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## **HORTICULTURE TRADE GROUP COMMITS TO TACKLING \$35 BILLION INVASIVE PLANT PROBLEM**

April 12, 2006, Sacramento, Calif. – With the damage caused by invasive plants in the United States reaching \$35 billion annually, the horticulture industry is beginning to take action to prevent the introduction and spread of invasive plants. The California Association of Nurseries and Garden Centers (CANGC) has unanimously approved voluntary codes of conduct that nursery professionals can follow to prevent aggressive garden plants from invading wildlands and open spaces. This proactive industry effort could save taxpayers and landowners millions and perhaps billions in the coming years.

“By adopting the St. Louis Voluntary Codes of Conduct, the California Association of Nurseries and Garden Centers engages 1,200 member companies in the effort to stop the spread of invasive plants,” said Bob Falconer, Executive Vice-President, CANGC. “Nurseries can play an important role by choosing not to grow invasive species and choosing instead to promote alternative plants that don’t cause problems in local ecosystems.”

Invasive species are one of the greatest threats to biodiversity, second only to habitat destruction. They cause environmental damage by crowding out native plants, insects and animals, and by increasing flooding and fire hazards. Most of the plants used in gardens and landscaping do not invade and threaten wildlands, but a few species can -- and do -- escape from cultivated areas into the wild and cause significant ecological problems. About 85% of invasive woody plants in the United States were introduced for landscape trade, and 53% of California’s most invasive plants have horticultural origins.

“CANGC is a highly visible organization that has set a trend for other industry groups around the country to follow,” said Terri Kempton, Project Manager, California Horticultural Invasives Prevention (Cal-HIP). “Their commitment to fight the spread of invasive plants shows that the horticulture industry can be an environmentally responsible ‘green’ industry.”

CANGC is developing a plan for implementing the codes in nurseries and garden centers throughout California by participating in Cal-HIP, a collaborative industry effort to prevent garden and landscaping plants from invading California’s natural wildlands. Nurseries, landscapers, wholesalers, retailers, scientists, environmental groups and governmental agencies have joined forces to find voluntary solutions to the invasive plant problem – solutions that can protect the environment and strengthen the gardening community. After identifying the problem plants in each region of California, Cal-HIP partners will be promoting safe – and beautiful – alternative plants. For more information, visit [www.suscon.org](http://www.suscon.org).

CANGC and other signatories to the St. Louis Voluntary Codes of Conduct for Nursery Professionals commit to:

1. Ensure that invasive potential is assessed prior to introducing and marketing plant species new to North America.
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.

#### ABOUT CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF NURSERIES AND GARDEN CENTERS (CANGC)

The California Association of Nurseries and Garden Centers (CANGC) was founded in 1911 and is the only statewide trade association representing wholesale nursery growers, retail garden centers and associated business in California. CANGC has over 1,200 company members, and services the industry by providing employee training and education, government relations representation, marketing and business benefits, and research and scholarship opportunities. [www.cangc.org](http://www.cangc.org)

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