



Master Gardener Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Response Framework: **Answering invasive plant questions from the public**

Created by California Invasive Plant Council (Cal-IPC) in collaboration with Master Gardener Coordinators and University Extensions from Arizona, California, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington states. Last updated Feb 2026.

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Introduction

Answering questions about invasive plants can be challenging. The purpose of this document is to provide a tool in the form of a ready-made outline for Master Gardener volunteers to use when responding to client email queries about invasive plants. This resource will walk Master Gardener volunteers through a suggested (not prescriptive) process of identifying the problem, gathering information, and responding to clients who are looking to prevent or manage invasive plants.

Quick reference: Outline for client response

This section offers a quick reference outline of what can be included in your response to a client with an invasive plant question. This is not a prescriptive outline – you do not need to cover every element of the outline in your response. It is a suggested framework to refer to if you're not sure where to start, or need some reminders of what to consider when giving advice.

Consider SPACES to guide your response! SPACES is the acronym for each step in the outline:

- Situation and objectives
- Pest identification and knowledge building
- Action
- Considerations and caveats
- Evaluation
- Supplemental information

Each step of the below outline is broken down into further detail in the IPM response framework in the following section.

- Situation and objectives (step 1 of IPM framework): Based on the information given in the client's email, clearly identify the question you're responding to. Consider things like who is doing the asking, what type of property it is, if the client has already tried approaches to solving their problem, or what the person's goal is.
 - o What is the objective / question?
 - o What do you know or assume, what do you not know?
- Pest identification and knowledge building (step 2 of IPM framework): Make sure the plant is properly identified, because this is what you will be giving advice based upon. Be clear in your response that the plant must be identified correctly before any techniques you suggest are used. If needed, let them know they can take samples into the extension office or email clearer pictures. They can also use online resources like iNaturalist to identify their plant of concern.
 - o Are you certain of the plant identification?
 - o If yes, what are knowledge building steps? If no, what are knowledge building steps?
- Action (step 3 of IPM framework): Suggest treatment(s) for solving the problem in the short term, long term, or both.
- Considerations and caveats (step 4 of IPM framework): To ensure that their action has the best possible outcome, mention things the client should consider before going ahead with the suggested treatment.
- Evaluation (step 5 of IPM framework): How or when can the client evaluate the results of the strategy used?
- Supplemental information (step 6 of IPM framework): Link to a few top sources of further information, such as:
 - o The natural history / characteristics of the plant
 - o Best practices for the techniques you're suggesting
 - o Local experts you can connect people to for more advice

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) response framework

This section offers more detail for each element of a SPACES response. The level of detail in this framework is intended as a guide for you, as a Master Gardener volunteer, to gain the necessary context to give an informed answer to a client. It is not advised to send the client everything you discover – sending too much information can lead to overwhelm and inaction on the part of the client.

It is your role as a Master Gardener volunteer to decide what the most relevant and important information is for the client, then to summarize the main points in order to send your client the most concise, accurate, and actionable suggestions you can.

Step 1: Situation and objectives

Based on the information given in the client's question, what do you know or not know?

1. Clearly identify the question you're responding to. Consider writing out the question you're responding to at the beginning of your response. This way you let the client know exactly what you're responding to, and it can help you stay focused in your response.
2. Consider the question being asked. Generally, the client will have either a prevention question or a management question.
 - a. *Prevention:* The plant in question is not yet in the area. The client could be asking:
 - i. If it's a species that's okay to introduce to an area
 1. Often this will take the form of a horticultural plant they want to landscape with, but first they want to check to make sure it's not invasive.
 - ii. How to keep a species out of an area
 1. If there is a well-known invasive plant in the area, like stinkwort or yellow star thistle, people might email and ask how to prevent its spread onto their property.
 - b. *Management:* The plant is already present on a property, and the client is asking how to identify, eradicate, or control the species. Client questions are more likely to fall into the management category than the prevention category.
 - i. If the plant they're asking about is a weedy native and not invasive, consider including information about the environmental benefits of letting hardy native plants grow.
3. What information can you infer or not infer from the question? Consider who is doing the asking, and any characteristics of the property or management the client mentions. This could influence the type of answer you give or the treatment(s) you suggest. For example, based on the client's email can you determine:
 - a. Is the client a private homeowner? Business owner? City employee?
 - b. Is the property public or private? Along a waterway, on a steep slope, in a rural or urban area, a working ranchland, a small garden?
 - c. Does the client mention any management techniques they've already tried?

