

INVASIVE PLANTS COUNCIL
Twentieth Annual Report
December 28, 2022

The Honorable Rick Lopes
State of Connecticut Senate
Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

The Honorable Joseph P. Gresko
State of Connecticut House of Representatives
Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Environment Committee Co-Chairs Senator Lopes and Representative Gresko, and members of the Environment Committee:

As Invasive Plants Council Chair acting on behalf of the Council, we respectfully submit this report for activities conducted in 2022.

The lack of funding for the Coordinator position has negatively impacted the activities and public outreach of the Invasive Plants Council (IPC)* since 2014. Fortunately, a mechanism to fund the Coordinator via Public Act 19-190, "The Invasive Species Sticker," which requires an Invasive Species Stamp for the Operation of a Motorboat on the Waters of the State, is now in place. Combined with federal funding for control of aquatic invasive species, the DEEP finalized the agreement to fund the Invasive Plant Coordinator position at the close of 2022. As a consequence of the source funding for the Coordinator, we expect the position to be filled in 2023, with majority effort directed on aquatic invasive plant species.

Richard McAvoy retired from UConn and fulfilled his final responsibility as IPC Chair after filing the 2021 IPC annual report. With a new 9-member council in place, the new CAHNR Dean Representative, Victoria Wallace, was nominated to serve as chair of the IPC. The council met three times in 2022 (February, June and October).

In the U.S., total annual costs directly attributed to control of or loss and damage from invasive plants exceeded \$34 billion (Pimentel et al., Ecological Economics 2005), with another \$43.7 billion linked to plant-specific invasive pests and microbes. Nationally, the annual cost of controlling aquatic invasive plants alone is estimated at \$100 million. In Connecticut, invasive plants continue to cause environmental and economic injury to our communities, land, and waterways, as well as commercial agricultural industries. Running bamboo (*Phyllostachys* spp.), an aggressive plant not on the Connecticut's invasive plant list, Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*), and other significant invasive plants continue to pose genuine grave concern for Connecticut residents and businesses. In 2022, the Council has been concerned with emerging challenges such as:

- The rapid expansion of *Hydrilla* throughout the Connecticut River and other waterways and the need to prevent spread to additional waters of the state ([Invading the CT River – The Spread of Hydrilla - YouTube](#)).
- The increasing spread of water chestnut and the loss of resources (monetary and manpower) dedicated toward control
- The emergence of toxic algal blooms in many Connecticut lakes
- The loss of state-wide resources to address the spread of *Phragmites* in wetland habitat
- The invasive barberry-deer tick-Lyme disease relationship and its impacts on public health
- The increasing spread of Callery pear (*Pyrus calleryana*) and Akebia vine (*Akebia quinata*) in terrestrial habitats.

The 2021 Annual IPC Report recommended that the status of Porcelainberry (*Ampelopsis brevipedunculata*) be changed to "prohibited" on the Connecticut Invasive Plants List. This plant has been on a watch list for many years, remains problematic and is no longer of economic importance to the commercial plant industry in Connecticut. In 2022, due to the concern about emerging and challenging terrestrial invasives, the council discussed the need for an in-depth review of the prohibited list in 2023 and have requested the Connecticut Invasive Plant Working Group (CIPWG), along with representatives of the IPC, to participate in the review process. CIPWG will also review the

protocol for the early detection/rapid response of plants on the CIPWG research list and will provide an update to the IPC in 2023.

As environmental and economic damage by increasing populations of invasive plants continues to accelerate, requests from communities, businesses, private landowners, and public land managers for advice and solutions for managing these problematic, non-native species continues. Since removal of invasive species from natural areas is extremely costly, the state is best served by programs that prevent future invasions through education, training, and the targeting of resources toward early detection and eradication campaigns. Prevention and early detection, coupled with public education and training, represent the most efficient, timely, and effective responses to emerging invasions and merit increased emphasis and legislative financial support, not passive neglect. The IPC supports research, educational outreach and training by UConn, CAES, and CIPWG. The CIPWG annual report, which documents training and outreach to combat invasive species, can be viewed at cipwg.uconn.edu.

Over the past 20 years, the DEEP, UConn, CAES, and DoAg have taken up the charge of responding to invasive plant issues by utilizing the resources and networks that the Council provides. Ongoing loss of critical staff positions has dramatically limited the ability of these agencies to process invasive plant management permits and control invasive species. The activities of the future Connecticut Invasive Plants Coordinator will support recommendations of the IPC and help to guide invasive plant education through public outreach, education, and training. We look forward to working with the Invasive Plant Coordinator in 2023. I and other Council members are available to answer questions and provide advice as needed. Please contact me via email at victoria.wallace@uconn.edu if questions arise.

As a final comment to this annual report, the statute prohibiting individual municipalities from adopting an ordinance regarding the trade in invasive plants has expired. The IPC believes it is important that this prohibition, maintaining jurisdiction at the state level, be reinstated to avoid confusion among municipalities and nursery and landscape businesses. [see *Sec. 22a-381d. Prohibited actions re certain invasive plants. Exceptions. Municipal ordinances prohibited. Penalty. (e) From July 1, 2009, until October 1, 2014, no municipality shall adopt any ordinance regarding the retail sale or purchase of any invasive plant*]. See cipwg.uconn.edu/ipc for the complete 2022 report from the IPC and affiliated groups.

Sincerely,

Victoria Wallace
Connecticut Invasive Plants Council, Chair
Dept. of Extension
University of Connecticut

William Moorhead
CT Dept. of Energy and Environmental Protection

Darryl Newman
Planters' Choice Nursery
Association Representing a commercial plant business

Constance L. Trolle
President of CFL
President of Bantam Lake Protective
Commissioner of Inland Wetlands, Morris CT

Denise Savageau
Representative of a nonprofit environment association

Dr. Jatinder Aulakh
Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station

Dustyn Nelson
CT Nursery and Landscape

Dr. John Silander, Jr.
IPANE project and Research Professor
Dept. of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology
University of Connecticut

Simon Levesque
CT Dept. of Agriculture

* As established in 2003, the Invasive Plants Council operates pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes §22a-381 through §22a-381d and is responsible for developing programs and materials to educate the public on issues related to invasive plants, developing recommendations for controlling and abating the dissemination of invasive species, updating and publishing a list of invasive plants, supporting agencies charged with conducting research on invasive plant control, supporting the development of non-invasive varieties, and making recommendations to the General Assembly for the prohibition of any plant determined to be invasive.