Invasive Plants of Eastern Oregon and Alternative Natives and Ornamentals

Mary K. Corp, and Chris Luttrell

When deciding upon which plants will be used in your garden or landscaping project it’s important to avoid selecting species that are considered invasive. These plants tend to establish themselves and spread in a very aggressive manner. If gone unchecked these invasive plant species can threaten the populations of native species. Avoiding invasive plants is a major component in the creation of a sustainable landscape that not only protects the local native species, but also address reducing the use of water, fertilizer, and pesticides.

This publication provides several examples of invasive plants for our area, specifically for zones 5 and 6 of the United States Department of Agriculture’s “hardiness zones” chart. The zones in this chart are based on average minimum temperature. Lower numbered zones are cooler, and therefore plants native to that area can survive the colder winters.

For example, the Summer lilac is an invasive plant that can invade local riverbanks and pastures by being propagated by broken stems and wind blown seeds. Instead, one could choose to plant the Blue Elderberry, which is native to our area. A non-native ornamental such as the Meyer lilac would also be a suitable alternative.

Map of Oregon’s USDA Hardiness Zones

Along with these invasives several native plants and non-native ornamentals are suggested as alternative choices to use for your landscaping project.

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INVASIVE PLANTS:

Butterfly bush, Summer lilac
(Buddleja davidii, B. variabilis)

Identification: Shrubs up to ten feet tall. White, pink, or purple tubular flowers. Velvety, lance-shaped, grayish-green leaves.

Habitats Invaded: Riverbanks, cut-over forest lands, pastures, and open waste areas.

Additional Information: Spread by broken stems and seeds dispersed by wind and water.

Alternatives

Natives: Blue blossom
Mountain mahogany
Mock Orange
Blue Elderberry

Ornamentals: Eastern ninebank
Beautyberry
Koreanspice viburnum
Weigela varieties
Meyer lilac

Mary K. Corp, associate professor, Dryland Cropping Systems, Umatilla County Extension, OSU, Pendleton, Oregon. Chris Luttrell, research student, Blue Mountain Community College, Pendleton, Oregon.
INVASIVE PLANTS: Himalayan blackberry, Armenian blackberry

(Rubus armeniacus, R. discolor, R. proverus)

**Identification**: Dense thickets, Cane-like branches, hooked prickles, white-pink flowers, black edible berries.

**Habitats Invaded**: Moist forests, riverbanks, near ponds, wetlands and drainage ditches. Also common along roadsides, range and pastures.

**Additional Information**: Spread by seeds, roots sprouts, and cane tips.

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**Natives**
- Salmonberry
- Thimbleberry
- Thin-leaf huckleberry
- Snowberry
- Indian plum

**Ornamentals**
- Marionberry
- Red Raspberry
- Black Raspberry
- Rocky Mt. Thimbleberry

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*Himalayan Blackberry*

*Snowberry*

*Marionberry*
INVASIVE PLANTS: Knotweeds, Fleece flower, Mexican bamboo

*polygonum cupsidatum, P. sachalinense, P. polystachyum, syn. Fallopia japonica and reynoutria japonica*

**Identification:** White to cream colored flowers, purple speckled hollow stems up to 10 feet tall, reddish-brown papery sheath at stem joints.

**Habitats Invaded:** Riverbanks, wet seeps and open disturbed sites.

**Additional Information:** Spread by broken stem fragments distributed by flowing water. Dense stands can degrade streamside habitats, and restrict public access for recreation and fishing.

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**Alternatives**

**Natives:**
- Red osier dogwood
- Native willows
- Ninebark
- Oceanspray
- Goat’s beard

**Ornamentals:**
- Virginia sweetspire
- Dappled willow
- Clumping bamboo
- Tatarian dogwood
INVASIVE PLANT: Russian Olive, Oleaster

_Elaeagnus angustifolia_

**Identification:** Large shrub or small tree with 2-3 inch thorns, long narrow leaves with tiny scales, small yellow flowers

**Habitats Invaded:** Riverbanks, stream banks, and seasonally moist places.

**Additional Information:** Tolerant of soil salinity and alkalinity. Seeds are dispersed by bird and small animal droppings.

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**Natives:**
- Blue elderberry
- Scouler’s buffaloberry
- Narrowleaf willow

**Ornamentals**
- Common hackberry
- Corneliancherry dogwood
- Silverberry
- Thorny elaegnus

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Russian Olive

Narrowleaf Willow

Silverberry
INVASIVE PLANT: Saltcedar, Tamarisk

*Tamarix ramosissima*

**Identification:** Large shrub or small tree with small leaves often with salt glands or crystals, reddish-brown smooth bark, white or pink feathery flowers.

