

# I went to the garden center looking to purchase a particular plant and was told the plant is an “Invasive Plant” and they do not sell it. What exactly does that mean?

## **What is an Invasive Plant?**

An invasive plant (including its seeds, eggs, spores, or other biological material capable of propagating that species) is one whose introduction to an area does or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health. Its spread is often rampant due to the lack of natural checks and balances found in its native range..

## **How does an *invasive plant* “invade”?**

First, the plant is introduced to an area, transported by humans across a major geographical barrier. Then, the introduced plants produce offspring by the way of seeds, rhizomes, stolons or creeping stems. Next, naturalization starts because environmental factors, predators (insects, plant diseases and foraging animals) and other barriers to survival which kept growth in check in the native range are now nonexistent in this new habitat. Some of these invasives only colonize an area, but others spread aggressively and spread over an area in a few years

## **Why should we be concerned?**

*Nonnative, invasive plants* have negative effects on the *native plants, animals* and *microbes* that already exist in an established ecosystem. First, invasive plants threaten the health of natural areas by replacing already existing diverse systems with single stands of nonnative species. Next, invasive plants change soil chemistry, land form processes, fire regime (the pattern, frequency and intensity of the wildfires that prevail in a given ecosystem), and hydrology (usage, movement and availability of water on, above or below the surface of an ecosystem). Finally, an invasion of nonnative plants creates competition with existing endangered species as well as with native plants.

## **Our role as the home gardener:**

1. Make wise decisions when purchasing new plants. Check out these sites to see if the plants that interest you are perceived to be a threat to our environment.

Nature Serve: <http://www.natureserve.org/explorer/servlet/NatureServe?init=Species>

Va. Dept. of Conservation and Recreation: [http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural\\_heritage/invspdflist.shtml](http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural_heritage/invspdflist.shtml)

Southeast Exotic Pest Plant Council: <http://www.se-eppc.org/>

2. Choose plants that are native to our area. The Virginia Native Plant Society has developed lists of plants that are native to our state. Check them out at <http://www.dcr.state.va.us/dnh/native.htm>