4. What does the client want to achieve by preventing or removing the weed? Make sure to keep the client's objective the main focus of your response. However, if it makes sense to address important topics that are not the initial question asked by the client, then do so.

Step 2: Pest identification and knowledge building

1. Make sure you are correctly identifying the pest species. If the species is not properly identified, the actions you suggest for prevention or treatment may not work or could even make a problem worse.
 - a. If there is more than one species in a photo sent by the client, clarify what species the client is asking about.
 - b. If the species is not identifiable in photos the client has sent, you can suggest they send clearer photos before giving them a detailed response. Request that they take clear photos that include:
 - i. A closeup of the leaves
 - ii. A shot of the whole plant
 - iii. Flowers and/or berries if present
 - iv. For trees, close-up of bark can be helpful
 - c. Be aware of lookalike species being misidentified!
 - d. If the client does not include pictures of the species they're asking about, do the best you can with what information they give you. In your answer, be sure to include the caveat that if the species is not properly identified, the treatments you are suggesting may not work or could make a problem worse.
2. How does the species spread, reproduce, or impact its environment? Read up on the species to best inform the client of special considerations they should account for when removing this plant. For example:
 - a. If a species is likely to have a large seedbank in the soil, or to resprout when cut, or to reproduce from very small fragments, let the client know so they can be strategic when removing the plant and plan ahead for future treatment .
 - b. Some invasive species have benefit to wildlife (i.e. some positive impact), like certain plants being nesting habitat for birds or a host plant for butterflies. Clients should be informed if it is best to remove these plants outside of nesting or breeding season to minimize impact to other species.
3. What methods of eradication or management / control might the species respond to?
 - a. Research types of control (cultural, physical/mechanical, biological, chemical) that are known to be effective on this species, and which types of control could make the problem worse over time.
 - i. For example, the physical/mechanical control of cutting the plant down might work very well on one species. But for another species (e.g. tree-of-heaven) cutting could stimulate stump sprouting and root suckering and make the problem worse in the long-term, therefore being ineffective as a long-term removal strategy.
 - b. Pay attention to things like timing when reading about or suggesting control methods.

- i. For example, mowing will fling seeds and plant material around. Therefore, mowing certain plants at the wrong time of year, like after they have set seed, can spread seeds and make the problem far worse.

Step 3: Action

Is there an obvious or targeted resource that already exists, that addresses the problem the client has? Look through the general and state resources at the end of this document for available expert advice that can be easily sent to your client.

What treatment options, and plan of action, can you suggest based on what you've found in your research? "Treatment options" refers to the different actions you will suggest a client takes. A "plan of action" refers to the order and/or time of year you suggest the actions should occur in.

Consider offering multiple treatment options that address short- and long-term management as well as methods that cover different options on the IPM diagram below (Image 1). Note that there can be overlap in how different treatments are categorized. For example, grazing may be called a cultural control in one resource, and a physical/mechanical control in another resource.

Another way to group treatment options is via chemical and non-chemical methods. Chemical controls are herbicides, while non-chemical controls are cultural, physical/mechanical, and biological methods. Consider a treatment plan that offers multiple non-chemical methods, or a combination of chemical and non-chemical methods. It's important to also include the short- and long-term aspects of these control methods.

For example, you might suggest an herbicide treatment (chemical) to kill off a large patch of weeds in the short-term to contain the problem, to be followed by competitive planting (cultural / non-chemical) as a long-term treatment after the initial population of weeds has been significantly reduced.

Don't forget to refer people to experts for more information! Remind people to contact their local Weed Management Area, county Agricultural Commissioner, University extension program staff, or other resources in the community.

