Non-Native Invasive ID and Control

A citizen’s guide to the non-native invasive plants that may be lurking in your backyard.
Common name
Scientific name

- Vines
- Shrubs
- Trees
- Herbaceous

Invasive priority level
★★★★ High
★★★ Moderate
★★ Low
★ Estimated level

Stars rank degree of invasiveness (negative impact on native plant and animal habitat). The more stars, the greater the impact.

The ranking system of stars is from the Invasive Alien Plant Species of Virginia (2003) list, published by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation.

Attention items:

- **Resprouts**: Plants will regenerate from root fragments left in the ground.
- **Reroots**: Plants will regrow from fragments, please discard with trash.
- **Bag**: Seeds and the rest of the plant should be discarded with trash, not yard waste.
- **Seed**: Seeds remain viable for several years. Plant requires many years to control.
- **Rash**: Prolonged contact with the plant may cause an allergic reaction in some people.

Flowering season

Fruiting season

Keep your yard invasive free:

- Plant only non-invasive plants.
- Share your knowledge and skill with your neighbors.
- Volunteer to help manage a natural area near your home.
Identification:
- Hairy roots
- Thick, leathery leaves

Threat:
- Increases wind damage to trees
- Displaces native species

Where to find it:
Forests and open areas

Autumn
Mid-late winter
Control methods:

- Remove from vertical surfaces first. Cut two feet above ground and then cut at ground level.
- Pull up roots (year round).
- Thick cuticle makes ivy resistant to herbicide.

Attention!

Resprouts  Reroots  Do not compost  Rash

Native look-alikes:

poison ivy

Virginia creeper
Identification:
- Keeps leaves in the winter
- Leaves are opposite and not joined at the base
- Larger vines have pale, shaggy bark

Threat:
- Girdles other plants
- Blocks sunlight
- Increases wind damage to trees

Where to find it:
- Roadsides, trails, forest edges, abandoned fields

Summer
Early autumn
Control methods:

- Pull seedlings and young plants.
- Cut two feet above ground and then cut at ground level.
- Apply systemic herbicides to cut stumps or leaves in winter when other plants are dormant.

Native look-alikes:

Trumpet honeysuckle

Attention!

- Resprouts
- Bag fruits
Identification:
- Barbs on stems
- Toothed leaves, five to nine lobes

Threat:
- Forms dense mats on natives
- Displaces native species

Where to find it:
Stream banks and forest edges

Japanese Hops
Humulus japonicus
Control methods:

- Hand pull before August or September when it reseeds.
- Systemic herbicides are effective.

Attention!

- Resprouts
- Reroots
- Bag fruits: Do not compost

Native look-alikes:

- Virginia creeper
- Wild cucumber
Identification:
- Large leaves have three leaflets
- Root crown at ground level

Threat:
- Displaces native species
- Can grow one foot per day

Where to find it:
Forest edges, roadsides, fields
Control methods:

- Cut two feet above ground and then cut at ground level.
- Remove entire root if possible.
- Cut or mow frequently.
- Systemic herbicides are effective.

Attention!

Native look-alikes:

- Poison ivy
- Grape

Kudzu

Pueraria montana

Resprouts

Reroots
Identification:
- Small barbs
- Alternate, triangular leaves

Threat:
- Thorns create barrier to movement
- Displaces native species

Where to find it:
- Summer
- Late summer
- Open areas in full sun
Control methods:

- Remove from vertical surfaces first. Pull up roots and bag if fruiting.
- Contact and systemic herbicides should be mixed with surfacant to help adhere to waxy leaves.

Attention!

Do not compost

Native look-alikes:

- pokeweed
- greenbrier
Identification:
- Alternate, glossy, round leaves with elongated tips
- Long curling tendrils
- Small greenish flowers
- Red-orange fruit along entire length of stem

Threat:
- Covers and kills native plants
- Displaces American bittersweet
- Increases wind damage to trees

Where to find it:
- Late spring
- Autumn-mid winter
- Forest edges, open woods, fields, roadsides
Control methods:

- Cut climbing vines two feet above ground and then at ground level.
- Remove roots.
- Treat leaves and stems with systemic herbicides.

Attention!

Resprouts
Bag fruits
Do not compost

Native look-alikes:

American bittersweet
greenbriar
Identification:
- Opposite, elliptical leaves
- Blue, lilac or white flowers

Threat:
- Forms dense groundcover
- Displaces native species

Where to find it:
- Woods, fields and roadsides

Spring-early summer

Rare
Control methods:

- Remove entire plant or mow frequently.
- Cut plant in spring and apply a systemic herbicide to regrowth.

Attention!

Native look-alikes:

- partridgeberry
- moss phlox

Periwinkle

Vinca minor, Vinca major

Resprouts
Identification:

- Variably colored berries
- Center of mature stem is white

Threat:

- Increases wind damage to trees
- Shades out shrubs and young trees

Where to find it:

- Pond edges, stream banks and thickets

Porcelainberry

Amelopsis breviligulata
Control methods:

- Prune in fall or spring to prevent flower buds.
- Cut at ground level and again two feet above ground.
- Apply systemic herbicides on leaves or cut stumps.

