

## **The St. Louis Declaration On Invasive Plant Species**

In December 2001, experts from across the globe met in St. Louis, Missouri to explore and develop workable voluntary approaches for reducing the introduction and spread of non-native invasive plants, which are serious threats to protecting biodiversity and ecosystems in the United States and other countries. The Workshop on Linking Ecology and Horticulture to Prevent Plant Invasions was convened by the Missouri Botanical Garden and the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew; and brought together some of the most respected leaders in their fields for the first time.

This landmark three-day gathering yielded the Saint Louis Declaration, which consists of two major components:

1. Overarching Findings and Principles that frame the invasive species problem and present the underlying basis for successful efforts to address it; and,
2. Draft Voluntary Codes of Conduct that help govern decisions made by commercial, professional and government groups whose actions affect the spread of invasive plant species including government agencies, nursery professionals, the gardening public, landscape architects and botanic gardens and arboreta.

The draft voluntary codes offer professional codes of conduct designed to curb the use and distribution of invasive plant species through self-governance and self-regulation by the groups concerned. This approach has been used successfully to ameliorate other problems but its application to invasive plant threats is novel and innovative. Importantly, the draft Voluntary Codes of Conduct were developed recognizing that education must accompany all efforts to address the problem and that some future government regulation may perhaps be needed if such efforts prove insufficient.

The following findings and principles were agreed upon by the entire St. Louis assemblage:

### Findings

- ◆ People are major dispersers of plants.
- ◆ The magnitude of this dispersal is unprecedented and has allowed dispersal of species that manifest aggressive traits in new areas.
- ◆ Plant introduction and improvement are the foundation of modern agriculture and horticulture, yielding diversity to our supply of plants used for food, forestry, landscapes and gardens, medicinal and other purposes.
- ◆ A small proportion of introduced plant species become invasive and cause unwanted impacts to natural systems and biological diversity as well as economies, recreation, and health.
- ◆ Plant species can be invasive in some regions, but not in others.
- ◆ The impacts of invasive plant species can occur at times and places far removed from the site of introduction.

## **Principles (a.k.a. The St. Louis Six)**

1. Plant introduction should be pursued in a manner that both acknowledges and minimizes unintended harm.
2. Efforts to address invasive plant species prevention and management should be implemented consistent with national goals or standards, while considering regional differences to the fullest extent possible.
3. Prevention and early detection are the most cost effective techniques that can be used against invasive plants.
4. Research, public education and professional training are essential to more fully understanding the invasive plant issue and positively affecting consumer demand, proper plant use, development of non-invasive alternatives, and other solutions.
5. Individuals from many fields must come together to undertake a broad-based and collaborative effort to address the challenge, including leaders in horticulture, retail and wholesale nurseries, weed science, ecology, conservation groups, botanical gardens, garden clubs, garden writers, educational institutions, landscape architects, foundations and government.
6. A successful invasive plant species strategy will make use of all available tools including voluntary codes of conduct, best management practices, and appropriate regulation. Codes of conduct for specific communities of interest are an essential first step in that they encourage voluntary initiative, foster information exchange, and minimize the expense of regulation.

**Voluntary Codes of Conduct for Nursery Professionals** (Adopted by the NYSNLA -2009)

1. Ensure that invasive potential is assessed prior to introducing and marketing plant species new to North America. Invasive potential should be assessed by the introducer or qualified experts using emerging risk assessment methods that consider plant characteristics and prior observations or experience with the plant elsewhere in the world. Additional insights may be gained through extensive monitoring on the nursery site prior to further distribution.
2. Work with regional experts and stakeholders to determine which species in your region are either currently invasive or will become invasive. Identify plants that could be suitable alternatives in your region.
3. Develop and promote alternative plant material through plant selection and breeding.
4. Where agreement has been reached among nursery associations, government, academia and ecology and conservation organizations, phase-out existing stocks of those specific invasive species in regions where they are considered to be a threat.
5. Follow all laws on importation and quarantine of plant materials across political boundaries.
6. Encourage customers to use, and garden writers to promote, non-invasive plants.

