Sustainably-managed Forests Provide

Economic, Ecological, and Social Benefits Today and for the Future.

Invasive Exotic Plants

Greatly Threaten the Long-term Health and Sustainability of Wisconsin's Forests.

http://dnr.wi.gov/invasives/

Ecological Implication

The loss or reduction of native trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants due to invasive exotics threatens the biodiversity of Wisconsin's forests.

Economic Implication

Landowners and public land managers spend millions of dollars each year to control invasive exotic populations.

Social Implication

Invasive exotic species negatively affect citizens' livelihoods and quality of life.

Black Locust

Robinia pseudoacacia

Threats to Wisconsin's Forests

Black locust commonly occurs in disturbed habitats like pastures, degraded woods, thickets, old fields and roadsides. Successful reproduction via vegetative runners has contributed to the naturalization of black locust in upland forests, prairies and savannas. Because dense clonal stands shade out most understory vegetation, such tree groves can be detrimental to native vegetation. Forestry work is hampered by the presence of black locust because of thorns.

Basic ID

Black locust is a leguminous deciduous tree that grows from 30 to 80 feet tall. It is often attacked by stem borers and other insects, causing deformed growth and dieback. It has a shallow, fibrous root system and spreads by underground rhizomes. Young saplings

have smooth, green bark; older trees have deep, furrowed, shaggy, dark bark with flat-topped ridges. Leaves are alternate and pinnately compound with 7 to 21 leaflets. Leaflets are thin, elliptical, dark green above, and pale beneath. Smaller branches are armed with heavy, paired thorns. Flowers are pea-like, fragrant, white and yellow, and born in large drooping racemes. Seed pods are shiny, smooth, narrow, flat, 2 to 4 inches long, and contain 4 to 8 seeds. Black locust stands are easy to identify in spring because they typically form multiple-stemmed clones and are slow to leaf out. They produce showy flower clusters in May or June.

History

Black locust is native to the slopes and forest margins of Southern Appalachia and the Ozarks. It was introduced throughout Wisconsin in the early 1900s because it is a nitrogen fixer and its aggressive growth pattern and extensive root system discourage soil erosion. Black locust wood is also valued for its durability and high fuel value, and provides good forage for bees.

BUCKTHORNS

Rhamnus spp.

Threats to Wisconsin's Forests

Common Buckthorn - Rhamnus cathartica

Buckthorn cuts off sunlight to tree seedlings limiting forest regeneration and shades out native understory vegetation. Well-established in our southern woodlands, these shrubs form dense thickets.

Basic ID

Glossy Buckthorn - Rhamnus frangula

Both shrubs can reach 20' tall and have dark bark with silvery marks called lenticels. Common buckthorn has dull, green, toothed-edged leaves and female plants have dark fruits in fall and winter. The Glossy's leaves are untoothed and shiny on top.

History

Native to Eurasia, both were introduced into North America as ornamentals. The seeds are spread by birds.

Exotic Bush Honeysuckles

Lonicera spp.

Threats to Wisconsin's Forests

Dense stands of this shrub cut off sunlight to the forest floor, prevent forest regeneration, and displace native understory vegetation. Tartarian, Morrow's, and Bella are three species of honeysuckle considered invasive in Wisconsin.

Basic ID

All of these multi-stemmed shrubs (3'-10' tall) have shallow roots, oval leaves and fragrant pink, white or yellow flowers. They produce orange or red berries and have hollow stems.

History

Bush honeysuckles are native to Eurasia. They were introduced to North America as ornamentals. The seeds are spread by birds.

Garlic Mustard

Alliaria petiolata

Threats to Wisconsin's Forests

Garlic mustard displaces native understory vegetation and can cut off sunlight to tree and shrub seedlings, limiting forest regeneration. Rapidly spread by seed, it is a serious problem in forests in eastern and southern Wisconsin and is spreading elsewhere.

Basic Identification

This cool-season biennial herb grows 12"- 40" tall, has triangular shaped leaves with toothed edges and smells of garlic when crushed. It has clusters of small white flowers with 4 petals. First year plants are low rosettes with rounded leaves. First-year plants remain green through the following winter, making it possible to check for the presence of this plant in your woods throughout the year.

History

It is likely early European settlers introduced garlic mustard into North America for its cooking uses and supposed medicinal properties.

Japanese Barberry

Berberis thunbergii

Threats to Wisconsin's Forests

Japanese barberry is not yet abundant in most of Wisconsin's forests and can still be controlled if land owners and managers are vigilant. This shrub cuts off sunlight to tree seedlings limiting forest regeneration, and shades

out native understory vegetation. Forestry work is hampered by the presence of Japanese barberry because of thorns.

Basic ID

Japanese barberry is a compact, spiny shrub that commonly grows two to three feet tall. It has clusters of smooth-edged oval leaves, yellow flower blooms in May, and bright-red fruits in mid-summer that remain on the bush during autumn and into winter.

History

Japanese barberry was introduced from Japan around 1875. It is commonly planted as an ornamental, for wildlife, and erosion control. The seeds are spread by birds.

Reed Canary Grass

Phalaris arundinacea

Threats to Wisconsin's Forests

Reed canary grass can rapidly invade and dominate wetlands, moist meadows, riparian areas, and bottomland forests. Once established, reed canary grass forms dense, impenetrable mats that outcompete native vegetation.

Basic ID

This large, coarse cool-season grass reaches 2'-9' tall, has wide 3"-10" flat leaf blades that taper at the ends and hollow stems.

History

Native to Eurasia and N. America, vigorous varieties of this perennial have been planted throughout the U.S since the 1800s for forage and erosion control. It has become naturalized in much of the northern half of the U.S., and is still being planted on steep slopes and banks of ponds and created wetlands.

The Invasive Way to Travel

Invasive exotic seeds and plant parts are often small and easily dispersed by muddy shoes, tire treads, motorized vehicles, boat trailers, animals, flowing water, and even gardeners whose ornamentals escape into the wild.

Become a Wisconsin Weed Watcher

Become a Wisconsin Weed Watcher and help nip new plant invasions in the bud. The Wisconsin Invasive Plants Reporting & Prevention Project is an Early Detection and Strategic Response initiative. This program is for reporting NEW invasive plants not yet know to exist in Wisconsin. For more information and to view a list of targeted species go to http://dnr.wi.gov/invasives/futureplants/weedwatcher.htm.

What You Can Do

- ✔ Use native plant alternatives for landscaping.
- ✔ Know how to identify these important pests.
- ✔ Volunteer to remove invasive species.
- ✔ Remove invasives from your property.
- ✔ Monitor property for invasives annually.
- ✔ Clean clothing and shoes thoroughly after being in an infested area.
- ✔ Notify landowners or land managers of infestations.

For detailed descriptions and control recommendations go to http://dnr.wi.gov/invasives/

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