

Alternatives to Ornamental Invasive Plants A Sustainable Solution for New York State

Invasive species are among the top causes of biodiversity loss across the globe. New York is one of many states throughout the U.S. now taking steps toward improving our environment by slowing the spread of invasive plants. Horticulturalists and gardeners can be part of the solution by growing and planting alternatives to ornamental invasive plants.

Here you'll find plants similar both in appearance and in cultural requirements to the invasive plants they can replace. These plants may be native or not but are not considered invasive. The alternatives listed here are just a few of many possibilities. They are hardy in much of New York, but check both your hardiness zone and your site's conditions. Many of these alternatives are readily available at local nurseries.

Invasive plants and animals pose a serious threat to some local economies in NY. For one, maintaining the value and beauty of woodlands, parks, and farms requires expensive control measures. For another, invasives that diminish the natural beauty of the outdoors also diminish the value of tourism.

You can help make the future of New York greener by growing the "native-friendly" plants suggested in this brochure instead of invasive species.

Seek additional advice at your local extension office and through Cornell's searchable Woody Plants Database.

Please see the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYS DEC) regulations and the complete list of prohibited and regulated species. Check local laws, as some NY municipalities have further restrictions on invasive species.



A native alternative, *Fothergilla gardenia* is a shrub with brilliant fall color. Photo: B. Eshenaur, NYS IPM.

Alternatives to NYS Invasive Prohibited Plants

The NYS DEC prohibited plant list consists of 69 invasive plants. As of March 2015 it is illegal to sell, import, purchase, transport, propagate or introduce any prohibited invasive species. Most of the prohibited plants are considered weeds. Listed here are selected prohibited and regulated plants that have ornamental characteristics and are sometimes cultivated.

AQUATICS	
Invasive	Alternatives
Yellow Flag Iris , <i>Iris pseudacorus</i>	White Turtlehead** , <i>Chelone glabra</i> Japanese Iris , <i>Iris ensata</i> Louisiana Irises* , <i>Iris spp.</i> Blueflag Iris** , <i>Iris versicolor</i> Cardinal flower** , <i>Lobelia cardinalis</i>

VINES	
Invasive	Alternatives
Porcelain Berry , <i>Ampelopsis brevipedunculata</i> Oriental Bittersweet , <i>Celastrus orbiculatus</i> Japanese Honeysuckle , <i>Lonicera japonica</i>	Dutchman's Pipe** , <i>Aristolochia macrophylla</i> Trumpet Honeysuckle** , <i>Lonicera sempervirens</i> American Bittersweet** , <i>Celastrus scandens</i> Trumpet creeper** , <i>Campsis radicans</i> (Aggressive spreader) Fox Grape** , <i>Vitis labrusca</i>

*Native to the United States

** Native to New York State (hybrids and cultivars of native species included)

Alternatives to NYS Invasive Prohibited Plants

TREES	
Invasive	Alternatives
Japanese Angelica Tree , <i>Aralia elata</i>	Pagoda Dogwood** , <i>Cornus alternifolia</i> (Canker disease is a problem in Eastern NY) Witch Hazel** , <i>Hamamelis virginiana</i> Staghorn Sumac** , <i>Rhus typhina</i> 'Dissecta' (Cutleaf cultivar, will spread)
Amur Cork Tree , <i>Phellodendron amurense</i>	Honeylocust* , <i>Gleditsia triacanthos</i> var. <i>inermis</i> Kentucky Coffeetree** , <i>Gymnocladus dioicus</i> Japanese Pagoda Tree , <i>Styphnolobium japonicum</i> Hackberry** , <i>Celtis occidentalis</i>

HERBACEOUS PLANTS	
Invasive	Alternatives
Garden and Purple Loosestrifes , <i>Lysmachia vulgaris</i> , <i>Lythrum salicaria</i>	Fireweed** , <i>Chamerion angustifolium</i> Meadowsweet* , <i>Filipendula purpurea</i> , <i>F. rubra</i> Blazing Star* , <i>Liatris spicata</i> Cardinal flower** , <i>Lobelia cardinalis</i> Obedient Plant** , <i>Physostegia virginiana</i> Perennial Sage , <i>Salvia nemorosa</i> (<i>S. x superba</i> ; <i>S. x sylvestris</i>) False Indigo , <i>Baptisia</i> spp. (blue, yellow, and white varieties; many are not native)
Golden and Yellow Groove Bamboo , <i>Phyllostachys aurea</i> , <i>P. aureosulcata</i>	Bottlebursh Buckeye** , <i>Aesculus parviflora</i> (for grove effect) Black Willow** , <i>Salix nigra</i> (Prune regularly for multiple stems and grove effect) Big Bluestem** , <i>Andropogon gerardii</i> Sugarcane Plumegrass** , <i>Saccharum giganteum</i>