## **Voluntary Codes of Conduct for Government**

1. Require risk assessment for government-led or financed plant introductions to ensure that no new harmful plant species are introduced, intentionally or unintentionally.
2. Do not distribute existing holdings of invasive plant species to areas where they can potentially do harm; eliminate these holdings or maintain new or existing holdings using appropriate safeguards.
3. Coordinate and facilitate collaboration in databases, early warning systems, monitoring, and other means of preventing invasive plant species problems.
4. Lead and fund (subject to budgetary considerations) the development of environmentally sound methods to control harmful invasive plant species, seek control of such species on public lands and promote their control on adjacent private lands.
5. Develop and promote the use of non-invasive plant species within all government units and to the public.
6. Facilitate, lead, coordinate and evaluate public outreach and education on harmful invasive plant species.
7. Encourage that employees and management participate in ongoing training programs on invasive plant species.
8. Foster international cooperation to minimize the risk of the import and export of potentially invasive plant species.
9. Develop partnerships and incentive programs to lessen the impact of invasive plant species and provide non-invasive restoration materials.
10. Provide a forum for regular evaluation of the effectiveness of these voluntary codes of conduct towards preventing the invasive plant species problem.
11. Enforce invasive plant species legislation at all levels.

## **Voluntary Codes of Conduct for Gardening Public**

1. Ask for only non-invasive species when you acquire plants. Plant only environmentally safe species in your gardens. Work towards and promote new landscape design that is friendly to regional ecosystems.
2. Seek information on which species are invasive in your area. Sources could include botanical gardens, horticulturists, conservationists, and government agencies. Remove invasive species from your land and replace them with non-invasive species suited to your site and needs.
3. Do not trade plants with other gardeners if you know they are species with invasive characteristics.
4. Request that botanical gardens and nurseries promote, display and sell only non-invasive species.
5. Help educate your community and other gardeners in your area through personal contact, and in such settings as garden clubs and other civic groups.
6. Ask garden writers and other media to emphasize the problem of invasive species and provide information. Request that garden writers promote only non-invasive species.
7. Invite speakers knowledgeable on the invasive species issue to speak to garden clubs, master gardeners, schools and other community groups.
8. Seek the best information on control of invasive plant species and organize neighborhood work groups to remove invasive plant species under the guidance of knowledgeable professionals.
9. Volunteer at botanical gardens and natural areas to assist ongoing efforts to diminish the threat of invasive plants.
10. Participate in early warning systems by reporting invasive species you observe in your area. Determine which group or agency should be responsible for reports emanating from your area. If no 800 number exists for such reporting, request that one be established, citing the need for a clearinghouse with an 800 number and website links to information about invasive plant species.
11. Assist garden clubs to create policies regarding the use of invasive species not only in horticulture, but in activities such as flower shows. Urge florists and others to eliminate the use of invasive plant material.

### **Voluntary Codes of Conduct for Landscape Architects**

1. Seek out education and information on invasive species issues:
2. Work with local plant ecologists, horticulturists, nurseries, botanic gardens, conservation organizations and others to determine what species in your region either are currently highly invasive or show aggressive potential. Investigate species under consideration that may present a threat.
3. Increase interaction with other professionals and non-professionals to identify alternative plant material and other solutions to problems caused by harmful invasive plants.
4. Take advantage of continuing education opportunities to learn more about invasive species issue
5. Identify and specify non-invasive species that are aesthetically and horticulturally suitable alternatives to invasive species in your region.
6. Eliminate specification of species that are invasive in your region.
7. Be aware of potential environmental impacts beyond the designed and managed area of the landscape plan (e.g. plants may spread to adjacent natural area or cropland).
8. Encourage nurseries and other suppliers to provide landscape contractors and the public with non-invasive plants.
9. Collaborate with other local experts and agencies in the development and revision of local landscape ordinances. Promote inclusion of invasive species issues in these ordinances.