**Habitats Invaded:** Moist seeps, riverbanks, stream banks, ponds, ditches and canals.

**Additional Information:** Spread by broken roots and windblown seeds. Plants exude salts onto soil surface inhibiting the germination of other plants.

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**Alternatives**

**Natives:** Blue elderberry
Native Roses
Birchleaf Spirea
Ponderosa pine
Narrowleaf willow

**Ornamentals:** Chinese fringe flower
Escallonia
Chinese fringetree
INVASIVE PLANTS: Bachelor's button and Knapweeds

*Centaurea cyanus, C. pratensis*

**Identification:** Bachelor’s button - Annual up to 3 ft tall with white, blue, or purple flowers. Bighead knapweed - 5 ft tall perennial with large basal leaves and yellow flowers.

**Habitats Invaded:** Grasslands, roadsides, reforestation sites.

**Additional Information:** Seeds spread by grazing animals, shoes or clothing, and vehicles and road equipment. Bachelor’s buttons may included in certain wildflower seed mixes.

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**Alternatives**

**Natives:** Common camas

**Ornamentals:** Purple coneflower
INVASIVE PLANTS: Hawkweeds:

*Hieracium floribundum, H. aurantiacum*

**Identification:** 2 ft tall perennials, basil rosette of hairy leaves, dandelion-like petals of yellow, or orange.

**Habitats invaded:** Grasslands, pastures, rangelands, and disturbed ground.

**Additional Information:** can spread from stolons, seeds have small barbs.

### Alternatives

**Natives:**
- Oregon Sunshine
- Arrowleaf balsamroot

**Ornamentals:**
- tickseed
- Black-eyed susan
- Mt. Atlas daisy
- Common sneezeweed
- Yellow oxeye daisy
INVASIVE PLANTS: Myrtle spurge and Leafy spurge

*Euphorbia myrsinites, E. esula*

**Identification:** 3 ft tall perennial with blue-green leaves, stems and leaves exude sticky sap, small yellow flowers.

**Habitats Invaded:** Semi-arid grasslands, pastures, rangelands, roadsides, and neglected croplands.

**Additional information:** Large colonies have extensive root systems, sap is toxic to humans and grazing animals.

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**Alternatives**

**Natives:**
Wild strawberry
Oregon sunshine

**Ornamentals:**
Creep raspberry
Miniature yarrow
Hens-and-chicks
Penstemon
Evening primrose

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**Wild Strawberry**

**Creeping Raspberry**
INVASIVE PLANT: Purple loosestrife

*Lythrum salicaria*

**Identification:** Perennial up to 8 ft tall with pink-purple flower spikes, angular stems, flowers have small yellow center.

**Habitats Invaded:** Wetlands, wet prairies, meadows, lake shorelines, streams, rivers, ditches, and canals.

**Additional Information:** spreads from broken stems, and windblown seeds. Plants can produce up to 100,000 seeds per year.

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**Alternatives**

**Natives:** Douglas spirea
Common camas
River lupine

**Ornamentals:** Spike speedwell
Gayfeather
Bee balm
Siberian iris
Swamp milkweed
**INVASIVE PLANTS:** Yellow flag iris, Yellow water iris

*Iris pseudacorus*

**Identification:** 5 ft tall perennial with sword-like leaves, yellow to cream-colored flowers.

**Habitats Invaded:** Wetlands, lake shorelines, streams, rivers, ditches, and canals.

**Additional Information:** Spread by broken stem fragments and seeds that float in the water. All parts of plant are toxic to humans and animals.

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**Alternatives**

**Natives:** Monkeyflower
- Rocky Mountain iris

**Ornamentals:** Japanese iris
- Siberian iris
- Blue-flag iris

**Douglas iris**
- Skunk cabbage

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[Images of Yellow Flag Iris, Monkeyflower, and Japanese Iris]
Trees and Shrubs in Order from Wettest to Driest Environments

The following chart* lists several species of trees and shrubs native to northeast Oregon that are organized by their environments from wettest to driest. Species native to drier environments will require less water, and thereby reducing irrigation costs.