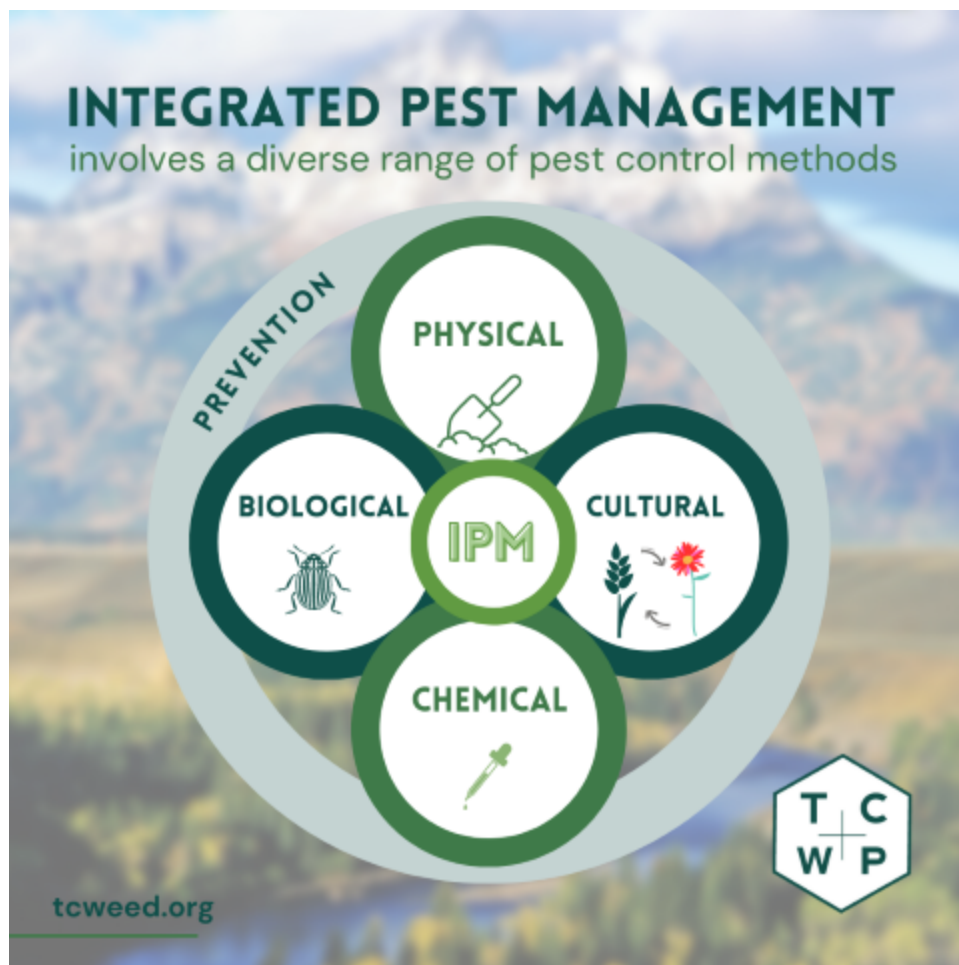


Image 1: IPM diagram. Prevention practices underlie all good IPM.

Step 4: Considerations and caveats

What else might the client need to know? Consider things like:

- **Timing:** Timed mowing, timing of herbicide application, nesting/hosting seasons for wildlife, climate/seasons, etc. For example:
 - Mowing at the wrong time can make the problem worse.
 - Spraying herbicide at the wrong time is a waste of product and money, and puts unnecessary chemicals into the environment.
 - Is the weed a host or nest plant for anything? Can the client remove it during a season that will cause minimal disturbance to non-target organisms?
 - Uprooting species (e.g. broom) can be easier during or right after the rainy season when the soil is damp.
- **Seed bank:** Is this something they will need to consider for long-term management?
- **Species that reproduce via vegetative propagation:** Remind them to get all parts of the plant so they don't repopulate the area.
- **Weed waste disposal:** Disposal of certain species can spread the problem to a new area, so industrial composting or bagging and trashing may be the best option.
- **Herbicides:** The label is the law! Remind people to use personal protective equipment (listed on the label) and to read the full label of any herbicide they use.

