

The following information was provided by the N.C. Invasive Plant Council, which hosts North Carolina's annual Invasive Plant Awareness Week. This year it runs April 1-7.

Non-native plants are those that have been introduced by humans, deliberately or accidentally, to locations outside of their native range, especially from other continents. Many of these plants become invasive, outcompeting native species for space, sunlight, water and nutrients. They also exhibit rapid growth over large areas and produce an abundance of seeds, which have a high germination rate. Once in place, they become persistent and may have a longer growing season than native plants.

Ultimately, non-native invasive plants reduce biodiversity by displacing native plants and providing reduced nutrition for wildlife. Some are overlooked by pollinators and other wildlife that do not recognize their flowers and fruits. In some cases, native animals have died from direct consumption of non-native species, or from harmful cyanobacteria which these plants may carry.

The good news is that anyone can control non-native invasive plants in their yards by using strategies and methods developed by public land managers and conservation organizations over the last two decades. Then, by replacing them with native species, homeowners can bring back wildflowers, trees shrubs, and pollinators that belong in our region. A recent study conducted by the Smithsonian Institution found that survival of baby chickadees declines in yards with less than 70% native plants. And, research by the entomologist Doug Tallamy has shown that native oak trees support over 500 species of caterpillars, whereas Asian ginkgoes host only five.

#### **Benefits of Native Plants:**

- Require lower maintenance
- Require fewer chemical treatments
- Provide beautiful color and foliage
- Are usually better at sequestering carbon
- Are better at conserving water and surviving weather extremes
- Provide the best food, cover, and nesting habitat for wildlife

#### **What can you do to stop the spread of invasive plants?**

- **Learn** about invasive plants and how to identify them
- **Landscape** your yard and gardens with native plants
- **Clean** boots, equipment, tires, and the dog before and after hiking or working in an infested area
- **Know** the source of your fill dirt, gravel or mulch to be sure they are free of invasive plants or seeds
- **Get involved** in volunteer control efforts with local organizations, garden clubs, and county/municipal parks, which hold invasive plant control events

Probably everyone can recognize kudzu, since it is highly visible along highways where it was once planted. But here are 10 other problematic non-native invasive plants that homeowners may find (and hopefully remove) from their yards:

- Bradford Pear (*Pyrus calleryana*)
- Burning Bush (*Euonymus alatus*)
- Butterfly Bush (*Buddleja davidii*)
- Chinese Silvergrass (*Miscanthus sinensis*)
- Fig Buttercup (*Ficaria verna*)
- Japanese Spirea (*Spiraea japonica*)
- Mimosa (*Albizzia julibrissin*)
- Multiflora Rose (*Rosa multiflora*)

- Olive species (*Eleagnus* spp.)
- Privet Species (*Ligustrum* spp.)

More information about invasive plants can be found by visiting the NC Invasive Plant Council website:  
<http://nc-ipc.weebly.com/>