

Selected Invasive Plants Common in or near Delaware County, NY

They may look pretty and smell beautiful, we may even think about growing them in our gardens, but they are quietly becoming a BIG problem by spreading quickly, excluding native species and disrupting wildlife habitat.

Purple Loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*)

A tall perennial wetland plant. Clustered pink to purple flowers during mid-summer. A single stalk may produce up to 300,000 seeds! Native to Eurasia, this plant was introduced to America in the early 1800s as an ornamental and for honey bee forage. Spreads by seeds, rhizome and plant parts. Very aggressive, it can form extensive mono-specific stands and replace native wetland plants, such as cattails, grasses, sedges and rushes.



Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*)

A 3 to 13 ft-tall perennial wetland grass. Leaves and stems are stiff and sharp from a high content of cellulose and silica. Prefers sunny wetland, riverbank and lakeshore habitats. New plants sprout from stems, roots or seeds and may form colonies hundreds of acres in size. Native to America as a less-aggressive sub-species, the introduced variety can quickly replace desirable wetland species and is reported to be toxic to the spotted salamander.



Garlic Mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*)

A biennial herb, seedlings emerge in early spring to form leafy rosettes by early summer. In spring of the 2nd year plants produce 2 to 4 ft-tall stems bearing white flowers. Garlic mustard is most invasive in disturbed landscapes. It is shade tolerant, but won't grow in very acid soils, including peat or muck. Brought by settlers for use in soups and stews in early spring, it is rich in vitamins A & C. As a very early growing spring plant, garlic mustard invades large areas while native species are still dormant.



Multiflora rose (*Rosa multiflora*)

A thorny perennial shrub that produces many clusters of fragrant white flowers in spring. In summer, fleshy red 'hips' are formed that remain into the winter. A single bush can produce ½ to 1 million seeds! Native to Asia, this plant was promoted during the 1930's as a "living fence" on farms. Plants spread quickly, can be difficult to control, and tend to displace native species.



Japanese knotweed (*Polygonum cuspidatum*)

An herbaceous perennial 3 to 8 ft tall with large oval leaves. Tiny white flowers grow in clusters. Typically found in sunny areas of streambanks, wetland margins, and roadsides. Native to eastern Asia, it was introduced as an ornamental in the early 1800s. Spreads from broken roots and stems that are transported by flowing water or excavated soil. Degrades native plant and wildlife habitat, and during winter its dry biomass can create a fire hazard.



Fly honeysuckle (*Lonicera morrowii*)

This (and similar species of *Lonicera*) is a deciduous shrub 6 to 20 ft tall with opposite, egg-shaped leaves and pairs of tubular, fragrant white or pink flowers. The juicy red to orange berries that form in fall are eaten by birds and small mammals, and seeds dispersed widely. These shrubs occur in sunny pastures, idle meadows and forest margins. Native to Asia and western Europe, it was brought to America as an ornamental in the mid-1800s. Honeysuckles can rapidly create a dense shrub canopy and may emit a compound that inhibits the growth of native plants.



Curly Pondweed (*Potamogeton crispus*)

A submerged perennial with reddish-green leaves and distinct wavy edges. The plant's flat reddish-brown stem grows 1 to 3 ft long. Most reproduction occurs from winter buds (called turions) or occasionally from seeds. Plants tolerate low light and low water temperatures. Native to Eurasia, Africa and Australia, it is now found in NY's lakes, ponds and streams. It is a popular aquarium plant introduced to U.S. waters by hobbyists in the 1800s. New plants form under ice cover during late winter. It is a nuisance aquatic plant that covers water bodies until late summer, when die-offs may result in critical loss of dissolved oxygen. Decaying plants may subsequently cause increased nutrient level in water, contributing to algal blooms.



Oriental bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*)

A deciduous woody vine with twining or trailing growth pattern and greenish-yellow flowers. Orange fruits are decorative and popular in flower arrangements. Prefers open sites such as roads or hedgerows, but its shade tolerance has allowed it to spread into forests. Native to eastern Asia, it was introduced in the 1860s as an ornamental. Fruits are eaten and dispersed by birds. Extremely invasive, it can reproduce by seed, stems and root shoots. Its climbing habit kills nearby plants, and once established it is very difficult to control.



Wild Parsnip (*Pastinaca sativa*)

Although considered more of a “noxious weed” than invasive, this introduced plant has escaped from cultivation to dominate many roadsides throughout the county. A biennial, its flower stalks form umbrella-form seed heads on stalks 2 to 5 ft tall in late summer. *The sap of freshly mowed or crushed plant leaves can cause serious sun sensitivity (burns) on exposed skin of some people.* Efforts to manually eradicate it should include wearing protective clothing.

