



Knockout rose



Weigela 'Wine and Roses'



Itea 'Little Henry'



Vernonia fasciculata

Although invasive plants are almost always not native to a region, it is important to note that most non-native species are not invasive. In some rare cases, native species have become invasive. We use the following definitions:

Native (indigenous)

A species that was present in North America prior to European settlement or has arrived since through natural means of dispersal.

Non-native (exotic, alien, introduced)

A species that was brought to North America by humans, either deliberately or accidentally.

Invasive

A species, usually non-native, that is able to establish itself within existing native plant communities and is posing a threat to the integrity of the community.

People have introduced the vast majority of invasive species, either accidentally or deliberately. In this brochure, we focus on plant species that are used ornamentally and have become invasive in at least part of the Midwest. Cultivars or hybrids produced from these species may or may not be invasive. In the few published cultivar evaluations, some cultivars are more invasive than the parent species, others less or not at all invasive. Since we lack research about cultivar invasiveness for many of these species, MIPN members are actively gathering information about cultivar behavior from growers throughout our geographic range. When we have good evidence about a problematic or a relatively benign cultivar, we list those specifically.

Everybody loves a beautiful garden.

Gardeners love plants that are adaptable, tough, and fast-growing. It's even better if that plant produces showy fruits that attract birds or is an annual that self seeds so it doesn't need to be replanted every year. Unfortunately, many of these plant traits desirable to gardeners can also increase the likelihood that a plant jumps the garden fence and invades natural areas.

Invasive plants threaten our environment and economy. Invasive plant species pose an enormous threat to our native plants, animals and ecosystems; their toll on the environment is second only to habitat destruction. Invasive plants can also alter communities by changing the hydrology or soil chemistry. Invasive plants cost the United States approximately \$35 billion per year (www.invasivespecies.gov).



Rhus 'Prairie Flame'

We divided our list into three categories:

I Invasive

Species that are known to be invasive in our region per the definition above

W Watch

Species that currently pose a lesser threat in our region

M Maintain

Species that need maintenance to prevent invasion

We provide several alternatives for each of the invasive species listed in this brochure, both native species, both native species and non-native species that currently show no signs of becoming invasive.

Alternatives



Lobelia cardinalis



Aronia mel Elata



Sesleria autumnalis



Liatris spicata



Physocarpus Diabolo



Amelanchier regent



Thuja Brabant



Cotinus cogg. Royal Purple



Phlox Volcano



Amelanchier canadensis

Further reading

To find additional photos, full descriptions and cultural information for the suggested alternatives, please refer to the following references:

Armitage's Native Plants for North American Gardens
Armitage, A.M. 2006.
Timber Press, Portland, OR.

Native Alternatives to Invasive Plants
Colston Burrell, C. 2006.
Brooklyn Botanic Garden, Brooklyn, NY.

The New England Wild Flower Society Guide to Growing and Propagating Wildflowers of the United States and Canada
Cullina, W. 2000.
Houghton Mifflin, Boston, MA.

Native Plants in the Home Landscape for the Upper Midwest
Nowakowski, K.G. 2004.
University of Illinois Press, Urbana, IL.

Landscaping with Native Trees
Sternberg, G. and J. Wilson. 1995.
Chapters Publishing, Ltd., Shelburne, VT.

Illinois' Best Plants
<http://bestplants.chicago-botanic.org>

PlantFinder
<http://www.mobot.org/gardeninghelp/plantfinder/Alpha.asp>

For information on invasive plants:

Invasive Plants of the Upper Midwest
Czarapata, E.J. 2005.
University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, WI.

Invasive Plants: Weeds of the Global Garden
Randall, J.M. and J. Marinelli. 1996.
Brooklyn Botanic Garden, Brooklyn, NY.

For information on the definition of invasive species:

<http://www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov/docs/council/isacdef.pdf>



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Midwest Invasive Plant Network

Landscape Alternatives for Invasive Plants of the Midwest

Invasive species and alternatives

I	<i>Ailanthus altissima</i> (Tree of heaven); Suitable for many soils		
	<i>Gymnocladus dioicus</i> (Kentucky coffeetree)	NS	Large compound leaves; waxy brown pods; tolerant of wide range of conditions
	<i>Cladrastis lutea</i> (Yellowwood)	NS	White, fragrant, pendulous flowers; yellow fall color; brown pods; tolerant of urban environments

