

Don't Plant a Pest!

Give them an inch and they'll take an acre...



Scotch Brooms create a serious fire hazard in the Sierra Foothill region.

Suggested alternatives for invasive garden plants

Sierra Foothills Region

Gardening Responsibly

California is a gardener's dream. Our Mediterranean climate allows us to have fantastic gardens showcasing a wide variety of ornamental plants from all around the world. Unfortunately, some of these are serious invasive plants, threatening California's biodiversity and economy. That's because some of our plants don't stay in the garden. They "jump the fence" when seeds, roots or stem fragments spread to other areas. Because of their highly aggressive nature, invasive plants out-compete desirable plants. Once established, they damage wildlife habitat, impair water resources, increase soil erosion, degrade agriculture lands, create fire hazards and reduce recreational opportunities.



English ivy (*Hedera helix*) climbing on an oak tree. Photo by J. M. DiTomaso

Some of these plants show weedy tendencies in the garden. For example, English and Algerian ivy can take over a yard and damage buildings and fences. When birds drop seeds from these ivies near a stream the plants can take over, displacing native vegetation and degrading wildlife habitat. As another example Scotch broom can quickly take over both landscaped and natural areas on your property. This plant is highly flammable and can increase the potential of wildfire.

Gardeners don't plant invasive species intentionally. Like other Californians, gardeners have a deep respect for our state's rich natural heritage. The good news is that most garden plants behave perfectly well in their intended roles. By choosing suitable replacements for the problem plants, we can save ourselves and our neighbors trouble and expense while helping to protect California's landscapes from invasive plants.

Invasive plants are, by nature, a regional or local problem. A plant that jumps out of the garden in one climate and habitat type may behave perfectly in

another. The problem plants listed here have escaped from gardens throughout the Sierra foothill region. For additional plants and lists of invasive plants in other regions of the state, see the California Invasive Plant Council website at www.cal-ipc.org.

How to use this brochure:

This brochure features the most common invasive non-native pest plants that are sold in nurseries or "shared" by unknowing gardeners and suggests safe alternatives for these plants. When you are buying new plants, consider these alternatives, or ask your local nursery for other noninvasive plants. If any of these invasive plants are already in your yard, especially if you live near a natural area or waterway, you should remove them and replace them with a suggested alternative.

- Full sun
- Part shade
- Full shade
- Regular water
- Medium water
- Low water
- California native

Think about why you might plant one of the problem plants in the first place. If it is for appearance, finding a replacement is often easy - some of the alternatives listed here are selected especially for their similar appearance. If you need a plant to fill a functional role, such as a groundcover that grows well in a shady place, or a border plant that likes full sun, the alternatives listed here thrive in the same environments as problem plants. Both native and non-native plants have been recommended as alternatives in this brochure. Many of these alternatives are readily available; others may be easiest to find in specialty or native plant nurseries.

Pay close attention to plant names when looking for non-invasive alternatives since a few of our recommended plants may have invasive relatives - even in the same genus.

Many of the characteristics that make a plant a good choice for the garden may also make it a successful invader:

Garden Plants	Invasive Plants
Easy to propagate	Broad germination
Establish rapidly	Colonizer
Mature early	Mature early
Abundant flowers	Prolific seeds
Pest/disease tolerant	Few natural predators

GROUND COVERS

DO NOT PLANT! INVASIVE!



Periwinkle
(*Vinca major*)

This aggressive grower has trailing stems that root wherever they touch the soil. This ability to resprout from stem fragments enables periwinkle to spread rapidly

in shady drainages and creeks, smothering the native plant community and reducing available wildlife habitat and forage.



Missouri Botanical Garden

English ivy, Algerian ivy
(*Hedera helix*, *Hedera canariensis*)

Some ivy species in the *Hedera* genus are invasive. Ivies can climb trees and under-story plants causing damage by completely shading them. Shading also prevents regeneration of new trees and shrubs. Birds often spread the berries of these ivies into riparian and wildland areas. Ivy also harbors pests, such as rats and snails. It is difficult to distinguish problem ivies from less invasive ones. Never dispose of ivy cuttings into natural areas.

