



Move Over!

They are undesirable, destructive, competitive, and difficult to control – but enough about your in-laws, ... let's talk **NOXIOUS WEEDS**.

Noxious weeds are non-native plants that, when introduced into an environment, quickly overrun native species. Noxious weeds can be spread by birds and other animals that eat their fruit, by the wind, and by humans who wittingly or otherwise carry plants or seeds into backyards and open spaces. The aggressiveness of some noxious weeds, such as English ivy, Scotch broom, and Himalayan blackberry are well-known. Others such as Yellow Archangel, Herb Robert (Stinky Bob), and Butterfly bush are commonly found as decorative additions to backyard gardens and are often not thought of being invasive plants. Unfortunately, these plants have a nasty habit of spreading rapidly and overrunning native species. For example, a single Butterfly bush plant can produce up to 3 million seeds which can remain viable in the ground for many years. In New Zealand, this plant is costing their forestry industry over a million dollars a year. To help citizens better recognize, understand, and control noxious weeds, the The Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board (<http://www.nwcb.wa.gov/>) has compiled a Noxious Weed List.

English Ivy – a Big Problem

English Ivy is probably one of the most commonly found noxious weeds in Western Washington. The rapid spread of this plant can cause an “ivy desert” where no other plants survive. These deserts provide little to no food for wildlife and provide shelter mostly for rats. Ivy can quickly cover a tree - dangerously weighing down its limbs, taking water away from its roots, and preventing the natural growth of leaves. All of these factors add stress to a tree and make it more susceptible to disease. Ivy is fairly easy to control by pulling and trimming. If you let the removed ivy dry (yeh, right) before disposing, it will shrink 80%. Where ivy has enveloped a tree trunk, you can cut a 3’ “girdle” of ivy away from the bark and the remaining ivy on the tree will die. On the ground, you should also create a 6’ ivy-free circle around the base of the tree. To combat the widespread occurrences of English Ivy, the Washington Native Plant Society (<http://www.wnps.org/>) has started the “Ivy Out” initiative (<http://www.ivyout.org/>). This organization provides information about English Ivy and has work parties for ivy removal.

What to do

So your in-laws are obnoxious – so what, they're your relatives right? I guess the message is be aware of the implications of introducing certain plants (or relatives) into your backyard. If you plant *any* species that can spread rapidly, look after it regularly. Also consider planting native species. They will typically use less water, be more hardy, and provide good food and shelter for wildlife.