

## Introduction

The green industry is increasingly aware of its relationship to invasive plants, and eager to play a positive role. Green industry members (GI) and home gardeners like Master Gardeners (MG) often view each other as a barrier to changing the plants offered for sale. To assess both groups' opinions, two surveys were conducted in fall 2006 to determine the attitudes of Maine's green industry members and Master Gardeners toward the invasive plant issue.

## Materials & Methods

Surveys were sent to 497 GIs and to 1184 MGs. Second copies were sent to nonrespondents. In total, 180 (36.2%) GIs and 749 MGs (63.3%) returned surveys.



Infestation of Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) invading a Portland ME garden.

## Survey Respondents

GIs were 100 (56.5%) male and 77 (43.5%) female. In age, 5 (2.8%) were under 30, 132 (74.6%) were 30-60, and 40 (22.6%) were over 60. In education, 53 (29.8%) had some technical school or university training, and 105 (59.0%) had at least a baccalaureate degree. Their businesses were 23 (12.8%) primarily wholesale, 84 (47.0%) primarily retail, 54 (30.2%) primarily service, and 18 (10.1%) a combination.

MGs were 121 (16.4%) male and 617 (83.6%) female. In age, 16 (2.2%) were under 20, 504 (68.1%) were 30-60, and 221 (29.8%) were over 60. Their gardening levels were 117 (15.8%) casual, 525 (70.8%) avid and 100 (13.5%) professional.

# Attitudes of Green Industry Members and Master Gardeners Concerning Invasive Plants

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## Results

Figure 1: Opinions of GIs and MGs about invasive plants as an issue, expressed as % of each group

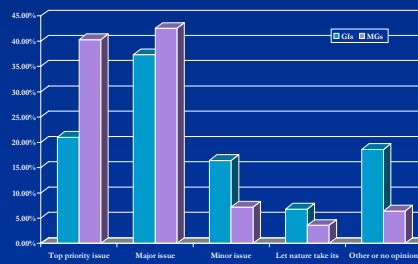


Table 1: Opinions of GIs and MGs about the role they believe the green industry should play in the sale of invasive plants

GIs N=177	MGs N=745	Green Industry's Role:
26 (14.7%)	26 (14.7%)	Businesses should not be allowed to sell any plants known to be invasive in Maine or elsewhere.
50 (28.2%)	269 (36.1%)	Businesses should not be allowed to sell any plants known to be invasive in Maine.
67 (37.8%)	220 (29.5%)	Businesses should be allowed to sell invasive plants, but they should be required to provide customers and clients with information about the plants' invasive status and how to manage them.
9 (5.1%)	4 (0.5%)	Businesses should have no restrictions regarding the sale of invasive plants.
25 (14.1%)	18 (2.4%)	Other opinion / no opinion

Table 2: Organizations/agencies that should be in charge of establishing regulation of invasive plants, according to the 109 (64.1%) GIs and 610 (84.6%) MGs who felt regulation should occur.

GIs N=109	MGs N=610	Who should be in charge of establishing invasive plant regulations:
2 (1.8%)	16 (2.6%)	Federal government
20 (18.3%)	144 (23.6%)	State government
22 (20.2%)	83 (13.6%)	Professional nursery/landscape associations
2 (1.8%)	11 (1.8%)	Environmental organizations
1 (0.9%)	5 (0.8%)	Universities
55 (50.5%)	267 (43.8%)	All interested groups should do this together
7 (6.4%)	12 (2.0%)	Other or no opinion
0 (0.0%)	73 (12.0%)	Checked two or more options

## Discussion

Vendors and buyers often view each other as a barrier to change in the marketplace, but Fig. 1 and Tables 2 and 3 show that Maine GIs and MGs agree generally that the invasive plant issue is important; that GIs have a responsibility to address this issue in some way; that invasive plants should be regulated; and that the regulation should be a collaborative effort.

In other New England states, invasive plant regulations are most accepted and effective where stakeholders such as GIs and their customers/clients were involved in the regulatory process.

In May 2007, Maine's legislature mandated the state's Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Resources to "convene a stakeholder group to conduct a study to develop processes and criteria to assess the danger posed to naturally occurring ecosystems by invasive terrestrial plant species and to determine which invasive plant species are of significant concern." This is widely viewed as a first step toward regulation of such plants.

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