Native look-alikes:

- Grape
- Pokeweed

Attention!

- Resprouts
- Bag fruits
Identification:
- Evergreen, perennial vine
- Shiny, egg-shaped leaves

Threat:
- Increases wind damage to trees
- Displaces natives

Where to find it:
Forest openings, wet areas

Mid-summer
Late autumn/ mid-winter
Control methods:
- Hand pull.
- Cut two feet above ground and then cut at ground level.
- Systemic herbicides effective on leaves or cut stumps.

Attention!

Look-alikes:
- Periwinkle
- English ivy

Resprouts
Reroots
Do not compost
Identification:
- Large leaves, usually 13 leaflets
- Violet flower clusters

Threat:
- Increases wind damage to trees
- Can alter sun and shade levels

Where to find it:
- Forests and forest edges
Control methods:
- Cut two feet above ground and then cut at ground level.
- Repeated cutting can exhaust root stores.
- Systemic herbicides can be applied to stumps and foliage.

Attention!

Native look-alikes:
- Trumpet creeper
- American wisteria

Wisterias
Wisteria floribunda, Wisteria sinensis

Resprouts
Reroots
American wisteria
**Identification:**
- Silvery, white scales and brown dots on underside of leaves
- Small, yellow flowers, red berries

**Threat:**
- Displaces native species

**Where to find it:**
- Forests, open areas and disturbed areas
- Early summer
- Early autumn
Control methods:

- Pull sprouts and seedlings in early spring.
- Prune flowers and fruits.
- Glyphosate applied to cut stumps.

Attention!

Native look-alikes:

spicebush

Resprouts

Do not compost
**Identification:**
- Leaves are egg-shaped and opposite along the stem
- Older stems are often hollow

**Threat:**
- Displaces native species
- Negatively alters natural ecosystems

**Where to find it:**
Forests edges, fields, pastures, roadsides, homesites
Control methods:

- Pull seedlings or small plants.
- Repeated cutting to ground level is also effective.
- Treat leaves or cut stumps with systemic herbicides.

Attention!

Native look-alikes:

spicebush
Identification:
- Finely toothed, opposite leaves
- Clustered flowers can be purple, pink, red or white

Threat:
- Forms dense thickets
- Draws pollinators away from native plants

Where to find it:
- Forests, roads and highly disturbed areas
Control methods:

- Hand pull or cut off flowers before they seed.
- Treat cut stumps with systemic herbicides.

Attention!

Look-alikes:

New Jersey tea

purple lilac
Identification:
- Red or green leaves
- Red berries, yellow flowers, wood and thorns

Threat:
- Displaces native plants
- Raises soil pH

Where to find it:
- Forests and open areas

Spring  Autumn
Control methods:

- Hand pull, including roots.
- Systemic herbicides are effective in early spring or during late summer fruiting.

Attention!

Native look-alikes:

- American barberry
- Hawthorne

Resprouts
Reroots
Identification:
- Showy, white and pink flowers

Threat:
- Rapid, dense growth
- Displaces native herbs

Where to find it:
- Disturbed areas and along streams
- Summer
Control methods:
-
- Repeated cutting controls spread but will not eliminate spiraea.
- Systemic herbicides are effective on leaves.

Native look-alikes:
- Virginia spiraea
- corymbed spiraea

Attention!
- Resprouts
- Seeds remain viable in soil for several years
**Identification:**
- Five to eleven sharply toothed leaflets
- Base of leaf stalk is “hairy”
- Thorny, arching stems

**Threat:**
- Displaces native species
- Competes for soil nutrients
- Thorns create barrier to movement

**Where to find it:**
Fields, pastures, roadsides and forest openings

**Spring-summer**

**Summer-mid winter**

**Multiflora Rose**
*Rosa multiflora*
Control methods:

- Pull out by root.
- Cut or mow repeatedly.
- Apply systemic herbicide to freshly cut stumps or regrowth.

Attention!

Native look-alikes:

- Swamp rose
- Pasture rose
- Blackberry

Resprouts
Bag fruits
Identification:
- Shrub, can be 15 feet tall
- Opposite, oval, evergreen leaves
- White flowers

Threat:
- Forms dense thickets
- Displaces native species

Where to find it:
- Forests, fields, floodplains

Privets
Ligustrum species
Control methods:

- Remove entire plant.
- For larger plants, apply systemic herbicide to the leaves or freshly cut stumps.

Attention!

Look-alikes:

- purple lilac
- itea
Identification:
- Reddish hairs cover entire plant

Threat:
- Displaces native species
- Thorns create barrier to movement

Where to find it:
Shade to full sun areas. Prefers slopes and uplands.
Control methods:

- Hand pull.
- Remove all root and cane fragments.
- Treat the canes and leaves with systemic herbicides.

Attention!

