

PlantRight FAQs

Fall 2007

For more info, see www.PlantRight.org

How does “PlantRight” work?

The PlantRight program helps gardeners, nurseries, and landscape professionals proactively address the challenge of removing invasive plants from horticulture. PlantRight facilitates responsible landscaping choices, promoting desirable alternatives to the few horticultural plants that are invasive in California.

What is “Cal-HIP”?

Cal-HIP stands for “California Horticultural Invasives Prevention.” The Cal-HIP partnership brings together diverse stakeholders to guide the PlantRight program. Stakeholders include horticultural associations, environmental groups, research institutions, and government agencies. Participation is entirely voluntary. The partnership works to involve all stakeholders in every decision, and decisions are grounded in scientific information and a transparent process.

What’s the outreach plan?

This fall and winter, Cal-HIP is asking weed workers to communicate with two audiences—nurseries and other weed workers. In spring 2008, outreach to gardeners and the public will begin.

Outreach to Weed Workers:

It is important that our fellow weed workers are aware of PlantRight and able to serve as ambassadors to the horticultural community. Below are common questions weed workers may have.

Why can’t we just make selling invasive plants illegal?

Members of the horticultural community are motivated to address this issue and believe that the initiative will be most effective if we encourage participation, rather than impose it through regulation. Developing solutions in partnership will be stronger in the long run.

Why aren’t all invasive plants on the PlantRight list?

PlantRight includes only invasive plants that are found in nurseries. In a few cases, there is uncertainty about which species is actually causing problems (ivy and fennel, for instance). In such cases, the Cal-HIP partnership is pursuing research to remove the uncertainty.

Why should weed workers get involved?

You are a valuable resource for outreach efforts as both a consumer and weed worker. You have seen firsthand the impact of invasive plants, and you understand the importance of coordinated action to prevent their spread. Educating nursery owners and other horticulture professionals about how they can contribute to invasive plant management is a powerful opportunity to bring important allies on board.

Who should one talk to at nurseries?

It is best to speak with a manager, since they can inform their staff. If a manager is not available, find out when one will be available and leave a brochure and your name and number. Follow up with another visit or a phone call to answer any questions.

Outreach to Nursery Workers:

Here are some questions that a nursery worker may have about PlantRight, with brief answers. Think about a horticultural professional's likely priorities: Business vitality (it's their livelihood), customer satisfaction and loyalty, efficient operations, freedom from governmental regulations, and responsible business practices. We can appeal to all of these.

What are invasive plants and why are they a problem?

“Invasive plants” are the few introduced species that out-compete native plants and animals for space and resources in natural areas. About 200 plant species damage wildlands across California. Some have spread widely, and most are difficult and expensive to control. Besides damaging wildlife habitat, invasive plants increase wildfire and flood danger, consume valuable water, degrade recreational opportunities, and destroy productive range and timber lands.

Are all non-native plants bad?

No. Only a small percentage of non-native plants become invasive. The PlantRight program promotes many non-native ornamental plants (as well as some California natives) as safe and desirable alternatives to invasive plants.

How do invasive plants get into natural areas?

Each invasive plant has its own strategy for growth and dispersal. Some, like pampas grass, have light seeds that are spread widely by the wind. Other seeds are carried by water or eaten by birds and animals that later deposit them far from the parent plant. And some species, like giant reed (*Arundo donax*), can reproduce from pieces of the parent plant. Historically, horticulture has been one of the principal pathways through which invasive plants have been introduced.

Are there good horticultural alternatives to invasive species?

Yes! There are lots of wonderful plants to serve as replacements for invasive plants in a garden or landscape. The PlantRight website lists recommended alternatives for the invaders in each region. Alternatives suggested are attractive, vigorous, and appropriate for the local climate.

Why should nursery and landscaping businesses get involved?

By working with PlantRight, businesses can serve their customers and community, protect the environment, and save Californians millions of dollars in management costs. By taking advantage of increasing customer demand for environmentally-friendly plants, you can help your bottom line while joining a powerful movement to protect California's natural resources.

What if someone already has an invasive plant growing in their yard?

It is best to remove the invasive plant and replace it with a recommended alternative. This is especially crucial if the property is located near natural areas. Information on removing problem plants can be found on the website of the California Invasive Plant Council, www.cal-ipc.org.

PlantRight—why haven't I heard of it?

The program has not gone public yet—it will be in spring 2008. We are working with nurseries first, so they can be prepared when PlantRight does go public. The California Association of Nurseries and Garden Centers (CANGC, pronounced can-gee-see) has been informing their members, and the California Department of Food & Agriculture (CDFA) will be contacting nurseries as well.