

# Connecticut Invasive Plant Working Group (CIPWG) 2012 Annual Report

The Connecticut Invasive Plant Working Group (CIPWG) is a consortium of individuals, members of environmental organizations, and affiliates of municipal and state agencies whose mission is to promote awareness of invasive plants and their non-invasive alternatives. Formed in 1997 as an ad-hoc group, CIPWG is now in its 15<sup>th</sup> year of operation. The working group meets 1 to 2 times per year to collaborate and share information on the presence, distribution, ecological impacts, and management of invasive plants affecting Connecticut and the region and to promote uses of native or non-invasive ornamental alternatives. The working group includes federal, state, and town agency staff, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), researchers, nursery growers, educators, master gardeners, community members, and interested citizens. Donna Ellis (University of Connecticut Department of Plant Science & Landscape Architecture) and Penni Sharp (Connecticut Botanical Society) serve as Co-chairs.

Since 2002, CIPWG has hosted biennial invasive plant symposia. The sixth biennial symposium was presented on October 25, 2012 at the University of Connecticut in Storrs, CT. The theme of the all-day conference was: *Getting Real about Invasive Plants: Prioritize, Strategize, Mobilize*. Previous symposia have typically attracted 300 to 400 people, but this year's conference was sold out at 475 registered attendees, and an additional 60 people were turned away when the event reached full capacity. Deputy Commissioner Susan Whalen of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) delivered opening remarks, and Keynote speaker Dr. Elizabeth Farnsworth of the New England Wild Flower Society presented, "Twenty-first Century Tools for Tackling Invasive Plants: Identify, Prioritize, Mobilize". Susan Parr (Federated Garden Clubs of Connecticut; CIPWG) was the first recipient of the Leslie J. Mehrhoff Award. Concurrent afternoon sessions addressed decision tools for management projects, invasives 101 (general information on invasive plants), aquatic invasive plants and clean boating, economics, restoration with native plants, and other topics. Research posters, other educational exhibits, and live invasive plant specimens were featured throughout the day.

CIPWG's news and events list serve has approximately 730 members. The CIPWG website has been moved to a newer server and is now accessible at [www.cipwg.uconn.edu](http://www.cipwg.uconn.edu). The website provides information on invasive plant topics that include identification, management, the Connecticut list of invasive plants, photos of invasive plants, invasive alternatives, resources, legislative updates, and much more. The CIPWG list serve and website reside on a University of Connecticut Department of Plant Science and Landscape Architecture server. Online reporting forms for mile-a-minute weed (*Persicaria perfoliata*), giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*), and purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*) allow website visitors to provide distribution information on these species. CIPWG provides links to the Early Detection and Distribution Mapping System (EDDMapS; [www.eddmaps.org](http://www.eddmaps.org)) to accept additional reports of any other invasive plant. During 2012, several new features were added to expand the CIPWG website, including a scrolling photo gallery of Connecticut invasive plants, early detection information, an event calendar, and new links to invasive plant fact sheets and management information. The design and layout of the site also underwent significant updates.

The Connecticut Invasive Plant Working Group maintains the following subcommittees:

- Education and Outreach (educational outreach about invasive species and their alternatives)
- Management (develop and disseminate information on invasive plant control options)
- Native Alternatives (explore and promote use of native plant species as alternatives to invasives)
- Volunteer (organize and provide assistance for pulling parties and other invasive plant activities where volunteers are needed).

Three invasive plant pulling parties for control of mile-a-minute weed were conducted in Sprague, CT on May 31, June 13, and July 12, 2012. Approximately 25 volunteers and project coordinators attended the three events, which were co-sponsored by CIPWG, DEEP, the University of Connecticut, and the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station.

On September 26, 2012, Penni Sharp from CIPWG and Bill Hyatt from the Connecticut Invasive Plants Council appeared before the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) to discuss the problems of invasive species in Connecticut. CEQ members showed interest in the issue and asked a number of questions regarding invasives. The CEQ included the following in its draft list of Recommendations for Legislation on November 14, 2012:

*“Appropriate sufficient funds to mount an effective defense against the largest ecological threat to Connecticut’s native habitats: invasive species.*

*Also require an appropriate agency (the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station, DEEP, Agriculture, or all three) to prepare a plan for rapid detection and eradication of newly discovered terrestrial invasive species (to complement the existing state plan for aquatic species).”*

CIPWG maintains a list of speakers who are available to give presentations on many aspects of invasive plants, including identification, control, and non-invasive alternatives. These speakers and other CIPWG members presented many lectures, workshops, demonstrations, and guided field walks during 2012. Two CIPWG exhibits developed in 2011 that feature terrestrial plants and aquatic species continue to be displayed at many public events.

