

## **Alternatives for Invasive Ornamental Plant Species**

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The goal of this presentation is to promote commercially available, although underused, native plants (primarily shrubs) as alternatives to potentially invasive ornamental plant species.

For this session, a plant species is considered native to the United States if it was present in the country before the arrival of settlers. For our purposes, this definition is restricted to plants native to the eastern United States. Native plants grown under the correct environmental conditions generally have fewer serious problems with common disease and insect pests. However, native plants are being lost to land development, invasive plant competition, and from attack by non-native diseases and insects.

The number of woody tree, shrub, vine and herbaceous perennial species available to the public is enormous. Most plants, whether they are native or non-native, limit their growth to the environment in which they are planted. In fact, many of our beautiful ornamental plants and the majority of our fruits and vegetables are not native to the United States and are not invasive. However, a small number of plant species have become invasive. They disperse to other locations and thrive there. In naturalized areas, they establish themselves at the expense of native plants. They also detract from the aesthetic appearance of managed landscapes and hamper the growth and harvest of crops in cultivated agricultural areas. In either case, this disruption has a negative impact. Typically, invasive species are extremely difficult to control once established.

### **What makes a good native alternative?**

- Flower color
- Fall leaf color
- Overall plant shape
- Function in the landscape (Food for wildlife, erosion control, windbreak, aesthetics)
- Ability to grow under harsh conditions, or the ability to grown under a variety of conditions
- Any combination of these five – whatever the gardener is looking for

***Alternatives to Invasive Ornamental Plant Species* is available from:**

#### **Publications**

**The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station  
P.O. Box 1106  
New Haven, CT 06504-1106**

**or online at:**

**[www.caes.state.ct.us/SpecialFeatures/SpecialFeatures.htm](http://www.caes.state.ct.us/SpecialFeatures/SpecialFeatures.htm)  
[www.hort.uconn.edu/cipwg](http://www.hort.uconn.edu/cipwg)**

### ***Printed Information Sources***

Armitage, A.M. 1997. *Herbaceous Perennial Plants*, 2nd ed. Varsity Press, Inc. Athens, GA.

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Martin, A.C., H. Zim and A.L. Nelson. 1951. *American Wildlife and Plants: A guide to wildlife food habits*. Dover Publications, Inc. NY, NY.

Maynard, B., R. Casagrande, M. Gold, S. Livingston and S. Gordon. 1999. *Sustainable Trees and Shrubs*, 3rd Edition. University of Rhode Island Cooperative Extension. (401) 874-2900.

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Taylor, S.L., G.D. Dreyer and W.A. Niering. 1987. *Native shrubs for landscaping*. The Connecticut College Arboretum. New London, CT. Bulletin No. 30. (860) 439-5020.

### ***Internet Information Sources***

Brooklyn Botanic Garden: [www.bbg.org/gar2/pestalerts/index.html#invasive](http://www.bbg.org/gar2/pestalerts/index.html#invasive)

Connecticut Botanical Society: [www.ct-botanical-society.org](http://www.ct-botanical-society.org)

Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection:

[www.dep.state.ct.us/burnatr/wildlife/pdf/ntvtree.pdf](http://www.dep.state.ct.us/burnatr/wildlife/pdf/ntvtree.pdf)

Maryland Native Plant Society: [www.mdflora.org/](http://www.mdflora.org/)

New England Wildflower Society: [www.newfs.org](http://www.newfs.org)

Pennsylvania Dept. of Conservation & Natural Resources:

[www.dcnr.state.pa.us/pubsforestry.htm](http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/pubsforestry.htm)

USDA National Agricultural Library: [www.invasivespecies.gov](http://www.invasivespecies.gov)

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service: <http://plants.usda.gov>

University of Connecticut Plant Database: [www.hort.uconn.edu/plants/](http://www.hort.uconn.edu/plants/)