Step 5: Evaluation

How or when can the client evaluate the results of the strategy used?

This is important to include in order to prepare the client to do follow up work in future seasons or years, and so they're not discouraged if they don't have total eradication after one treatment. This can be especially important with species that have a large seed bank.

Consider timelines of when they might expect to see results for different treatments – immediately? Next growing season? In a few years?

Step 6: Supplemental information

Whenever possible, refer clients to experts and expert resources that can help the client, such as cooperative extension professionals, local Weed Management Areas, or Agricultural Commissioners. Include their contact information in your response and suggest the client contact them as well.

What are the top links to include in the email to your client if they want more info? Try to keep it to the top 3 links, as too much info can be overwhelming.

You can include links to:

- Natural history / characteristics of the plant (for instance, the profiles on [Cal-IPC's Plant Inventory](https://www.cal-ipc.org/plants/inventory/)¹)
- Treatment options for the species of concern and best practices for the techniques you're suggesting (such as the information on [WeedCUT](https://weedcut-new.ipm.ucanr.edu/management-practices/)²)
- Info for specific herbicides you're describing. Not brand names, but general info for the active ingredient (e.g. herbicide pages on [WeedCUT](https://weedcut-new.ipm.ucanr.edu/management-practices/))

¹ Full URL for Cal-IPC Plant Inventory: <https://www.cal-ipc.org/plants/inventory/>

² Full URL for WeedCUT: <https://weedcut-new.ipm.ucanr.edu/management-practices/>

General resources for invasive plants

Weed Control in Natural Areas in the Western U.S. (DiTomaso et al.): Physical book available for purchase on the Cal-IPC website. Resources within the book are also available for free on [Cal-IPC plant inventory](#) pages. Urban weed pages online can be found on the [UC IPM Weeds](#) site.

- Full URL for Weed Control in Natural Areas in the Western U.S.: <https://calipc.app.neoncrm.com/np/clients/calipc/product.jsp?product=2&>
- Full URL for Cal-IPC plant inventory page: <https://www.cal-ipc.org/plants/inventory/>
- Full URL for UC IPM Weeds site: <https://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/menu.weeds.html>

UC IPM Weeds (University of CA Agriculture and Natural Resources):

<https://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/menu.weeds.html>

Brief overview of how to manage different weed species for homes, gardens, landscapes, and turf.

Clear up the confusion: Know how to select the appropriate herbicide to control weeds:

<https://extension.arizona.edu/sites/default/files/2024-08/az1914-2021.pdf>

PDF article from University of Arizona Cooperative Extension

iNaturalist: <https://www.inaturalist.org/observations>

Can help with species ID. Community science app and website, helps land managers with species distribution info. See “[General guide for photographing plants](#)”

(https://www.inaturalist.org/guide_taxa/355708) to send a client a reference guide for how to take clearer photos for identification.

Pacific Northwest Weed Management Handbook (Pacific Northwest Extension):

<https://pnwhandbooks.org/weed>

Quick reference for weed control practices and herbicides in Idaho, Oregon, and Washington.

PlantRight: <https://plantright.org/>

Lists of horticultural invasives not to plant, with suggestions for what horticultural species to plant instead. Focus is on California, but there is a [map of ecoregions](#)

(<https://plantright.org/about-invasive-plants/plant-list/>) you can select from to choose what ecoregion is closest to where you are.

PlayCleanGo (North American Invasive Species Management Association (NAISMA)):

<https://playcleango.org/>

Public outreach campaign to stop or slow spread of invasive species, many outreach resources on the website about site hygiene and invasive species.

Responsible landscaping (Cal-IPC): <https://www.cal-ipc.org/solutions/prevention/landscaping/>

Offers resources and alternatives to avoid invasive plants when landscaping

Weeds of the West (University of Wyoming Extension):

https://wyoextension.org/publications/Search_Details.php?pubid=696

Online publication, PDF. Identify plants that compete with native plants, horticultural and agricultural crops as well as those that can poison livestock and people.