*Native to the United States

** Native to New York State (hybrids and cultivars of native species included)

Alternatives to NYS Invasive Prohibited Plants

SHRUBS	
Invasive	Alternatives
<p>Japanese Barberry, <i>Berberis thunbergii</i></p>	<p>For dwarf purple cultivars of <i>B. thunbergii</i>:</p> <p>Old Fashioned Weigela, <i>Weigela florida</i> (Dwarf purple cultivars)</p> <p>For standard purple cultivars of <i>B. thunbergii</i>:</p> <p>Smokebush, <i>Cotinus coggygria</i> (Purple cultivars)</p> <p>Eastern Ninebark**, <i>Physocarpus opulifolius</i> (Purple cultivars)</p> <p>Weigela, <i>Weigela florida</i> (Standard purple cultivars)</p> <p>For yellow or gold cultivars of <i>B. thunbergii</i>:</p> <p>Eastern Ninebark**, <i>Physocarpus opulifolius</i> 'Dart's Gold'</p> <p>Old Fashioned Weigela, <i>Weigela florida</i> (Yellow cultivars)</p> <p>For green cultivars of <i>B. thunbergii</i>:</p> <p>Spicebush**, <i>Lindera benzoin</i></p> <p>Bush Cinquefoil**, <i>Dasifora fruticosa</i></p> <p>Fragrant Sumac**, <i>Rhus aromatica</i> (Dwarf cultivars)</p> <p>Virginia Rose**, <i>Rosa virginiana</i></p> <p>Weigela, <i>Weigela florida</i></p>
<p>Autumn olive, <i>Elaeagnus umbellata</i></p>	<p>Eastern Baccharis**, <i>Baccharis halimifolia</i></p> <p>American smoketree*, <i>Cotinus obovatus</i></p> <p>Northern Bayberry**, <i>Morella pensylvanica</i></p> <p>Serviceberry**, <i>Amelanchier canadensis</i></p>
<p>Border Privet, <i>Ligustrum obtusifolium</i></p>	<p>Boxwood, <i>Buxus sp.</i></p> <p>Holly, <i>Ilex spp.</i> *(some species native to U.S.)</p> <p>Yew, <i>Taxus spp.</i> (<i>T. canadensis</i> native to NY; check hardiness zones) All species deer susceptible</p> <p>American arborvitae**, <i>Thuja occidentalis</i> (Note: deer susceptible)</p> <p>Black chokeberry**, <i>Aronia melanocarpa</i></p>
<p>Shrub Honeysuckle:</p> <p>Fly, <i>Lonicera x bella</i></p> <p>Amur, <i>L. maackii</i></p> <p>Morrow's, <i>L. morrowii</i></p> <p>Tartarian, <i>L. tartarica</i></p>	<p>Beautyberry*, <i>Callicarpa americana</i></p> <p>Buttonbush**, <i>Cephalanthus occidentalis</i></p> <p>White Meadowsweet**, <i>Spiraea alba</i></p> <p>Nippon or Vanhoutte Spirea, <i>Spiraea nipponica</i></p> <p>Red Osier Dogwood**, <i>Cornus sericea</i></p>

*Native to the United States

** Native to New York State (hybrids and cultivars of native species included)

Alternatives to NYS Invasive Regulated Plants

The NYS DEC regulated list consists of six invasive plants. Regulated species may be possessed, sold, purchased, propagated or transported but may not be introduced into a free-living state (e.g. planted in or adjacent to public lands or waters or natural areas).

