

PRESS RELEASE

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Revised Invasive Plant List Issued to the Public –

Kentucky Exotic Pest Plant Council releases updated list of invasive pest plants after thorough review by state experts

Frankfort, KY. (July 22, 2013) – The Kentucky Exotic Pest Plant Council (KY-EPPC) has published a revised list of 180 non-native invasive plants that are having a negative impact on Kentucky’s landscapes. After a year-long review in consultation with leading weed experts, university professors, and natural areas land managers, the revised list is more comprehensive in scope and takes new regional data into consideration. This list is non-regulatory and serves as a reference for agencies, universities, land managers, horticulture professionals, and private landowners.

The list has four rankings describing the threat of invasiveness - severe, significant, moderate, and watch. There are now 41 species considered a severe threat, with 12 species added to this category since the last review. These are most likely to cause environmental degradation and increase costs for control or eradication. The watch category highlights exotic plants that have not been observed or well-documented in Kentucky, but are considered a threat in neighboring states. Beverly James, KY-EPPC president said “We hope this addition will lead to the early detection of new weeds and allow a more rapid response before they have a chance to become well established.”

Established in 2000, the KY- EPPC works to raise public awareness about the growing threat that non-native invasive plants pose to Kentucky’s rich natural heritage. Invasive exotic plants arrived in the US by accident or on purpose and out-compete native species because the natural controls that kept them in balance in their native range do not occur here. While kudzu may be the most notorious example, there are many species that are eliminating habitat for rare plants and animals, reducing production potential of forestlands and grasslands, choking lakes and other aquatic habitats, growing over recreational trails and causing safety concerns along highways. All of these impacts are costing millions of dollars in management.

Professionals and citizen scientists can easily report observations of non-native invasive plants with EddMaps (<http://www.eddmaps.org/southeast/index.html>). Homeowners can help by becoming familiar with what is growing in their yard and choosing native plants, which support a higher diversity of pollinators, birds, and other wildlife. There are also natural areas and parks throughout the state that need volunteers to help with eradicating invasive plants. The KY-EPPC can help connect people to volunteer opportunities in their area. For more information, please contact KY-EPPC President Beverly James at floracliff@aol.com.