WeedCUT (Weed Control User Tool, Cal-IPC and UC IPM):

<https://www.cal-ipc.org/resources/weedcut/>

Decision support tool to manage invasive plants. Offers best management practices for physical and chemical removal of weeds.

- **[Non-chemical Best Management Practices \(BMPs\):](https://weedcut-new.ipm.ucanr.edu/management-practices/#non-chemical)**
<https://weedcut-new.ipm.ucanr.edu/management-practices/#non-chemical>
Best practices for a number of cultural and physical/mechanical weed removal techniques
- **[Chemical BMPs:](https://weedcut-new.ipm.ucanr.edu/management-practices/#herbicides)**
<https://weedcut-new.ipm.ucanr.edu/management-practices/#herbicides>
Best practices and other considerations for chemical weed control. Offers detailed information about active ingredients.
- **[Chemical application technique BMPs:](https://weedcut-new.ipm.ucanr.edu/application-techniques/)**
<https://weedcut-new.ipm.ucanr.edu/application-techniques/>
Best practices for applying herbicides

State-specific resources for invasive plants

State Departments of Agriculture, Weed Management Areas (WMAs), state invasive plant or invasive species councils, and state university extension sites are all good resources to check into. The following lists of state-specific resources have been provided by Master Gardener Coordinators and partners within that state.

Arizona

- **AZ Invasive Plants:** <https://azinvasiveplants.arizona.edu/>
University of AZ Extension's database of invasive plants of Arizona
 - **Find a plant by botanical name:**
<https://azinvasiveplants.arizona.edu/by-botanical-name>
 - **Find a plant by image:** <https://azinvasiveplants.arizona.edu/by-image>
- **Invasive Species Program Pima County, UA Cooperative Extension:**
<https://extension.arizona.edu/programs/pima-county-invasive-species-program-pima-county>
 - **Pima County invasive plant info flyers:**
<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1v5fRCd7pBp-vG7iNuUzALbdYV99DRs1c>
Informational / educational flyers about top AZ invasives, buffelgrass, stinknet (bilingual), fountaingrass.
- Invasive species sites:
 - **Pima County Conservation Lands and Resources Department:**
<https://www.pima.gov/1414/Invasive-Species>
 - **Invasive Plants - Saguaro National Park (U.S. National Park Service):**
<https://www.nps.gov/sagu/learn/nature/invasive-plants.htm>
 - **Habitat Restoration Info, Tucson Bird Alliance:**
<https://tucsonbirds.org/restoinfo/>
- Buffelgrass:
 - **Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum's buffelgrass site:**
<https://www.desertmuseum.org/buffelgrass/>
- Stinknet:
 - **Stop Stinket in Pima County:** <https://www.stinknet.org/>. The hub for all things stinknet related in Southern AZ, including mapping and reporting
- **Sonoran Desert Cooperative Weed Management Area** (SD-CWMA):
<https://www.sdcwma.org/>
- Arizona-specific plant ID sites:
 - **Yavapai County Native & Naturalized Plants:**
<https://yavapaipalants.extension.arizona.edu/>
 - **Southwest Desert Flora:** <https://southwestdesertflora.com/>
 - **Arizona Wild Flowers:** <https://www.delange.org/ArizWFlowers/Wf.html>

California

- **Cal-IPC Invasive Plant Inventory:** <https://www.cal-ipc.org/plants/>
Plants that are known or suspected to be invasive in wildlands (does not include agricultural or common urban weeds unless the species is also invasive in wildlands). Includes links to natural history and management information for each species.
 - **Cal-IPC Inventory:** <https://www.cal-ipc.org/plants/inventory/>
Tabular text list of 300+ inventory plants, linking to individual profile pages for each plant. Filterable by region and habitat type.
 - **Plants A-Z:** <https://www.cal-ipc.org/plants/>
Photo list of the inventory plants (same information as tabular text list but in a more visual format)
 - **Plants in Horticulture:** <https://www.cal-ipc.org/plants/horticulture-plants/>
Selected plants from the inventory, (all species are also in the two other inventory lists)

Important note!: Just because a plant is not in the Cal-IPC Inventory does not mean it is “safe” to plant, or not invasive. It only means it has not yet been extensively evaluated by a panel of experts to have an entry in the Cal-IPC Inventory. Note also that the Inventory includes plants listed as “Watch” species, which are not currently known to be invasive in California but have been assessed as a high risk of becoming invasive in the future.