I	<i>Elaeagnus angustifolia</i> (Russian olive); Small tree, silver foliage		
	<i>Elaeagnus umbellatus</i> (Autumn olive); Large shrub, silver foliage		
	<i>Shepherdia argentea</i> (Buffaloberry)	NS	Silver-green leaves; silver stems; red to yellow fruit good for wildlife
	<i>Salix sericea</i> (Silky willow)	NS	Silver, lance-shaped leaves
	<i>Salix elaeagnos</i> (Rosemary willow)	E	Stems and undersides of leaves silver-gray; leaves look like long rosemary leaves
	<i>Cornus sericea</i> (Redosier dogwood)	NS	Bright red stems; small white flowers; good for hedges or mass plantings
	<i>Elaeagnus commutata</i> (Silverberry)	NS	Silver foliage; very tolerant of dry conditions

I	<i>Ligustrum vulgare</i> , <i>L. obtusifolium</i> (Privet); Hedge or border plantings		
	<i>Viburnum prunifolium</i> (Black haw)	NS	Small white flowers in dense clusters; dark blue berries persist into winter

I	<i>Lonicera morrowii</i> , <i>L.tatarica</i> , <i>L. x bella</i> (Bush honeysuckles); Fast growth; red fruit for birds and wildlife		
	<i>Amelanchier</i> spp. (Serviceberry)	NS/E	White flowers; edible fruit; fall color
	<i>Calycanthus floridus</i> (Carolina allspice)	NS	Fragrant, red flowers; aromatic leaves
	<i>Kolkwitzia amabilis</i> (Beautybush)	E	Pale, pink flowers; yellow to red fall color; grows quickly
	<i>Sambucus canadensis</i> (American elderberry)	NS	White flowers; purple-black fruit; attracts birds and butterflies
	<i>Sambucus pubens</i> (American red elderberry)	NS	Yellowish white flowers; red fruit
	<i>Lonicera dioica</i> (Red honeysuckle)	NS	Yellow flowers; red fruit; bluish foliage; attracts birds, bees, and butterflies
	<i>Lonicera involucrata</i> (Twinberry)	NS	Pale yellow flowers; deep green foliage; small shrub; erosion control
	<i>Stephanandra incisa</i> (Cultleaf stephanandra)	E	Arching stems; purple-red to orange fall color

I	<i>Lonicera maackii</i> (Amur honeysuckle); Larger size than above <i>Lonicera</i> spp.		
	<i>Amelanchier</i> spp. (Serviceberry)	NS/E	White flowers; edible fruit; fall color
	<i>Heptacodium miconioides</i> (Seven son flower)	E	Clusters of fragrant white flowers, purplish-red fruits persist through winter
	<i>Kolkwitzia amabilis</i> (Beautybush)	E	Pale, pink flowers; yellow to red fall color; grows quickly

I	<i>Rhamnus cathartica</i> , <i>R. frangula</i> (Common and glossy buckthorns); Hedge or border plantings		
	<i>Carpinus caroliniana</i> (American hornbeam)	NS	Small tree; orange to red fall color
	<i>Corylus americana</i> (American hazelnut)	NS	Shade-tolerant; edible nut
	<i>Rhamnus alnifolia</i> (Dwarf alder)	NS	Shiny, ovate leaves; red to black berries
	<i>Thuja occidentalis</i> (American arborvitae)	NS	Dense, evergreen foliage; good as a screen or hedge plant
	<i>Thuja plicata</i> (Western arborvitae)	NS	Dense, evergreen foliage; good as a screen or hedge plant

I	<i>Ulmus pumila</i> (Siberian elm); Fast-growing, tolerant of wide range of conditions		
	<i>Ginkgo biloba</i> (Ginkgo)	E	Shade tree; tolerant of urban environments
	<i>Ulmus americana</i> (American elm)	NC	Spreading, arching branches; good street or shade tree (disease resistant cultivars, including 'Princeton' 'Valley Forge' and 'New Harmony')
	<i>Ulmus</i> hybrids (Hybrid elm)	E	Arching branches; good street or shade tree (disease resistant cultivars, including 'Princeton' 'Valley Forge' and 'New Harmony')

I	<i>Butomus umbellatus</i> (Flowering rush); Water gardens		
	<i>Juncus effusus</i> (Common rush, soft rush)	NS	Stiff, pale green stems; grows in clumps; good for water gardens
	<i>Schoenoplectus pungens</i> (Common threesquare)	NS	Stiff, triangular stems; good for water gardens
	<i>Schoenoplectus acutus</i> (Hardstem bulrush)	NS	Stiff, round stems; good for water gardens

I	<i>Celastrus orbiculatus</i> * (Oriental bittersweet); Attractive red and orange fruit		
	<i>Celastrus scandens</i> (American bittersweet)	NS	Leaves, fruit, and growth habit similar to <i>Celastrus orbiculatus</i>

