

What are invasive species and why are they a problem?

Invasive species (IS) are species that are introduced to an area outside of their native range. They can be introduced intentionally or unintentionally. Once they establish, invasive plants can reproduce quickly because they have no natural predators or pathogens to keep them in check, and they often become the dominant species in an ecosystem. This can have devastating effects on the environment. Invasive species can displace native plants by monopolizing space, light, water and other resources needed for growth. They can completely alter native plant communities and drastically lower biodiversity. There are many invasive species that adversely affect the economy and human health, as well.



Two invasive plants commonly found in garden waste: Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) and Goutweed (*Aegopodium podagraria*)

Where do invasive species come from?

Many invasive species are still available for customers to purchase, be it online or locally. Gardeners buy invasive species for a number of reasons: they make good groundcovers, they are aesthetically pleasing, or their growing requirements match their garden conditions. Most often invasive species are bought by unsuspecting gardeners that are unaware of the environmental damage invasive plants can cause. Once planted, the invasive plants may grow normally for a couple of seasons. However, eventually they will begin to take over the garden and outcompete other species. Suddenly, a beautiful, diverse, garden is transformed into a vast monoculture, and the gardener is left with the task of removing the invasive plants.

Sometimes unwanted plants are disposed of in a way that may cause further spread, such as putting yard waste in a neighboring vacant lot or in a nearby natural area. This is called **garden dumping**, and it is one pathway through which invasive species are spread.

DO

- **Plant regional native species:** Native species have naturally adapted to the local environment and are non-invasive.
- **Dispose of plant material properly:** Place invasive plants in a clear plastic bag and label the bag with plant name or “invasive plant”. Place in the Black Waste Bin. Two excess bags can be placed beside your bin.
- **Contact your local waste management facility:**
<https://iwmc.pe.ca/interactivesortingguide.php?>

DO NOT

- **Compost garden waste:** Plant parts/roots may sprout and begin growing in the new location. Invasive plants cannot be put in the Green Compost Bin.
- **Burn garden waste:** Seeds contained in the waste may become air borne or remain viable, germinate and begin growing again.
- **Dump invasive plants in vacant lots or natural areas:** If a plant is invasive in a garden it will most likely be invasive in a natural area. Native plants species may be choked out, and food and habitat sources

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