TREES	
Invasive	Alternatives
Norway Maple , <i>Acer platanoides</i>	<p>Freeman Maple**, <i>Acer x freemanii</i></p> <p>Sugar Maple**, <i>Acer saccharum</i></p> <p>London Planetree, <i>Platanus x acerfolia</i></p> <p>Basswood**, <i>Tilia americana</i></p> <p>For red cultivars of <i>A. platanoides</i> including 'Crimson King' consider purple but smaller trees:</p> <p>Eastern Redbud*, <i>Cercis canadensis</i> (Purple cultivars)</p> <p>Crabapple, <i>Malus spp.</i> 'Royal Raindrops'</p>
Black Locust* , <i>Robinia pseudoacacia</i>	<p>Honeylocust*, <i>Gleditsia triacanthos</i> var. <i>inermis</i></p> <p>Hickories**, <i>Carya cordiformis</i>, <i>C. ovata</i></p> <p>Yellowwood**, <i>Cladrastis kentukea</i></p> <p>Kentucky Coffeetree**, <i>Gymnocladus dioicus</i></p> <p>For additional information on appropriate tree selection visit the Urban Horticulture Institute's website, hort.cornell.edu/uhi. Refer to the site assessment checklist.</p>

VINES	
Invasive	Alternatives
Sweet Autumn Clematis or Japanese Virgin's Bower , <i>Clematis terniflora</i>	<p>Groundnut**, <i>Apios americana</i></p> <p>Virgin's Bower**, <i>Clematis virginiana</i></p> <p>Climbing Hydrangea, <i>Hydrangea anomala</i> subsp. <i>petiolaris</i></p>

*Native to the United States

** Native to New York State (hybrids and cultivars of native species included)

Alternatives to NYS Invasive Regulated Plants

SHRUBS	
Invasive	Alternatives
Winged Euonymus or Burning Bush, <i>Euonymus alatus</i>	<p>Red** or Black** Chokeberry, <i>Aronia arbutifolia</i>, <i>Aronia melanocarpa</i></p> <p>Gray Dogwood**, <i>Cornus racemosa</i></p> <p>Dwarf*, Hybrid*, or Large* Fothergilla, <i>Fothergilla gardenii</i>, <i>F. x intermedia</i>, <i>F. major</i></p> <p>Witherod Viburnum**, <i>Viburnum nudum</i> var. <i>cassinoides</i></p> <p>Blueberry**, <i>Vaccinium corymbosum</i> (in sites with acid soil)</p> <p>Ozark Witch Hazel, <i>Hamamelis vernalis</i> 'Kohankie Red'</p>
Wintercreeper Euonymus, <i>Euonymus fortunei</i>	<p>Bearberry**, <i>Arctostaphylos uva-ursi</i></p> <p>Sweetfern**, <i>Comptonia peregrina</i></p> <p>Bearberry Cotoneaster, <i>Cotoneaster dammeri</i></p> <p>Allegheny Spurge**, <i>Pachysandra procumbens</i></p> <p>Wild Blue Phlox**, <i>Phlox divaricata</i> (does not tolerate dry sites)</p> <p>Moss Phlox**, <i>Phlox subulata</i></p>

HERBACEOUS PLANTS	
Invasive	Alternatives
Chinese (Japanese) Silver Grass or Maiden Grass, <i>Miscanthus sinensis</i>	<p>Big Bluestem**, <i>Andropogon gerardi</i></p> <p>Feather Reed Grass, <i>Calamagrostis x acutiflora</i></p> <p>Korean Feather Reed Grass, <i>Calamagrostis brachytricha</i></p> <p>Bottlebrush grass**, <i>Elymus hystrix</i></p> <p>Switch Grass**, <i>Panicum virgatum</i> & cultivars</p> <p>Indian grass**, <i>Sorghastrum nutans</i></p>

*Native to the United States

** Native to New York State (hybrids and cultivars of native species included)

Authors: Brian Eshenaur, New York State Integrated Pest Management Program, Cornell University, nysipm.cornell.edu, and Sharon Bachman, New York Invasive Species Outreach Program, nyis.info, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Erie County.

Reviewed by: Nina Bassuk, Cornell University Horticulture Section, and Jim Engel, White Oak Nursery, whiteoaknursery.biz.

Produced January 2015. Last updated July 2017.

Adapted from: *Alternatives to Invasive Plants, A Sustainable Solution for Long Island Horticulture*. Produced by Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County. Project Leader: Alexis Alvey 2009, revised 2012.

USDA PLANTS database is the source for the native status of the plants in this publication.

Questions and comments on this resource are welcome. Please contact Brian Eshenaur at bce1@cornell.edu.