

Recommendations for common invasive plants

Asian Bittersweet:

Pull smaller vines from the soil, roots and all. Cut the stems of large vines prior to the generation of berries (before August). Dry or decompose in place, keeping the roots from touching soil. If berries are mature, bagging and drying in the sun is best. Dried vines can be composted, burned, or buried. Note: It may be safest to not remove large vines.



Japanese Knotweed (and other fragment-sprouters):
Japanese knotweed can regrow from root/ rhizome/stem fragments. Pull and keep the uprooted plants from contacting soil before drying/burning. Take care to keep cut or uprooted Japanese knotweed away from wetlands or waterways, where it can easily disperse. Composting without first killing will turn a compost pile into a knotweed plantation!

Black Swallowwort (and other seed-dispersers):

Pull up plants including the root prior to the release of seeds from mature pods. Seed pods can be bagged and cooked in the sun before disposal. Once dead, plants without seed pods can be composted, burned, or buried.



Black Swallowwort



Shrubs and Small Trees:
Autumn olive, burning bush, and non-native bush honeysuckle can be burned, buried, or allowed to decompose in place. Invasive shrubs should be removed by late summer, prior to their copious seed production. Wood can be used as firewood.

Reducing invasive plants on public and private land, and encouraging the growth of native species, maintains and enhances the biodiversity and natural beauty of our town. Please see our brochures detailing these and other invasive species found in Westford at westfordconservationtrust.org/new-invasive-plants-of-westford-massachusetts-guide/ Questions? Contact

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got invasives?



How to properly dispose of invasive plants

When disposing of invasive plants, you really don't want them to grow and spread! To determine the right means of disposal, consideration should be given to how each plant reproduces in order to minimize the potential for regrowth and dispersal. Invasive plants are often prolific seed producers, and culling is generally best timed prior to seed production. Some can grow from root, rhizome, or stem fragments, and these should always be prevented from contacting the soil or entering wetlands and waterways. Generally, do not transport invasive plant material, but dispose on site whenever possible.

Some suggested methods of disposal are provided in this brochure, along with specific recommendations for a few of our most common invasive plants.

Photos, clockwise from upper left: Fruit/flowers/seeds of Japanese Barberry, Autumn Olive, Multiflora Rose, Black Swallowwort, Japanese Knotweed, Burning Bush, and Asian Bittersweet

"How do I dispose of invasive plants?"

Pros and Cons of common methods

1. Let it Rot! Plants can be pulled up by the roots or cut and allowed to decompose in place. Plants treated with herbicide can be dealt with similarly.

Pros

- Easy
- Prevents risk of dispersal during transport
- Prevents spread of herbicide

Cons

- Some plants can grow from stem fragments
- Seeds may still disperse
- If roots remain, regrowth is likely



2. Dry It! Soft plant material, seed pods or berries can be sealed in black plastic bags and exposed to the sun on dark pavement. Big piles can be covered with a dark tarp in full sun. In either case, the material should be left for several weeks or until it is clearly dead.

Pros

- Destructive method that prevents regrowth
- Can combine with burning, composting, or burying
- Can be used as soil amendment after that 2nd step

Cons

- Can take weeks to fully kill
- Dried material will need a 2nd step for disposal



3. Burn It! Dried brush, branches and trunks of invasive plants can be burned if there is an area where it can be done safely. Invasive trees such as Norway maple can be used for firewood.

Pros

- Destructive method that prevents regrowth
- Greatly reduces volume of material
- Ash can be used as soil amendment

Cons

- A seasonal permit is required to burn brush
- Light seeds may be dispersed by hot air



4. Compost It! (2nd step only) Composting is not generally sufficient to kill invasive plant fragments and particularly seeds but can be used in combination with another method to prevent regrowth or sprouting.



Pros

- Relatively easy
- Compost is a great soil amendment

Cons

- Is not sufficient to kill seeds
- Invasive plants may take root/spread in compost

5. Bury It! Dig a large hole or ditch and place the removed dirt (several feet or more) on top of the invasives. A layer of landscape cloth on top of the plant material may help for some plants that regrow from stems (e.g., Japanese knotweed). The resulting soil mounds (which eventually settle) can then be used for gardens, are excellent for berry patches or can be converted to native landscaping.

Pros

- Can be used in garden or landscapes
- Builds soil and tilth

Cons

- Is not sufficient to kill seeds
- Significant effort required to bury deep enough



6. EAT IT! Some invasive species are edible in whole or have edible parts. Garlic mustard is easy to gather, can be used as a green and makes excellent pesto. Japanese knotweed stems are edible, and the fruit of autumn olive can be used to make jam. Goats are voracious grazers and may show preference for some invasive plants.



Pros

- Can be quite tasty
- Great activity for the kids

Cons

- Only applicable to some invasive plants
- Requires proper plant identification