

WHY NATIVE PLANTS?

Gardening with native plants makes environmental and economic sense—plus, they're beautiful! Native plants are those that were here prior to European settlement and co-evolved with local wildlife over thousands of years. They are adapted to local conditions.

Benefits of gardening with native plants:

- Native plants are low-maintenance. They don't need fertilizer, require little water once established, and come back year after year.
- They provide food for birds in the forms of seeds, berries, and insects.
- From steep slopes to clay soils to the spot in your yard that never drains, there is a native plant that has adapted to those conditions and will flourish.
- Pollinators and other native insects are the foundation of our ecosystem—and they need native plants thrive.
- Gardening with native plants supports biodiversity.



GROW HABITAT BY REPLACING INVASIVES WITH NATIVES

We can all make a difference for the environment through our gardening choices. It starts by avoiding adding invasive species to our yards.

With over 2,000 species native to Pennsylvania, there are many high-wildlife value species to replace any invasive species.

Contact Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania for more information and resources.



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INVASIVE vs. NATIVE PLANTS

***Our Gardening Choices Matter
for the Environment***

Annually, invasive species cause over \$100 million in economic damages in Pennsylvania and degrade our ecosystems. Simple changes like gardening with native plants and avoiding invasive species can make a big difference.





WHAT IS AN INVASIVE PLANT?

Invasive plants have the following qualities:

- Non-native to the region.
- Cause environmental or economic harm to the introduced environment.
- Grow and reproduce rapidly, with the ability to outcompete native plants.
- Readily spread from areas where planted to nearby forests, waterways, and other natural areas.
- Can grow in a wide range of conditions, especially disturbed areas.
- Provide limited wildlife value.

Burning bush (above) and privet (below) are common invasive landscape plants. They are now found throughout PA's forests, where they outcompete native shrubs and degrade habitat. Sales of these species were recently banned in PA.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Invasive plants cause economic and environmental harm. Invasive plant impacts include:

- Loss of biodiversity and degraded forest health.
- Agricultural impacts through invaded fields and damaged fruit trees.
- Restricted recreational access to community parks, trails, and lakes.
- Safety concerns on roadways due to proliferation of invasive shrubs.
- Invasion of wetlands, waterways, and stream plantings, which impacts flood control, water filtration, and habitat quality of these areas.

DID YOU KNOW:

There are over 140 invasive plants in Pennsylvania.

The ornamental garden trade is the main way that invasive plants are introduced. Take knotweed as an example—it was introduced in the 1800s as an ornamental!

Barberry (Berberis thunbergii), shown below, is a common invasive landscape plant that creates a “nursery” for ticks.



WHAT CAN I DO?

- Get to know invasive plants and avoid adding them to your garden.
- Garden with native plants to support birds, pollinators, and other wildlife.
- When you're shopping for plants, ask for native plants and let store owners know that you're avoiding invasive plants.
- Remove invasive species from your property by following best practices.
- Invasive identification and management resources include:
 - Penn State Extension extension.psu.edu
 - PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources dcnr.pa.gov
- Encourage your neighbors and local municipality to incorporate native species and avoid invasive species.

Pictured above, the Bradford pear (Pyrus calleryana 'Bradford') is another common landscape plant that was recently banned from being sold in PA. There are many native trees such as Eastern redbuds (Cercis canadensis) and flowering dogwoods (Cornus florida) that also flower in spring, offering many bonus benefits such as supporting native pollinators and birds.
