinkle (*Vinca minor*)
21. Russian olive (*Elaeagnus angustifolia*)
22. Sea buckthorn (*Hippophae rhamnoides*)
23. Spearmint (*Mentha spicata*)
24. Tree-of-heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*)
25. White mulberry (*Morus alba*)
26. Winged burning bush (*Euonymus alatus*)
27. Euonymus, Wintercreeper (*Euonymus fortunei*)
28. Yellow archangel (*Lamium galeobdolon* syn *Lamiastrum galeobdolon*)

Sixth, the Canadian Nursery Landscape Association (of which Sheridan Nurseries is a member), the Canadian Society of Landscape Architects and the Canadian Council of Invasive Species (CCIS) developed a [code of conduct](#) for the horticultural industry. Members are advised to “Phase-out or dispose of existing stocks of specific high-risk invasive species” and to “Create and/or **share publications** on preventing the introduction and spread of known invasive plants available to your clients and customers such as local [Grow-Me-Instead](#) booklets, species-specific rack cards, or species-specific best management practices.” Has Sheridan adopted this code of conduct?

Sheridan Nurseries was founded by landscape architects Howard and Lorrie Dunnington-Grubb. “[Their vision was to bring the concept of the English garden to Canada.](#)” Much has changed in 100 years. We now know that plants brought to Canada from other countries do not support complex native food webs, and biological diversity is on the decline. We also now know that **invasive plants that displace native plants are responsible** for declines in native **biodiversity**.

You may be unaware that Canada, as a signatory to the *Convention on Biodiversity*, has agreed to [prevent or reduce the rate of introduction and establishment of invasive alien species by 50%](#) by 2030, in order to protect native biological diversity. We all must do our part if we are to achieve that goal.

We ask that you revise the vision of your company and commit to helping Canada meet its obligations to reduce invasive species. We recommend Sheridan Nurseries take the following actions:

- Adopt the [National Voluntary Code of Conduct](#) and proudly display your pledge to stop the sale of high-risk invasive plants.
- Label invasive plants now to inform consumers of their harm, while you work to phase them out of production.
- Ensure all buyers, managers and staff are knowledgeable about invasive plants and the harm they cause to help consumers make better informed choices.

In addition to the lists provided above, we suggest you consult the Canadian Council on Invasive Species (CCIS) list of "[Canada's most Unwanted Invasive Plants](#)." They point out: "**As Canadians, it is our responsibility to not grow, plant, trade or buy these high risk, invasive plants** in order to protect the natural diversity of Canada's landscapes."

Sheridan Nurseries should act now and become a [PlantWise](#) recognized retailer and demonstrate leadership in sustainable practices.

We have included some composite slides using photos from anguished gardeners and ecologists who are witnessing the damage that escaped invasive garden plants are causing (see end of email). They feel helpless to manage infestations and angry that they continue to see these plants sold to an unsuspecting public from retailers like Sheridan. We hope this will help to motivate your company to make a bold and important move and change your company's policies and practices.

Sincerely,

Cathy Kavassalis, Claudette Sims, Candi Jeronimo, Lynne Patenaude

Canadian Coalition for Invasive Plant Regulation ([CCIPR.ca](#))

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