I	<i>Polygonum cuspidatum</i> (Japanese knotweed); Rapid growth; plumes of white flowers		
	<i>Aruncus dioicus</i> (Goat's beard)	NS & E	Showy plumes of white flowers; grows 3 to 5 feet tall
	<i>Cornus sericea</i> (Red stemmed dogwood)	NS	Bright red stems; small white flowers; good for hedges or mass plantings
	<i>Persicaria polymorpha</i> (Giant fleeceflower)	E	Showy plumes of white flowers; grows 3 to 5 feet tall

I	<i>Hesperis matronalis</i> (Dame's rocket); Bright pink and white flowers		
	<i>Phlox paniculata</i> 'Katherine', Shortwood', 'David' (Summer phlox)	NC	Narrow, pointed leaves; forms dense clumps; variety of flower colors
	<i>Phlox carolina</i> 'Reine du Jour' (Summer phlox)	NC	Bright pink flowers; mildew-resistant

I	<i>Lonicera japonica</i> (Japanese honeysuckle); Fragrant flowers, climbing vine red or black berries; attractive to birds (more serious problem in southern part of region)		
	<i>Lonicera sempervirens</i> (Scarlet honeysuckle or trumpet honeysuckle)	NS	Coral, red, or yellow trumpet-shaped flowers;
	<i>Lonicera x heckrottii</i> (Everblooming honeysuckle)	NS/E hybrid	Pink flowers buds open to show yellow center; fragrant flowers
	<i>Lonicera dioica</i> (Red honeysuckle or Northern bush honeysuckle)	NS	Yellow flowers; red fruit

I	<i>Lythrum salicaria</i> (Purple loosestrife, including all cultivars); Bright pink-purple flowers		
	<i>Liatris spicata</i> 'Kobold', <i>Liatris pychnostachya</i> (Blazing stars)	NC	Showy spikes of purple flowers
	<i>Vernonia fasciculata</i> (Prairie ironweed)	NC	Dense purple flowers; stiff stems
	<i>Lobelia cardinalis</i> , incl. hybrid cultivars (Cardinal flower)	NC	Tubular red flowers; attracts hummingbirds
	<i>Asclepias incarnata</i> (Swamp milkweed)	NS	Flat clusters of pink-red flowers; grows well in wet areas

I	<i>Phalaris arundinacea</i> (Ribbon grass); Tufted growth form; easy to grow		
	<i>Spartina pectinata</i> 'Aureomarginata' (Variegated prairie cord grass)	NC	Golden edged foliage; purple flowers
	<i>Carex morrowii</i> 'Ice Dance' (Ice dance sedge)	NC	Stiff, dark green leaves; drought tolerant
	<i>Sesleria autumnalis</i> (Autumn moor grass)	E	Forms tufted mound; drought tolerant

Watch species and alternatives

W	<i>Acer platanoides</i> * (Norway maple); Shade tree; tolerant of urban environments		
	<i>Acer miyabei</i> (Miyabei maple)	E	Small to medium tree; yellow fall color
	<i>Ginkgo biloba</i> (Ginkgo)	E	Shade tree; tolerant of urban environments
	<i>Acer freemanii</i> (Hybrid maple)	NS hybrid	Fast-growing; yellow to red fall color
	<i>Tilia cordata</i> (Littleleaf linden)	E	Good street tree; tolerant of urban environments

W	<i>Berberis thunbergii</i> * (Japanese barberry); Red fall color; tolerant of urban conditions		
	<i>Tilia cordata</i> (Littleleaf linden)	E	Good street tree; tolerant of urban environments
	<i>Buxus</i> spp. (Boxwood 'Glencoe' or 'Green Velvet')	E	Dense, evergreen foliage; small round leaves; fragrant
	<i>Ribes alpinum</i> 'Green Mound' (Alpine currant)	E	Dense foliage; lobed leaves; yellow fall color
	<i>Fothergilla major</i> (Large fothergilla)	NS	White flower clusters; red to orange fall color
	<i>Cotoneaster divaricatus</i> (Spreading cotoneaster)	E	Small, pale pink flowers; red to purple fall color
	<i>Ilex verticillata</i> (Winterberry holly)	NS	Bright red berries in dense clusters, persist through winter; attracts birds
	<i>Physocarpus opulifolius</i> 'Diablo' (Ninebark)	NC	Dark, reddish-purple leaves; pinkish-white flowers
	<i>Rosa rubrifolia</i> (Redleaf rose)	E	Purplish-red foliage; pink flowers
	<i>Rosa knockout</i> (Knockout roses)	E	Brilliant flower color; disease resistant

