



## MEET THE CONNECTICUT INVASIVE PLANT WORKING GROUP (CIPWG)

<https://cipwg.uconn.edu/>



The Connecticut Invasive Plant Working Group (CIPWG) is an ad hoc group of people who come together to work on invasive plant-related issues. As a group, we are committed to educating ourselves, providing educational outreach, and promoting activities that reduce the adverse effects of invasive plants. Such activities include detection and management of invasives and replacement of invasive plants with non-invasive alternatives. Partnerships for outdoor education events are coordinated by Rose Hiskes.

Current Co-Chairs are Rose Hiskes (Rose.Hiskes@ct.gov; The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station), Emmett Varricchio (currently in medical technology, formerly CAES), and Victoria Wallace (UConn Extension, Victoria.Wallace@uconn.edu; 860-885-2826) who also began serving as CIPWG's UConn liaison upon the retirement of Co-Chair and Co-Founder, Donna Ellis [UConn Emerita Faculty]).

### HISTORY

in 1997, CIPWG was founded by Leslie J. Mehrhoff, State Botanist of the (then) Connecticut Dept. of Environmental Protection and Donna Ellis of the University of Connecticut Extension who was working on a Beetle Farming program, teaching members of the public to raise the beetles that control invasive Purple Loosestrife. As State Botanist, Les had begun to recognize that there was a set of non-native plants that were increasing rapidly in number through Connecticut, spreading up roadsides, (particularly major travel corridors such as I-91), in wetlands, and in sites where soil was disturbed. Some of these plants had been present for years in Connecticut and were found in all eight counties while others were new to Connecticut and, though in but a few counties, were rapidly extending their range.

One of the first groups Les worked with was the Federated Garden Clubs of Connecticut where Susan Parr and Helen Pritchard quickly grasped the importance of the issue and provided Les a large and engaged audience for his message.

In the mid-1990s, Elizabeth Farnsworth facilitated meetings at the Connecticut Chapter of The Nature Conservancy. These meetings were attended by people from State and Federal agencies, academic institutions, and conservation groups interested in management and preservation of natural habitats, both terrestrial and aquatic.

The 1997 meeting from which CIPWG evolved was held at the Tolland County Agricultural Center and was open to anyone interested in the presence, abundance, and management of invasive plants in Connecticut. The 30 attendees represented groups that were to form the backbone of the organization: federal, state, and town agency staff, non-profit conservation groups, researchers, nursery and landscaping representatives, educators, master gardeners, and interested citizens.

### CIPWG SYMPOSIA

CIPWG holds biennial symposia to provide a forum for interactions among attendees and presenters of diverse backgrounds united in their interest in invasive plants and native alternatives. Talks tend to be management-oriented, while posters offer opportunities for sharing of academic insights. The 2020 and 2022 symposia were in webinar format.

### HOW DOES CIPWG INTERACT WITH THE CONNECTICUT INVASIVE PLANTS COUNCIL?

Prior to the Connecticut statute that set up the Connecticut Invasives Plant Council (IPC) and charged it with developing a list of invasive plants, CIPWG co-founder and DEP State Botanist, Leslie J. Mehrhoff had developed a list of non-native plants that appeared to be spreading in Connecticut. After the founding of CIPWG in 1997, the list was revised with the help of CIPWG members Betsy Corrigan and Ken Metzler as new information about invasive and potentially invasive species became available. In 2003 the IPC listed seven aquatic plants based on the list presented by Les Mehrhoff, who sat on the Council as the representative from the Invasive Plant Atlas of New England (IPANE). The Council adopted the full list of both aquatic and terrestrial plants as the official state list of Invasive and Potentially Invasive Plants in 2004.

CIPWG members attend Council meetings (which are open to the public) and CIPWG often is asked to give inputs. When a proposal to add Mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*) to the official list was made, CIPWG contacted their membership via the listserv to get information on the distribution and invasiveness of Mugwort in Connecticut. The Invasive Plants Council added Mugwort to the official list in 2012.

The CIPWG website has a tab for the Connecticut Invasive Plants Council. IPC meeting minutes and annual reports are available as well as links to the legal criteria for listing invasive species and invasive plant laws. **November 2022**