**The CIPWG exhibits were displayed and/or invasive plant educational materials were provided at the following local, statewide, and regional events during 2012:**

- Bethel Garden Fair, Bethel (500 attendees)
- Bethlehem Fair (10,000 attendees)
- Branford Land Trust meeting (15 attendees)
- CIPWG Symposium, Storrs (475 attendees)
- CT Agricultural Experiment Station Forest Health Monitoring Workshop, New Haven (60 attendees)
- CT Agricultural Experiment Station Plant Science Day, Hamden (2 exhibits) (1,000 attendees)

**List of 2012 outreach events, continued:**

- CT Association of Conservation and Inland Wetlands Commissions Annual Meeting, Cromwell (250 attendees)
- CT Association of Wetland Scientists Annual Meeting, Meriden (27 attendees)
- CT Conference on Natural Resources, Storrs (200 attendees)
- CT DEEP Headquarters, Hartford
- CT Flower and Garden Show, Hartford (37,000 attendees)
- CT Nursery and Landscape Association Summer Field Day, Hamden (360 attendees)
- CT Nursery and Landscape Association Winter Symposium and Expo, Manchester (570 attendees)
- CT River Watershed Invasive Species Initiative (18 attendees)
- DEEP Vegetation Management Training Program, North Haven (45 attendees)
- Eastern States Exposition (Big E), West Springfield, MA
- Fall Garden Day, Norwich (80 attendees)
- Farmer's Markets in Monroe, Norfolk, Norwalk, Watertown, Westport, and Wilton (500 attendees)
- Federated Garden Clubs of CT, Inc. Environmental Studies School, Derby (22 attendees)
- Flanders Nature Center, Woodbury
- Floating Workshop, Mansfield
- Food, Land, and People Annual Conference, Madison (50 attendees)
- Gillette Castle, Haddam (210 visitors)
- Goshen Fair (30,000 attendees)
- Greenwich Audubon Hawk Watch (200 attendees)
- Hamden Earth Day Celebration (3,500 attendees)
- Harwinton Fair (26,000 attendees)
- Hilltop Farm Fest, Suffield
- Invasives 101 Forum, Newington (40 attendees)
- Invasive Plant presentation, Hampton (35 attendees)
- Invasive Plant Workshop, Woodbury (50 attendees)
- Invasive Species Workshop, Ridgefield (25 attendees)
- Invasive Workshop, Lebanon (48 attendees)
- Joshua's Trust and MassConn Sustainable Forest Partnerships Workshop, Mansfield (35 attendees)
- K-8 School Grounds Ornamental Plant Management Workshop, Hebron (outdoor component) (65 attendees)
- K-8 School Grounds Ornamental Plant Management Workshop, West Hartford (indoor component) (125 attendees)
- Killingworth Woodland Fair (14 attendees)
- Lebanon Town Fair (8,000 attendees)
- Legislative Reception, State Capitol Building, Hartford (150 attendees)
- Mad Gardener's Symposium, Falls Village (30 attendees)
- Mile-a-minute Weed Biological Control Cooperators' Meeting, Trenton, NJ (80 attendees)
- Mile-a-minute Workshop, Madison
- Native Plants Workshop, Vernon (16 attendees)

**List of 2012 outreach events, continued:**

- Nature Festival, West Hartford (200 attendees)
- New England Grows Great Ideas Pavilion, Boston, MA (15,000 attendees)
- Riverton Fair (15,000 attendees)
- Sierra Club of Greater Hartford meeting, West Hartford (20 attendees)
- Southern Connecticut State University, Institute for Science Instruction and Study program, New Haven (8 attendees)
- Suffield High School field walks with science students (60 attendees)
- The Living Earth Environmental Studies School (Federated Garden Clubs of CT, Inc.), New Haven (20 attendees)
- Town of Coventry (CIPWG exhibit displayed in Town Hall)
- Town of Marlborough event
- Trout Unlimited regional meeting, Bozrah (40 attendees)
- University of Connecticut Climate Change Forum, Storrs (74 attendees)
- University of Connecticut Cornucopia Fest, Storrs (5,000 attendees)
- University of Connecticut Garden Conference, Storrs (320 attendees)
- University of Connecticut Haddam County Cooperative Extension, Haddam
- University of Connecticut New London County Master Gardener Office, Norwich
- University of Connecticut New London County Master Gardener Plant Sale, Norwich (150 attendees)
- University of Connecticut Perennial Plant Conference, Storrs (325 attendees)
- University of Hartford, West Hartford (30 attendees)
- University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension Weed Management program, Goffstown and Manchester, NH (72 attendees)
- West Hartford Garden Club meeting (80 attendees)
- Wild Ones presentation, New London (13 attendees)
- Windsor Garden Club (40 attendees)

*Submitted by Donna Ellis (University of Connecticut Department of Plant Science and Landscape Architecture; CIPWG Co-chair), with contributions from Todd Mervosh (Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station), Charlotte Pyle (USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service), Logan Senack (University of Connecticut and Department of Energy and Environmental Protection), Penni Sharp (Connecticut Botanical Society; CIPWG Co-chair), and University of Connecticut Master Gardener Coordinators Jackie Algon, Regina Campfield, Patricia Eldredge, and Susan Munger.*

- 30 November 2012