* Chart was provided by the Confederated Tribes of Umatilla Indian Reservation Native Plant Nursery
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Name</th>
<th>Scientific Name</th>
<th>Common Name</th>
<th>Scientific Name</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arrowleaf balsamroot</td>
<td>Balsamorhiza sagittata</td>
<td>Native Roses</td>
<td>Rosa nutkana or R. woodsii</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bee balm</td>
<td>Monarda didyma</td>
<td>Native willows</td>
<td>Salix spp.</td>
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<td>Birchleaf spirea</td>
<td>Spiraea betulifolia</td>
<td>Oceanspray</td>
<td>Holodiscus discolor</td>
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<td>Black elderberry</td>
<td>Sambucus nigra cvs</td>
<td>Oregon sunshine</td>
<td>Eriophyllum lanatum</td>
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<td>Black raspberry</td>
<td>Rubus occidentalis</td>
<td>Penstemon</td>
<td>Penstemon pinifolius</td>
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<td>Black-eyed Susan</td>
<td>Rudbeckia hirta</td>
<td>Ponderosa pine</td>
<td>Pinus ponderosa</td>
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<td>Blue blossom</td>
<td>Ceanothus thriflorus</td>
<td>Purple coneflower</td>
<td>Echinacea purpurea</td>
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<td>Sambucus cerulea</td>
<td>Red osier dogwood</td>
<td>Cornus sericea ssp. Accidentalis</td>
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<td>Blue-flag iris</td>
<td>Iris versicolor</td>
<td>Red raspberry</td>
<td>Rubus idaeus</td>
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<td>Chinese fringe flower</td>
<td>Loropetalum chinense</td>
<td>Red-flowering currant</td>
<td>Ribes sanguineum</td>
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<td>Chinese fringetree</td>
<td>Chionanthus retusus</td>
<td>River lupine</td>
<td>Lupinus rivularis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Common Camas</td>
<td>Camassia quamash</td>
<td>Rocky Mountain Iris</td>
<td>Iris missouriensis</td>
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<td>Common hackberry</td>
<td>Celtis occidentalis</td>
<td>Rocky Mt. thimbleberry</td>
<td>Rubus deliciosus</td>
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<td>Common sneezeweek</td>
<td>Helianthus autumnale</td>
<td>Scouler's willow</td>
<td>Salix scouleriana</td>
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<td>Corneliancherry dogwood</td>
<td>Cornus mas</td>
<td>Siberian iris</td>
<td>Iris sibirica</td>
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<td>Creeping raspberry</td>
<td>Rubus calycinoides</td>
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<td>Iris sibirica</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dappled willow</td>
<td>Salix integra 'Hakuro Nishiki'</td>
<td>Silver buffaloberry</td>
<td>Shepherdia argentina</td>
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<td>Silverberry</td>
<td>Elaeagnus commutata</td>
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<td>Sumersweet</td>
<td>Clethra alnifolia</td>
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<td>Oenothera macrocarpa</td>
<td>Swamp milkweed</td>
<td>Asclepias incarnata</td>
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<td>Liatris spicata</td>
<td>Tatarian dogwood</td>
<td>Cornus alba</td>
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<td>Goat's beard</td>
<td>Aruncus dioicus</td>
<td>Thimbleberry</td>
<td>Rubus parviflorus</td>
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<td>Hens-and-chicks</td>
<td>sempervivum tectorum</td>
<td>Thin-leaf huckleberry</td>
<td>Vaccinium membranaceum</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Oemleria cerasiformis</td>
<td>Thorney elaegnus</td>
<td>Elaeagnus pungens</td>
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<td>Iris ensata</td>
<td>Tickseed</td>
<td>Coreopsis verticillata</td>
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<td>Viburnum carlesii</td>
<td>Virginia sweetspire</td>
<td>Itea virginica</td>
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<td>Achillea tomentosa</td>
<td>Weigela varieties</td>
<td>Weigela florida</td>
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<td>Philadelphus lewisi</td>
<td>White fringetree</td>
<td>Chionanthus retusus</td>
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<td>Monkeyflower</td>
<td>Mimulus guttatus</td>
<td>Wild strawberry</td>
<td>Fragaria virginiana</td>
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<td>Mountain mahogany</td>
<td>Cercocarpus ledifolius</td>
<td>Yellow oxeye daisy</td>
<td>Buphthalmum salicifolium</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mt. Atlas daisy</td>
<td>Anacystis depressus</td>
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<tr>
<td>Narrowleaf willow</td>
<td>Salix exigua</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Additional Resources**

- Oregon Invasive Species Council  
  [www.oregon.gov/OISC/](http://www.oregon.gov/OISC/)
- Oregon’s List of noxious weeds  
- Pacific Northwest Invasive Plant Council  
  [www.depts.washington.edu/waipc/](http://www.depts.washington.edu/waipc/)

**References**


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