

# Protecting the Open Space Landscape of Monmouth County

In keeping with the Park System's mission to protect the open space resources and landscapes of Monmouth County, it is becoming necessary to address a looming threat to our parks and open space. Invasive species are poised as real threats to our ability to utilize and enjoy this natural resource. Invasive species have the potential to alter the form and function of the landscape by altering biological processes, displacing native species and introducing pathogens. The commitment to preserve our open space resource will require a plan of action to counteract this threat and protect the landscape we have grown to love, and want to protect for future generations.



High quality open space provides the citizens of Monmouth County with places to participate in healthy recreation and to explore and wonder at the natural landscape of our county.

## What is an Invasive Species?

A species is considered *invasive* when it disrupts the form and function of native communities. Invasive species can be plants, both aquatic and terrestrial, or animals including insects or microbes. Many invasive species are plants non-native to our region, introduced intentionally for erosion control or ornamental purposes. Others have escaped from botanical gardens and our own backyards, or arrived by hitching a ride with imported goods. The increase in intentional travel, trade, and shipping have caused a more rapid spread of invasives over the years. *Invasive* species grow and spread rapidly, getting established and persisting over large areas. Invasive plants may exhibit robust vegetative growth, high reproductive rate, abundant seed production, and longevity.

## What are the Problems Caused by Invasive species?

With little or no pressure from natural herbivores, parasites, predators and pathogens which can under normal conditions provide a check on growth, invasive species can dominate and spread almost without restriction.

Without adequate management, invasive species will overwhelm our landscapes and our native plant and animal communities and greatly diminish the aesthetic, recreational, and cultural values that have made them so important to us. Our parks and open space will, in all too short a time, become biological wastelands.

There are an estimated 4,000 invasive species that impact our economy to the tune of \$123 billion annually. Ecosystem impacts include disruption of normal regimes, such as fire; impacts to hydrology, affecting water quality and quantity; alteration and acceleration in erosion and sedimentation; and impacts to soil chemistry and nutrient. In 1993, the Congressional Office of Technology

Assessment reported that devastating invasions of plants, insects, aquatic invertebrates, pathogens, and other organisms have changed ecosystems and permanently diminished the biological diversity associated with them.

Invasive species are also a serious threat to our biodiversity, affecting native communities and populations. Some of the known ecological impacts of invasive species include the following:

- Disruption to vegetation structure
- Alteration/acceleration of erosion or sedimentation
- Reduced community biodiversity
- Increased competition for resources
- Hybridization with native species, altering genetics
- Acting as host reservoirs for plant pathogens and other organisms
- Loss of food and/or habitat for native insects, birds, and other wildlife
- Reduction of native plant-animal associations such as pollination and seed dispersal



*"A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends to do otherwise." -Aldo Leopold*

## A Community Effort

The Park System has initiated an inventory of invasive species within the properties it manages and has several active projects involving the large-scale removal of invasive plants. But, since invasive species are blind to property boundaries and ownership, a community-wide effort is crucial to stopping their spread. We can all be stewards of the landscape; here's a few ways you can help.

### DON'T:

✘ Buy plants or animals that have been identified as invasive— some nurseries, garden centers, and landscapers may promote the use of certain invasives because of their aesthetics, hardiness, and fast growth.

✘ Carry “hitchhikers” into open space areas on your clothes or pets— you may inadvertently spread invasives from one area to another.

✘ Discard yard refuse into parks— it may contain invasive seeds.

### DO:

✔ Use native plants in your yard and garden— contact the Deep Cut Gardens Horticultural Hotline at 732-671-6906 for suggestions regarding alternatives to popular invasives.

✔ Help in early detection so managers can make a rapid response. If you recognize a new invasive species, let park managers know.

✔ Volunteer your time and energy to help rid the parks of invasive species. Contact the coordinator of volunteers at 732-842-4000x4283 for more information.

✔ Encourage and support community initiatives to use native plants and control invasives. Ask your municipal public works and parks departments and local garden centers about their policies and practices.

## Invasive Species to Watch

### Current TOP 10 invasive plants in the parks:

Norway Maple  
Porcelain Berry  
Autumn and Russian Olive  
Multi-flora Rose  
Asian Bittersweet  
Garlic Mustard  
Japanese Stilt Grass  
Japanese Barberry  
Japanese Honeysuckle  
Ailanthus (Tree of Heaven)



*Porcelain Berry*

### Other invasive species or pathogens to monitor:

Asian Longhorned Beetle  
Gypsy Moth  
Kudzu  
Wineberry  
Weeping Love Grass  
Mugwort  
Knapweeds  
Knotweed  
Canada Thistle  
Purple Loosestrife  
Wisteria  
Bamboos  
Sudden Oak Death  
West Nile Virus



*Kudzu*

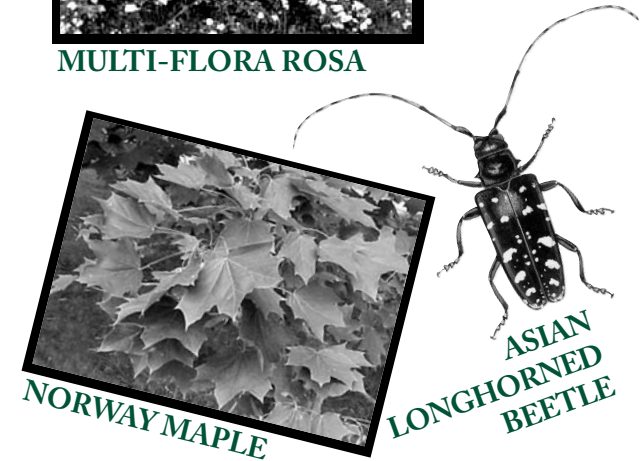


*Knotweed*

# Most Unwanted In Monmouth County



**MULTI-FLORA ROSA**



**NORWAY MAPLE**

**ASIAN  
LONGHORNED  
BEETLE**



**PURPLE LOOSESTRIFE**



**AILANTHUS**

Monmouth County Park System  
805 Newman Springs Rd. Lincroft, NJ 07738  
Contact: Ken Thoman  
732.842.4000x4267  
kthoman@monmouthcountyparks.com