- **CalWeedMapper** (Cal-IPC): <https://www.cal-ipc.org/resources/calweedmapper/>
Maps weeds throughout the state, filter by county for more detailed info
- **California Weed Management Areas** (WMAs): <https://www.cal-ipc.org/solutions/wmas/>
Find contact info for the WMA in your county
- **Calflora:** <https://www.calflora.org/search.html>
Compiled California distribution of plant species from multiple sources. Large photo library including CalPhotos link on every plant species page that can help with ID. Search for native and introduced species in California, helps land managers with distribution info.
- **Encycloweedia** (CA Department of Food & Agriculture):
https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/plant/IPC/encycloweedia/encycloweedia_hp.html
CA noxious weed list, other noxious weed notes.
- **PlantRight:** <https://plantright.org/>
Non-invasive alternatives for landscape plants and information on invasive plants being sold commercially.
- **UC IPM Weeds** (University of CA Agriculture and Natural Resources):
<https://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/menu.weeds.html>
Brief overview of how to manage different weed species for homes, gardens, landscapes, and turf.

Nevada

- University of Nevada, Reno Extension
 - Bursage: **[A Northern Nevada Homeowner's Guide to Identifying and Managing Annual Bursage.](https://extension.unr.edu/publication.aspx?PubID=3346)**
<https://extension.unr.edu/publication.aspx?PubID=3346>
 - **[Pest Solutions: Weeds and Problem Plants.](https://extension.unr.edu/pest-solutions/weed-problems.aspx)**
<https://extension.unr.edu/pest-solutions/weed-problems.aspx>
 - **[Nevada Nuisance Weeds Field Guide:](https://extension.unr.edu/publication.aspx?PubID=2325)**
<https://extension.unr.edu/publication.aspx?PubID=2325>
 - **[Checklist of the Non-native Plants of Southern Nevada:](https://extension.unr.edu/publication.aspx?PubID=4783)**
<https://extension.unr.edu/publication.aspx?PubID=4783>
- From Nevada Department of Agriculture
 - **[Nevada Noxious Weed List:](https://agri.nv.gov/plant/noxious_weeds/noxious_weed_list/)**
https://agri.nv.gov/plant/noxious_weeds/noxious_weed_list/
 - **[Nevada Noxious Weed Reporting:](https://survey123.arcgis.com/share/a97ba753053e4811a41f812a21a05bf4)**
<https://survey123.arcgis.com/share/a97ba753053e4811a41f812a21a05bf4>
 - **[Nevada Reporting Noxious Weeds \(By County\):](https://agri.nv.gov/uploadedFiles/agrinvgov/Content/Plant/Noxious_Weeds/Documents/Noxious%20Weeds%20Notification%20Hotlines_final_2.pdf)**
https://agri.nv.gov/uploadedFiles/agrinvgov/Content/Plant/Noxious_Weeds/Documents/Noxious%20Weeds%20Notification%20Hotlines_final_2.pdf
 - **[EDDMapS Noxious Weed Species Detection Reporting:](https://sso.bugwood.org/login?app_id=eddmmaps&redirect_uri=https%3A%2F%2Fwww%2Eeddmmaps%2Eorg%2Freport%2Findex%2Ecfm)**
https://sso.bugwood.org/login?app_id=eddmmaps&redirect_uri=https%3A%2F%2Fwww%2Eeddmmaps%2Eorg%2Freport%2Findex%2Ecfm
 - **[Nevada's Cooperative Weed Management Areas \(CWMAs\):](https://agri.nv.gov/Plant/Noxious_Weeds/Programs_CWMA_Overview/)**
https://agri.nv.gov/Plant/Noxious_Weeds/Programs_CWMA_Overview/
 - **[Integrated Weed Management:](https://agri.nv.gov/Plant/Noxious_Weeds/Control_IWM/)**
https://agri.nv.gov/Plant/Noxious_Weeds/Control_IWM/
- **[Lake Mead Invasive Plant Management Team:](https://www.nps.gov/lake/learn/nature/ipmt.htm)**
<https://www.nps.gov/lake/learn/nature/ipmt.htm>
- **[Lake Tahoe Basin Weed Management Area:](https://ucanr.edu/site/lake-tahoe-basin-weed-management-area)**
<https://ucanr.edu/site/lake-tahoe-basin-weed-management-area>

