**Invasive Plants Threaten Maine’s Natural Treasures**

Bulletin #2536

**What’s the difference between a “weed” and an “invasive plant”?**

A weed is simply a plant growing in a place where it’s not wanted. It might be a problem locally, but it generally doesn’t spread to become a large-scale problem in natural areas.

An invasive plant is a non-native plant with very high reproductive potential and the ability to establish across long distances (for example, it might produce seeds that can spread by wind or by animals). An invasive plant can become established in natural areas, and disrupt natural communities by outcompeting native plants.

**What problems do invasive plants cause?**

Invasive plants outcompete native species and agricultural crops, causing billions of dollars of damage each year. They affect forests, wetlands, lakes, streams, croplands, and pastures, and degrade many of our sensitive natural habitats. They grow rapidly, multiply, and spread to unmanageable levels in short periods of time.

Invasive species are the second greatest threat to global biodiversity, after loss of habitat. Invading plants outcompete native species for sunlight, nutrients, and space. They change animal habitat by eliminating native foods, altering cover, and destroying nesting opportunities. Some invaders are so aggressive that they leave no room for our natives.

Invasive plants threaten Maine’s natural and working landscapes. Their aggressive growth degrades our recreational experiences. Species like Japanese barberry and multiflora rose can form thorny, impenetrable thickets in forests. Other invasive plants choke waterways, limiting their use. Invaders increase the costs of agriculture and affect forest regeneration. And, these species mar the natural beauty of our regionally distinctive landscape.