

LONG ISLAND WEED MANAGEMENT AREA

Invasive Plants – a blueprint for action!

Invasive plants are a leading source of environmental destruction across ecosystems on Long Island. Invasive plants spread into natural areas and out-compete, damage, and often eliminate native plants and the wildlife that depend on them. In addition to displacing native species, these weeds disrupt fundamental ecosystem patterns and processes, such as hydrology and natural succession.



Purple loosestrife may look beautiful, but don't be fooled. This plant destroys valuable wetland habitat.

Invasive plants interfere with outdoor recreation and tourism by crowding out the diverse blend of native plants and wildlife that people come to see and enjoy. On farmland, these weeds reduce crop yields and interfere with harvest operations. Along public roads and highways, invasive trees and vines restrict visibility and create dangerous roadside hazards. Such weeds are inflicting serious ecological and economic damage.

The good news is that Long Island has a blueprint for action to reduce the threat of invasive weeds. The Coordinated Invasive Plant Management Plan was developed by the Long Island Weed Management Area as the result of a collaborative process by more than 15 federal, state, and county government agencies and private conservation groups. Through this plan, land managers and owners can coordinate weed management efforts, both public and private, and thereby take advantage of opportunities to pool talents and resources, address the problem of weeds spreading from neighboring lands, and develop cost-effective and environmentally-sound management programs. Below is a summary of the recommendations.

Prevent new invasions

The most efficient and cost-effective way to stop the damage caused by this “biological wildfire” is to prevent weeds from becoming established in the first place. Prevention is the first line of defense and the highest priority in protecting lands and waters from degradation.

Many invasive plant species are not yet present on Long Island. These weeds must be stopped from accidentally or intentionally being introduced. Weeds that are already here

must be prevented from spreading into weed-free areas. About half of our invasive plant species are ornamental plants that have escaped from our gardens.

Rapidly detect and eradicate new invaders

Early detection and rapid eradication are used to control weeds that have bypassed prevention programs. Early detection and eradication of small infestations minimizes ecological damage, saves time and money, and is often more successful than attempts to eradicate large, established infestations. “Weed Watchers” volunteers are critically important to this and other weed management efforts.

Survey and map weeds

A confident knowledge of the severity and distribution of weeds is necessary for successful weed management. The goal of weed surveys is to accurately delineate lands and waters that contain populations of weeds, as well as to identify weed-free areas that require protection from invasion.

Education and outreach

Education and outreach are among the best tools for preventing the spread of weeds, detecting new infestations, and in rallying public support and action. Education and outreach are critical to establishing new funding and policy support for weed management.

Conduct research and share technology

Research is needed to develop new weed management techniques, as well as to better understand the biology of weeds and the conditions that make ecosystems vulnerable to invasion. Information and other resources need to be shared by land managers and owners.

Manage invaded ecosystems

Land managers and owners should contain or suppress expansive populations of weeds that are likely to spread by preventing the leading edges from advancing and ensuring that weed seed or other reproductive plant parts do not spread.

Restore degraded areas

Land managers and owners should develop and implement effective methods and procedures to restore areas that have been degraded by weeds.

Monitor results

It is important to know whether or not weed management programs are accomplishing their objectives and to continuously improve programs for maximum benefit to native species and ecosystems.

By pulling together, we can prevent, slow, halt, or reverse the spread of these biological invaders, thereby preserving Long Island’s rich natural heritage.



Published by:
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