Native look-alikes:

blackberry and raspberry

Resprouts

Do not compost
Identification:
- Winged branches
- Brilliant red leaves in autumn

Threat:
- Forms dense thickets
- Displaces native species

Where to find it:
- Late spring
- Summer
- Forests, scrubland
Control methods:

- **Seedlings** - Hand pull.
- **Shrubs** - Cut repeatedly to control resprouting or uproot.
- Treat cut stumps with systemic herbicides.

Attention!

Native look-alikes:

- American euonymus
- Sweetgum
- Spicebush

Winged Burning Bush

*Euonymus alatus*
Identification:
- Leaves turn red in late fall
- White flowers, brown fruit

Threat:
- Displaces native species
- Disrupts natural succession

Where to find it:
- Early spring
- Spring-summer
- Fields and road edges, full or partial sun
Control methods:

- Hand pull. Remove entire root system.
- Cut large trees or girdle them in spring and summer.
- Apply systemic herbicides to stumps.

Attention!

Native look-alikes:

- apple tree
- basswood
Identification:
- Stalks and leaf veins ooze a milky white sap
- Fruits at 180° angle
- Bark may appear black

Threat:
- Forms single species stands that create dense shade
- Displaces native species

Where to find it:
- Forests, fields and other natural habitats

Spring ~ Summer

Norway Maple
Acer platanoides
Control methods:
- Seedlings can be pulled.
- Small to large trees can be cut to the ground repeatedly.
- Treat cut stumps with a systemic herbicide.

Attention!

Native look-alikes:
- Sugar maple
**Identification:**
- Large, compound leaves
- Crushed leaves and stems have strong, offensive odor
- Large leaf scars on trunk

**Threat:**
- Displaces native species
- Produces toxins that discourage other plants

**Where to find it:**
Fields, roadsides, forest edges and openings, disturbed urban environments
Control methods:

- Pull seedlings. Remove roots.
- Repeated cutting of sprouts over time may also be effective.
- Treat leaves or freshly cut stumps with systemic herbicides.

Attention!

Native look-alikes:

- staghorn sumac
- black walnut

Tree-of-Heaven
Ailanthus altissima

Resprouts
Bag fruits
**Identification:**
- Woody, perennial evergreens
- Long, narrow, pointed leaves
- Jointed stems

**Threat:**
- Spreads quickly through underground stems
- Displaces native species

**Where to find it:**
- Usually near homes or on stream banks
Control methods:

- Cut to the ground in June.
- Apply systemic herbicide in fall to re-growth. Reapply two weeks later.

Attention!

Resprouts  Reroots  Do not compost  giant cane
Identification:
- Cylindrical seed pods and small, white, cross-shaped flowers
- Heart-shaped, coarsley toothed leaves
- Leaves smell like garlic when crushed

Threat:
- Displaces native species
- Threatens rare native insects
- Interferes with tree establishment

Where to find it:
Wooded stream banks, forests and floodplains
Control methods:

- Hand pull, including roots.
- Cut flowering stems at ground level to prevent seed dispersal.
- Systemic herbicides can be effective on leaves.

Attention!

- Resprouts
- Do not compost

Native look-alikes:

- early saxifrage
- sweet cicely
Identification:
- Broad, oval to triangular leaves, pointed at top
- Jointed stems that resemble bamboo
- Sprays of greenish-white flowers

Threat:
- Forms dense thickets
- Alters natural ecosystems

Where to find it:
Near water sources, along streams and in low areas
Control methods:

- Single young plants can be pulled by hand. Remove roots.
- Cut repeatedly.
- Treat foliage or freshly cut stems with systemic herbicides.

Attention!

Resprouts
Bag fruits
Do not compost

Look-alikes:

- prince’s feather
- Virginia knotweed
**Identification:**
- Short grass less than 3’ tall
- Silver stripe down center of leaf
- Pulls up with gentle tug

**Threat:**
- Displaces native species
- May alter forest and water chemistry

**Where to find it:**
Almost anywhere. Readily invades disturbed areas.
Control methods:

♦ Pull at any time.
♦ Mow flowering plants before seed production (July).
♦ Contact or systemic herbicides useful for large infestations.

Attention!

Seeds remain viable in soil for at least three years

Native look-alikes:

deertongue

bearded shorthusk
Identification:
• Dark green leaves
• Glossy, butter-yellow flowers

Threat:
• Emerges earlier than most native plants
• Displaces native species

Where to find it:
Moist, forested floodplains
**Control methods:**

- Do not pull by hand, tubers will spread.

- Apply contact or systemic herbicides before flowers appear.

**Attention!**

- Resprouts from unearthed tubers
- Do not compost

**Native look-alikes:**

- Marsh marigold
- Buttercup

*Lesser Celandine*

*Ranunculus ficaria*
Identification:
- Evergreen ground cover
- Small white flowers

Threat:
- Displaces native species

Where to find it:
In dense shade along forest edges, near streams
Control methods:

- Pull year-round, being careful to get all root fragments.

Attention!

- Resprouts
- Reroots

Look-aikes:

- Allegheny spurge
- Archangel
This work supports the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors’ 20-year environmental vision.

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