

Guidelines for Disposing of Invasive Plant Material

This Fact Sheet is intended to provide information about how to properly dispose of invasive plants and help limit their spread. As you may already know, invasive plant species are defined as plants that are non-native to a region and can come from all around the world. Invasive plant species cause many issues such as expensive economic and ecological damage, habitat degradation, crop decimation, and clogging water facilities and waterways. There are plant species that impact human health (ex. wild parsnip that can cause severe blistering – similar to chemical burns – and yellow flag iris which can also cause skin irritation).

How to dispose of invasive plant materials:

When removing invasive plants, it is crucial that you take the proper precautions and understand the plant's life cycle. Should the plant be improperly disposed of it could allow the plant to regrow or be transported to an uncontaminated area. By following the guidelines below, you can help limit the spread of invasive plants.

Disposal of invasive plants:

Air Dry

- **Terrestrial Plants:** After removing the plants, allow them to dry until dead. When possible, cover the material with plastic to speed up decomposition and reduce dispersal by animals. Ideally, removing invasives should be done before flowering and the production of seeds. **Do not use this method for plants that could easily regrow.** Some plants can remain dormant for a long period of time, so when the timing is right, they will readily reestablish themselves.
- **Aquatic plants:** Dispose of all aquatic plant debris in assigned trash cans or on dry land. Dried plant materials can be burned where allowed.



Japanese knotweed



Common reed



Brazilian peppertree

Form Brush Piles

- In locations where applicable, leave plant materials on site and allow them to decompose. **Do not use this method for plants that could easily regrow.**

Bag and dispose at your landfill

- **Terrestrial Plants:** First, ensure that your landfill will accept plant materials. Plants should be placed in a thick, durable plastic bag, ensuring that the materials are securely retained to avoid spread while in transport. Another option is to place the plant material in a clear plastic bag, and place in a sunny location for several weeks to kill and decompose the plants. Warmer temperatures will speed up the process, but it is important to allow the bags to sit for a minimum of three weeks.
- **Aquatic plants:** If you need to move the plants off site, bag and dispose of appropriately. Again, ensure that your landfill will accept plant materials.

Burning

- Dried plant material may be burned in areas that burning is permissible. Be sure to understand the plant's lifecycle, some seed species can germinate after burning. Contact your local and state departments for burning regulations. **WARNING:** Do not burn plant materials when the risk of wildfires is high, and never leave a fire unattended.

Other notes

- Don't use contaminated topsoil or mulch. Topsoil that comes from unknown origins can contain weeds and other invasive species. Relocating topsoil or mulch can easily transport invasive plants or seed to uncontaminated areas.
- **Composting:** This is **not recommended** for invasive plant material. Some plants have resilient rhizomes, extensive root structures, and hardy seeds that can survive and regrow (i.e. Japanese Knotweed and spotted knapweed). This should be avoided for aquatic species due to the risk of spreading seeds or plant fragments, especially if the disposal location is near a waterbody.
- **Aquatic plants:** Unwanted aquatic plants should never be disposed of in or near waterbodies, ditches, or canals.

Not sure if your plant is invasive? Check out:

<https://plants.usda.gov/home/noxiousInvasiveSearch>

If you have any questions regarding this Fact Sheet, please feel free to call our office at: (518) 767-9051

Reference:

https://extapps.dec.ny.gov/docs/lands_forests_pdf/disposinginvasiveplantfs.pdf

