

Exotic Invasive Plants - You Can Make a Difference!

Exotics are plants that are not native to a particular country, but have been introduced.

Exotic Invasives are non-native plants that out-compete vital native flora, which native animals and insects have evolved with and require for their survival. Without that interdependent web of native plants and animals, our environment becomes unhealthy.

Moreover, plants introduced from somewhere else leave behind the diseases and herbivores that kept them under control in their native habitats. This provides them with an advantage that allows them to crowd out native species.

While a more complete lists and control/eradication techniques are available at <http://www.newfs.org/conserve/index.htm>, those below are particularly pervasive in Milton.



Garlic Mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*): Garlic Mustard flowers and seeds in early spring before many plants have even broken ground. They form a dense stand, shading out other seedlings. Each plant produces hundreds of seeds, which last five years in the soil. Therefore, eradication should begin as soon as plants are noticed. Make a note of locations where you pull so that you can revisit in the fall (second flowering) and subsequent years. Each year, you should see quite an improvement.

Eradication and Disposal Method: Pull entire plant and root. In sun and densely vegetated areas roots are quite strong and deep and may require a little loosening with a spade. Dry on hard surface if can, then bag.



Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*): One small root in a mound of fill can start a major infestation. Roots are very deep. Try digging as soon as you notice it and get to know the seedlings so you can dig them up right away.

Eradication and Disposal Method: Cut in July. Spray foliage to point of run-off in September. When regrowth 3 to 4 feet, spade the ground 8 to 12 inches deep in early October.



Wild Chervil (*Anthriscus Sylvestris*): Wild Chervil is also called Wild Carrot and also has a tap root if allowed to grow unchecked. Mowing strengthens it. Foliage resembles a fern, especially until the stem appears.

Eradication and Disposal Method: Pull from the base of the plant gently until you feel the roots begin to give, pulling quickly leaves too many roots. The best time to pull is in spring after a rain. Poison ivy leaves are curled and bright burgundy so they are easier to work around at this time. However, pull it any time. If you don't have time, at least try cutting the flowers to avoid seed heads. Dry on imperious surface if can, then bag.

Warning: Huge person-sized Chervil with reddish/purple stems are actually highly poisonous Hogweed. Do not touch this plant, but contact the Boston Natural Areas Network, or the Town.



Purple Loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*): Purple Loosestrife chokes the damn on Harland Street, other waterways and meadows and is even present in yards. This tenacious plant produces thousands of seeds that last for a decade in the soil. Its square stem should help you identify it early before it fully flowers. Flowers progress up the stem, so seeds are produced over a long period, so control it early.

Eradication and Disposal: Dig up all of the root as soon as you see the plant.



Burning Bush (*Euonymus alatus*): Burning Bush is also called winged Euonymus, due to the wing-like projections on its stems. Birds love it, and so it is dispersed widely. It will not stay in your yard, and the seed is dropped encased in fertilizer. Unfortunately for the birds, like Japanese Honeysuckle and Oriental Bittersweet, Burning Bush does not provide them with the proper nutrients – especially those needed by migratory species. This, coupled with destruction of historical feeding grounds has led to a huge decline in our songbird populations. This is a popular shrub is available at most nurseries, but there are great alternatives so please use an alternative.

Eradication and Disposal: Burning Bush has a wide, shallow, fibrous root system, so it's actually quite easy to pull when small and dig out larger plants. Do your best to dry and kill.



Oriental Bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculata*): Oriental Bittersweet has hybridized with our native Bittersweet (yellow berry with orange calyx), effectively extinguishing it from the landscape. This robust vine chokes countless woodlands and its root system is made stronger by cutting. Get to know it – especially in its seedling stage, as even young plants have deep (red-colored) roots.

Multiflora Rose: (*Rosa multiflora*) / Japanese Barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*) / Japanese Honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica*): Until you have some time to tackle these three, just cut off the flowers to avoid seed production and dispersal.

Eradication and Disposal: Cut at the stem and paint herbicide onto the exposed stem – repeatedly – until dead. Smaller plants can be pulled or dug out with a spade. Do your best to dry and kill.

Pesticides: Try to use only organic herbicides such as Round-Up and Rodeo (use near water), but use them as a last resort. Herbicides kill every plant they touch, so target carefully, even using a paintbrush on cut stems. Pesticides also harm birds, mammals (including humans) and insects that eat contaminated fruits, stems, leaves, soil, etc. If you've got a big problem, find a licensed herbicide applicator.

It's helpful to spread the word to your neighbors, as seeds are dispersed by the wind (including passing cars), animals, and water. Those dispersed by birds are especially troublesome. Some plants also spread using underground roots or rhizomes. They have a way of creeping onto your property. When you have bare soil on your property, monitor the bare soil periodically. If you have Town land adjacent to you property, or unused corners in your neighborhood, think about getting a weeding group together if you spot any of these plants. It's a great way to reconnect with your friends and neighbors after a long winter hibernation!

Alternatives to Invasives: While exotic species are often beautiful, there are often native plants, shrubs and trees with similar characteristics. The New England Wild Flower Society's website lists alternatives to popular exotic invasives: <http://www.newfs.org/conserv/docs/invalt2.pdf>.