TRY PLANTING THESE INSTEAD

Star jasmine
(*Trachelospermum jasminoides*)



Photo by C. Martus

Evergreen, vining groundcover with glossy, dark green leaves and pale yellow, pinwheel-shaped flowers with a jasmine scent.

Common yarrow
(*Achillea millefolium*)



Native, perennial with finely divided leaves and white flower heads. White flowers in spring, blooms can be prolonged by cutting back old flower stocks or mowing.

Cinquefoil
(*Potentilla* species)



Sturdy, unfussy perennials that flower mid- to late spring. Leaves are reminiscent of strawberry foliage.

Potentilla glandulosa is a common native forest understory perennial in the Sierra foothill region.

Pachysandra
(*Pachysandra terminalis*)



Missouri Botanical Garden

Evergreen leaves are shiny dark green; small white flowers on 1-2" spikes; withstands shade and is widely used under trees. Grows more slowly than ivy or periwinkle but has a crisp, neat growth form.

Carpet bugle/Ajuga
(*Ajuga reptans*)



This popular ground cover spreads quickly by runners, making a mat of dark green leaves. Blue flowers appear in spring and early summer.

Creeping mahonia
(*Mahonia repens*)



Photo by Wm. Hewlett

Prickly leaves, short clusters of flowers in mid- to late spring followed by blue berries; good winter color.

Also try: Dwarf coyote bush (*Baccharis pilularis* or *cultivars*); Creeping manzanita (*Arctostaphylos* species.); California wild grape - native (*Vitis californica*); *Vinca minor*, which to date has not been found to be invasive; Creeping sage - native (*Salvia sonomensis*).

ORNAMENTAL GRASSES AND SCREENS

DON'T PLANT! INVASIVE!

Green fountain grass
(*Pennisetum setaceum*)



Spreads aggressively via seed by wind, water or hitch hiking on vehicles and animals. Dense infestations can crowd out native and other desirable

vegetation and increase fire hazard. Existing research indicates that red varieties (*Pennisetum setaceum* 'Rubrum') are not invasive.

Pampasgrass, jubatagrass
(*Cortaderia selloana*, *Cortaderia jubata*)



Wind and water can carry the tiny seeds for miles. The massive size of each plant with its accumulated litter reduces wildlife habitat

and can create a serious fire and flood hazard. Riparian areas are particularly vulnerable to invasion and the damage caused by these plants.

Giant reed/Arundo
(*Arundo donax*)



Photo by Joseph DiTomaso

An extremely fast-growing plant that grows in moist areas. *Arundo* spreads by root sprouts and stem sections, can cause erosion and displaces

desirable plants. Highly flammable and can burn even when green. Areas along creeks and streams are particularly vulnerable to invasion and the damage caused by this plant.

TRY PLANTING THESE INSTEAD

Deer grass
(*Muhlenbergia rigens*)



Clumping perennial grass growing up to 3 feet tall with 2 foot plumes rising about the plant. Native Americans use it

for making baskets. Other *Muhlenbergia* species can also be good choices.

New Zealand flax
(*Phormium tenax*)



Chris Morris, San Luis Obispo Co. Dept. of Agriculture

Large, hardy, fast growing and requires minimal care. Many varieties available including striking stripes of red, yellow and green.

Bamboo - clumping varieties only
(*Bambusa multiplex*)



Photo by Steve Green

Rhizomes of the clumping bamboo stay close to the plant, decreasing the ability to become invasive like the running bamboo

varieties. Dense growth forms good hedges and screens.

California fescue
(*Festuca californica*)



Photo courtesy Santa Barbara Botanical Garden

Flowering stalks rise up to 5 feet above large clumped grass (2-3 foot tall) in late spring, early summer. Striking appearance, good adaptability, with clumps holding their shape well throughout the year.

Blue oat grass
(*Helictotrichon sempervirens*)



Photo courtesy GardenSoft

Evergreen, bright blue-gray, narrow leaves in a fountain like clump. In spring, stems to 2 feet or taller rise above foliage, bearing straw-colored flower clusters.

Also try: California melic - native (*Melica californica*), giant wild rye (*Leymus condensatus*)