Oregon

- **Effective, low-risk solutions for Pacific Northwest pests and weeds:**
<https://solvepestproblems.oregonstate.edu/>
Resources from Solve Pest Problems, a project of the Oregon IPM Center and Oregon State University Extension Service
 - **Weed Identification:** <https://solvepestproblems.oregonstate.edu/weeds>
 - **General Property & Pest Management Guides:**
<https://solvepestproblems.oregonstate.edu/property-guides>
- **Invasive species: What gardeners need to know** (OSU Extension):
<https://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog/em-9035-invasive-species-what-gardeners-need-know>
- From the Oregon Department of Agriculture:
 - **Oregon Noxious Weed Profile:**
<https://www.oregon.gov/oda/weeds/oregon-noxious-weeds/pages/default.aspx>
 - **Oregon WeedMapper:**
<https://www.oregon.gov/oda/weeds/pages/weedmapper.aspx>
 - **Noxious weed FAQs:**
<https://www.oregon.gov/oda/weeds/pages/weeds-faqs.aspx>
 - **Oregon noxious weed biocontrol agents:**
<https://www.oregon.gov/oda/weeds/pages/biological-control.aspx>
 - **County weed programs:**
<https://www.oregon.gov/oda/weeds/pages/county-weed-programs.aspx>
- **Invasive Species Digital Information Hub** (Oregon Invasive Species Council):
<https://www.oregoninvasivespeciescouncil.org/infohub>
- **PNW Weed Management Handbook** (Pacific Northwest Extension):
<https://pnwhandbooks.org/weed>
- County lists of noxious and invasive weeds (produced by each county)
 - Example: **Klamath County Noxious Weed List**
(<https://www.klamathcounty.org/966/Weed-Profiles>) includes tips and lists of what species MGs should notify the county.
 - Example: The **4-County Cooperative Weed Management Area**
(<https://4countycwma.org/invasive-species-resources/weed-management-resources>) shares information about noxious weeds in Clackamas, Clark, Multnomah, and Washington counties
 - Example: The Benton Soil and Water Conservation District offers an **invasive plants database** (<https://www.bentonswcd.org/invasive-plant-database>) divided into categories: aquatic plants, grasses, herbs, shrubs, and vines. It also offers **small grants to help control invasive species** (<https://www.bentonswcd.org/invasive-species-control-grants>).
- **Oregon Invasive Species Online Hotline:** <https://oregoninvasiveshotline.org/>
Report suspected invasive plants in your area

Washington

- **[Find a Priority Species - Invasive Species Council](https://invasivespecies.wa.gov/find-a-priority-species/?_sft_priority-specie-type=noxious-weeds)** (Washington Invasive Species Council):
https://invasivespecies.wa.gov/find-a-priority-species/?_sft_priority-specie-type=noxious-weeds. List of priority invasive species in the state
- **[Invasive Species](https://www.wnps.org/invasive-species)** (Washington Native Plant Society):
<https://www.wnps.org/invasive-species>. General information about invasive species and their management within Washington
- **[Noxious weeds](https://agr.wa.gov/departments/insects-pests-and-weeds/weeds)** (Washington State Department of Agriculture):
<https://agr.wa.gov/departments/insects-pests-and-weeds/weeds>. Lists priority noxious weeds in the state
 - **[Washington State Noxious Weed General Distribution maps](https://agr.wa.gov/washington-agriculture/maps/weed-distribution)**:
<https://agr.wa.gov/washington-agriculture/maps/weed-distribution>

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