## **Voluntary Codes of Conduct for Botanic Gardens and Arboreta**

1. Conduct an institution-wide review examining all departments and activities that provide opportunities to stem the proliferation of invasive species and inform visitors. For example, review or write a collections policy that addresses this issue; examine such activities as seed sales, plant sales, book store offerings, wreath-making workshops, etc.
2. Avoid introducing invasive plants by establishing an invasive plant assessment procedure. Predictive risk assessments are desirable, and should also include responsible monitoring on the garden site or through partnerships with other institutions. Institutions should be aware of both direct and indirect effects of plant introduction, such as biological interference in gene flow, disruption of pollinator relationships, etc.
3. Consider removing invasive species from plant collections. If a decision is made to retain an invasive plant, ensure its control and provide strong interpretation to the public explaining the risk and its function in the garden.
4. Seek to control harmful invasive species in natural areas managed by the garden and assist others in controlling them on their property, when possible.
5. Promote non-invasive alternative plants or, when possible, help develop non-invasive alternatives through plant selection or breeding.
6. If your institution participates in seed or plant distribution, including through Index Seminum, do not distribute known invasive plants except for bona-fide research purposes, and consider the consequences of distribution outside your biogeographic region. Consider a statement of caution attached to species that appear to be potentially invasive but have not been fully evaluated.
7. Increase public awareness about invasive plants. Inform why they are a problem, including the origin, mechanisms of harm, and need for prevention and control. Work with the local nursery and seed industries to assist the public in environmentally safe gardening and sales. Horticulture education programs, such as those at universities, should also be included in education and outreach efforts. Encourage the public to evaluate what they do in their own practices and gardens.
8. Participate in developing, implementing, or supporting national, regional, or local early warning systems for immediate reporting and control. Participate also in the creation of regional lists of concern.
9. Botanical gardens should try to become informed about invasiveness of their species in other biogeographic regions, and this information should be compiled and shared in a manner accessible to all.
10. Become partners with other organizations in the management of harmful invasive species.

11. Follow all laws on importation, exportation, quarantine, and distribution of plant materials across political boundaries, including foreign countries. Be sensitive to conventions and treaties that deal with this issue, and encourage affiliated organizations (plant societies, garden clubs, etc.) to do the same.

### **Current List of Endorsements of the Voluntary Codes of Conduct**

1. [American Nursery and Landscape Association](#)
2. [American Society of Landscape Architects](#)
3. [American Association of Botanic Gardens and Arboreta](#)
4. [The Garden Club of America](#)
5. [The Federated Garden Clubs of Missouri, member of National Garden Clubs, Inc.](#)
6. The National Association of Exotic Pest Plant Councils
7. [Mid-Atlantic Exotic Pest Plant Council](#)
8. [Chicago Botanic Garden](#) (also implementing the Codes)
9. [Missouri Botanical Garden](#) (also implementing the Codes)
10. [North Carolina Botanical Garden](#) (also implementing the Codes)
11. [University of Washington](#) (also implementing the Codes)
12. [Florida Nurserymen and Growers Association](#)
13. [Tampa Bay Wholesale Growers Association](#)
14. [Perennial Plant Association](#)
15. [Texas Nursery and Landscape Association](#)
16. [Michigan Invasive Plant Council](#)
17. [Southeast Exotic Pest Plant Council](#)
18. [Massachusetts Nursery and Landscape Association, Inc](#)
19. Delaware Nursery & Landscape Association
20. [Pennsylvania Landscape and Nursery Association](#)
21. Delaware Federation of Garden Clubs, member of National Garden Clubs, Inc.
22. Florida Nursery and Landscape Association
23. [Ohio Nursery and Landscape Association](#)
24. Wisconsin Nursery and Landscape Association
25. [Minnesota Nursery and Landscape Association](#)
26. [Michigan Nursery and Landscape Association](#)
27. Maryland Nursery and Landscape Association
28. [New York State Nursery and Landscape Association](#)
29. [Connecticut Nursery and Landscape Association](#)
30. Southern Region, International Plant Propagators Association
31. [Texas Nursery and Landscape Association](#)
32. [Massachusetts Nursery & Landscape Association](#)
33. [New Jersey Nursery & Landscape Association](#)
34. Tampa Bay Wholesale Growers
35. [California Invasive Plant Council](#)
36. [Federated Garden Clubs of Iowa](#)
37. [Montana Federation of Garden Clubs, Inc.](#)

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