W	<i>Berberis thunbergii</i> , <i>purple forms</i> * (Japanese barberry); Purple foliage; tolerant of urban conditions		
	<i>Cotinus coggygria</i> (Smoke bush)	E	Airy pink flowers; purple fall foliage
	<i>Physocarpus opulifolius</i> 'Diablo,' 'Summer Wine,' 'Coppertina' and 'Center glow' (Ninebark)	NC	Dark, reddish-purple leaves; pinkish-white flowers
	<i>Weigela florida</i> 'Wine and Roses' (Weigela 'Wine and Roses')	E	Dark burgundy-purple foliage and rosy pink flowers

W	<i>Euonymus alatus</i> * (Burning bush); Red fall color; red fruit		
	<i>Aronia arbutifolia</i> (Red chokeberry)	NS	Brilliant red fall color; red berries
	<i>Aronia melanocarpa</i> (Black chokeberry)	NS	Brilliant red fall color; black berries
	<i>Fothergilla major</i> (Large fothergilla)	NS	White flower clusters; red to orange fall color
	<i>Fothergilla</i> 'Mt. Airy' and 'Blue Shadow' (Fothergilla cultivars)	NC	Abundant white flowers; red to purple fall color
	<i>Itea virginica</i> (Virginia sweetpire)	NS	Bright red fall color; green or red winter twigs; arched branches; fragrant white flower clusters
	<i>Viburnum prunifolium</i> (Blackhaw)	NS	Small white flowers in dense clusters; dark blue berries persist into winter
	<i>Rhus copallinum</i> (Shining sumac)	NS	Brilliant red autumn color; drooping red berry clusters; glossy leaves
	<i>Euonymus americanus</i> (Strawberry bush)	NS	Red capsules open to reveal orange-red berries; green stems in winter
	<i>Euonymus atropurpureus</i> (Eastern wahoo)	NS	Dark purple fall foliage; red fruits are attractive to wildlife
	<i>Acer palmatum</i> 'Osakazuki' (Japanese maple)	E	Brilliant red fall color; small tree

Maintain species and alternatives

M	<i>Euonymus fortunei</i> , trailing types* (Wintercreeper); Groundcover		
	<i>Arctostaphylos uva-ursi</i> (Bearberry)	NS	Evergreen groundcover; large red berries
	<i>Asarum canadensis</i> (Wild ginger)	NS	Herbaceous groundcover; heart-shaped leaves
	<i>Asarum europaeum</i> (Wild ginger)	E	Herbaceous groundcover; glossy, heart-shaped leaves
	<i>Helleborus</i> spp. (Hellebore)	E	Evergreen; shiny, dark green foliage

M	<i>Vinca minor</i> * (Periwinkle); Groundcover		
	<i>Arctostaphylos uva-ursi</i> (Bearberry)	NS	Evergreen groundcover; large red berries
	<i>Waldsteinia fragarioides</i> (Barren strawberry)	NS	Evergreen groundcover; butter-yellow flowers in spring

		
<i>Aronia brilliantissima</i>	<i>Asarum canadense</i>	<i>Itea 'Henry's Garnet'</i>
		
<i>Asclepias incarnata</i>	<i>Carex 'Ice Dance'</i>	<i>Helleborus 'Royal Heritage'</i>

*Notes

- Alternatives are identified as: **Native species (NS)**, **Native cultivar (NC)** or **Exotic** (not native to U.S.) **species (E)**.
- Celastrus orbiculatus* (Oriental bittersweet)**: Can be difficult to tell apart from the native **American bittersweet (*Celastrus scandens*)**. The native bears its orange fruits at the end of branches in large terminal clusters and the invasive species bears fruit in smaller clusters at nodes along the stem.
- For our “watch” species, large variation in fecundity of cultivars has been observed. If you decide to use these species, please ask for cultivars that set little fruit. Be aware that lightly fruiting cultivars may also escape. ***Acer platanoides* (Norway maple) 'Crimson King'** is a less fecund cultivar. ***Berberis thunbergii* (Japanese barberry)**: Some cultivars have set relatively few fruit in comparative trials, including **'Concorde,' 'Crimson Ruby,'** and **'Golden Devine.'** ***Euonymus alatus* (Winged euonymus)**: Heavily fruiting cultivars including **'Nordline'** and **'Timber Creek' (Chicago Fire)** should be avoided. The cultivar **'Rudy Haag'** sets relatively little fruit.
- Euonymus fortunei* (Wintercreeper)** This species can spread both vegetatively and by seed when allowed to climb. It must climb approximately four feet before it produces flowers and fruits. If it is contained (by concrete or mowed lawns) and kept trimmed, it is not a threat. It should not be planted adjacent to natural, or minimally managed, areas.
- Vinca minor* (Periwinkle)** This species can spread vegetatively into natural areas but does not spread by seed. If it is contained (by concrete or mowed lawns) and kept trimmed, it is not a threat. It should not be planted adjacent to natural, or minimally managed, areas.