

May all your future gardens be weedless!

Common Garden Weeds		
Common Name	Scientific Name	Plant Type
Common chickweed	<i>Stellaria media</i>	Winter annual
Common lambsquarters	<i>Chenopodium album</i>	Summer annual
Red sorrel	<i>Rumex acetosella</i>	Perennial
Ground ivy	<i>Glechoma hederacea</i>	Perennial
Large crabgrass	<i>Digitaria sanguinalis</i>	Summer annual
Quackgrass	<i>Elytrigia repens</i>	Perennial
Prostrate pigweed	<i>Amaranthus blitoides</i>	Summer annual
Common ragweed	<i>Ambrosia artemisiifolia</i>	Summer annual
Common burdock	<i>Arctium minus</i>	Biennial
Dandelion	<i>Taraxacum officinale</i>	Perennial
Hairy galinsoga	<i>Galinsoga ciliate</i>	Summer annual

A Volunteer Opportunity: Help Us Determine if Burningbush is Invasive in Maine

by Jennifer D'Appollonio, Lois Berg Stack, Mary Rumpho Kennedy and Donglin Zhang

Many of our favorite landscape plants have been introduced to our state. Most of these non-native plants are beautiful, functional and well-behaved. Our landscapes would not be the same without crabapples, for example, and our vegetable gardens would be very sparse!

A few species, however, escape from our gardens and become detrimental to their new habitats by aggressively outcompeting native plant species. These non-native invasive (NNI) species have become one of the primary sources of habitat destruction and loss of biodiversity in the U.S. Although NNI species have occupied the U.S. for well over a century, focused efforts to control and/or eradicate invasive species populations have been ongoing for only the last few decades. We have a lot of work ahead of us here in Maine. We still do not know where many populations of invasive species exist in this state, and these populations continue to spread and dominate ecosystems in invaded areas. It's difficult to address any problem without knowing exactly where it is.

New NNI Species Project

In order to support work on the issue of NNI species on a regional basis, the University of Maine has received a federal grant in conjunction with the Universities of Connecticut and Vermont. Projects of the Maine team (the authors of this article) include:

1. Development of an "invasive species walking map" on the UMaine campus in Orono, to help people identify and see first-hand the problems these plants can cause;
2. Creation of native plant gardens on the UMaine campus in Orono, to educate visitors about some native plants that can fill similar landscape roles as NNI species but not cause environmental problems;
3. Sponsorship of a one-day workshop to be held in fall 2006, to provide an arena for a discussion about the issues surrounding NNI species in Maine;
4. Documentation and management of one NNI species, Japanese barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*) in four locations across the state; and

5. Documentation of one potentially invasive species, burningbush (*Euonymus alatus*, formerly *E. alata*), throughout the entire state – this is the goal we hope you’ll help us to achieve!

Burningbush: An Easy-to-Identify Landscape Plant

You can identify burningbush by its distinctive characteristics. It has opposite-to-subopposite, finely toothed leaves that are 1-3” long, tapering to a point on both ends. These leaves can develop spectacular red fall color, hence its common name “Burningbush”. The plant can reach 15-20’ in height, although it grows slowly and is often pruned in the landscape to remain smaller. It produces flowers and fruits, but they are not very showy. This plant’s most unique characteristic is the source of its second common name, “Winged Euonymus”: the stems have corky brown wings on four sides. The most vigorous shoots develop the most prominent wings.

To identify this plant, refer to the photos in this article. You can find additional photos on the Invasive Plant Atlas of New England website at www.ipane.org. And, you may find specimens at a local nursery or garden center.

Burningbush has become a popular landscape plant for several reasons: various cultivars offer diversity of leaf color (one cultivar’s new growth is pink-splotched, and some have dark purple leaves); fall color is spectacular; shearing allows its use as a formal hedge; and it is easy to establish and maintain. However, it has become invasive in other New England states, and we believe it may be escaping into Maine natural areas, too.

How You Can Help

When gardeners ask “What can I do about NNI plants?”, one common answer is to get involved in community efforts to manage them. You may have experienced the problem of managing NNI

plants in your own yard – Asiatic bittersweet, common buckthorn, sweet autumn olive and others – and you know that once established, these plants can be difficult to control. If we can identify an NNI species at the onset of its invasion, map it to document the problem, and use that information to accomplish something proactive, we may be able to avoid adding another species to that list of formidable foes!

We don’t know yet if burningbush is truly invasive in Maine, but we hope you will help us find out. Our first step is to identify places where it appears to have escaped from gardens and become established in natural areas, and map these sites carefully. The information can be used to assess whether the populations of this plant are increasing, and whether they are actually outcompeting native plants.

Contributing to this project requires no hard physical labor on your part... just an alert eye and a few minutes of time to provide some information about sightings. If you’d like to help, just fill out the form included here, add a sample of the plant you’ve sighted (leaves and stem), and send them to us.

What will we do with the information? First, we’ll call you for driving directions to the site, and to determine if we need a landowner’s permission to enter the site. Then, we’ll visit each site to map the plants with GPS, note the environmental conditions, and create a base map of this plant’s occurrence in Maine natural areas. Remember that the first step in solving any problem is identifying the problem. With your help, we can take that first step. Thank you.

About the authors: Jennifer D’Appollonio is a graduate student working on this project. Lois Stack is an Extension Specialist in Ornamental Horticulture. Mary Rumpho Kennedy is a Professor of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology: Cooperating Professor of Marine Sciences. Donglin Zhang is an Associate Professor of Horticulture. All work at the University of Maine in Orono.

Your name: _____

Your telephone number: _____ Your email address: _____

Town where burningbush plants are located: _____

Are the plants on private or public land?

Send completed forms to: Lois Stack, 495 College Ave., Orono ME 04473-1294; email lstack@umext.maine.edu

Notes: Please report only plants that appear to be naturalized, not those planted in landscapes.
Please include a stem of the plant for confirmation purposes.
Deadline for submission of information is **September 30, 2006.**



Figure 1. The fall foliage and winged stems of burningbush.

Citation: James H. Miller, USDA Forest Service, www.invasive.org.

Figure 2. Growth habit of burningbush when planted and maintained in a lawn or garden.

Citation: Jennifer D'Appollonio, University of Maine



Figure 3. Growth habit of escaped burningbush in the natural landscape of New England.

Citation for both: Leslie J. Mehrhoff for Invasive Plant Atlas of New England; found at

<http://www.lib.uconn.edu/webapps/ipane/browsing.cfm?descriptionid=20>

