

# Noxious Weeds in my Yard?

*“The invasion of noxious alien species wreaks a level of havoc on America’s environment and economy that is matched only by damage caused by floods, earthquakes, mudslides, hurricanes, and wildfire.”*

—Bruce Babbitt, as US Interior Secretary, 1998

## Does your garden contribute to the spread of invasive species?

Many familiar plants are invaders. Plants that were imported as exotic garden ornamentals are now choking our streams and lakes, invading native plant communities, destroying wildlife habitat, and increasing erosion. They can do this because the insects and diseases that kept them under control are not present in their new environment.

According to the US Department of Agriculture, noxious weeds:

- Comprise 8 to 47 percent of the total plants in most states
- Threaten two-thirds of the endangered species
- Invade western wildlands at the rate of 5,000 acres per day

Some common plants on the state noxious weed list include :

English ivy (*Hedera helix*)  
Scot’s broom (*Cytisus scoparius*)  
Spanish broom (*Spartium junceum*)  
Butterfly bush (*Buddleja*)  
Japanese knotweed (*Polygonum cuspidatum*)  
St. Johnswort (*Hypericum perforatum*)  
Mediterranean sage (*Salvia aethiops*)  
Dalmatian toadflax (*Linaria dalmatica* spp. *dalmatica*)  
Oxeye daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*)  
Fragrant water lily (*Nymphaea odorata*)

## What you can do

- Don’t plant invasive plants in your garden.
- Keep an eye on your garden, and don’t allow invasive plants to spread. Remove plants that spread too readily.
- If you find these plants for sale at your local nursery, suggest they find substitutes. Most responsible nurseries have stopped selling these plants.
- Beware of wildflower seed mixes. They often contain weeds, noxious and otherwise. Use only wildflower mixes that contain native plants of western Washington.
- If you need to control these weeds, look for methods on the King County noxious weed web site. Effective mechanical or manual methods may include cutting or pulling them out, removing seed heads, and using very thick layers of mulch to smother them.  
  
Sometimes herbicides will be necessary. This is not an easy choice for those of us who prefer not to use chemicals. It may come down to a choice between using a small amount of poison or losing valuable trees, salmon habitat or swimming areas in local lakes.
- Visit our web site for a link to King County’s noxious weed web site. The site includes photos, fact sheets and information about how to control these unwanted plants. 

