

The Weeder's Digest

I know I often get tired, sometimes to the point of nausea, of over-played songs on the radio, over-reported stories in the media, and oft-heard cries when co-workers compare their work surfaces with my precisely organized desk and then break down in pitiful displays. But I cannot flag upon hearing reports of more naturalizing non-native pests. Today, we cannot afford to ignore these reports, for the results of past neglect, ignorance, or lack of funding and public will are too blatantly in our faces. If only the first hydrilla sprig had been shipped right back to Sri Lanka, or North America's first fertile Asian fig had just become fodder for some famished fruit fancier. —Mike Bodle

Gumming Up the Works

Well, reports are in from two sites in Palm Beach County, Florida on an Australian gum tree, Torrell's eucalyptus, also commonly called "Cadaga." We must treat these reports with the same alarm we've felt when faced with dense curtain-walls of Asian climbing fern or soggy plains of purple loosestrife. Torrell's eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus*

torrelliana) is this moment's subject and it warrants future attention also.

Be on the lookout for a tree that has:

- fuzzy red new leaves on terminal shoots.
- Ovate leaves with acute tips that are 4-5 inches long by 3 inches wide and rather thin with rough and papery top and bottom surfaces.

- very fast growth to 35 feet tall, with an openly-spreading canopy 20 feet wide.
- a smooth and dappled trunk.
- branched triple clusters of small, white-filamented flowers.
- branched triple clusters of brown .75-inch long fruit capsules.

Field sightings report seedlings spreading from nurseries and landscape plantings into surrounding areas. This Australian tree has been strongly recommended by some American horticulturists and has recently been available from at least one Florida nursery with a market name of "Cadaga." It survives 25°F conditions, albeit with considerable freeze damage.

Seek out this fertile and not-so-furtive invader. If observed, approach and collect botanical voucher specimens for your closest neighborhood herbarium. Then, if possible, eradicate all specimens with the greatest possible speed. — Mike Bodle

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Hey, South Florida! Look Out for Logwood!

Chuck Hubbuch reports that logwood, also called campeche, (*Haematoxylum campechianum*) is spreading into natural areas surrounding Fairchild Tropical Garden (FTG) in Miami. At Fairchild, it has spread from their Bahamian plant collection into neighboring mangroves. Hubbuch reports it's currently available from South Florida nurseries, although it is going to be banned from sale at any FTG functions. In the Cayman Islands it has taken years to control its rampant spread within Queen Elizabeth II Botanical Park and moist buttonwood forests have also become infested. Others report its spread into dry forests and along roadsides of Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. Its ready naturalization in such diverse Caribbean and Floridian habitats occurs by suckering and spread of prolific seed. Such adaptability has set alarm bells a'ringing for many tropical and sub-tropical naturalists.

Common and scientific names refer to its native Mexican state of Campeche. The raw wood's extracts are orange-red, hence the genus *Haematoxylum* or blood wood. Logwood is a Central American tree in the legume family used for centuries as the source of a bluish-black

pigment, haematoxylin, which results after boiling the raw extracts. Haematoxylin has also found uses as a biological microscope slide pigment and medicinally as an astringent and to combat dysentery and diarrhea. Before the development of synthetic dyes, many shiploads of this valuable dye-wood crossed the Atlantic bound for European processing. And presumably, during that same time, it was spread to most West Indian islands including the Lesser Antilles, Jamaica, Hispaniola, and the Bahamas and Caymans.

Logwood trees are deciduous; 15-30 feet high with ridged or angled and fluted trunks up to two feet in diameter. Leaves are evenly pinnate with 4-8 paired leaflets that are reverse heart-shaped (obovate) or wedge-shaped. Fragrant and showy light-yellow flowers almost .5-inch across are often attached in unbranched clusters at the base of leaves. Also distinctive are thin and papery, oblong light brown pods 1-2.5 inches long and .25-.5 inches wide, that are pointed at both ends, and split down the middle, instead of along the edges. Flowering is reported from December to May. Very numerous pods are clustered among the leaves and contain 1-3 oblong, flat seeds clustered among the leaves that may remain attached for several months. So, let's be on the lookout, or we may get caught in a log(wood) jam! — Mike Bodle

We Get By With A Little Help...

Cogon grass, wisteria, mimosa trees, tallow trees, chinaberry trees, mulberries, bamboo, air potatoes, Japanese climbing fern... this list of plant invaders is enough to strike fear into the hearts of Southerners concerned with preservation of native lands.

Well, this fearful list belongs to Bob Heeke, with Suwannee River Water Management District (SRWMD) in North Florida. He's found these seriously bad characters invading oak hammocks, blackjack oak scrub, and pine woods. He and land management co-workers in Live Oak were noticing more and more of these seriously invasive plants, but weren't comfortable with control methods for the wide range of plants sprouting forth on their properties. What were they to do? They couldn't just sit and watch their sparkling spring runs disappear behind dense thickets of exotic plants, could they?

Bob cried on a few shoulders and finally, at St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD), he found Wayne Corbin and Shawn Moore's shoulders big enough to share some of his load. Wayne's SJRWMD team, including Shawn, Charles Bedard and Matt Cole, loaded up assorted herbicides (including Ken Langeland's "special juice"), sprayers and injectors and headed west to lend a few hands.

Lots of big mimosa trees (*Albizia julibrissin*), along with Chinese tallow (*Sapium sebiferum*), and chinaberry (*Melia azedarach*) have succumbed to bark applications of triclopyr (GARLON 4). They also injected some trees with 22-cartridge powered herbicide capsules. Cogon grass (*Imperata cylindrica*) and golden bamboo (*Phyllostachys aurea*) are losing out to glyphosate (ROUNDUP) applications. Vining wisteria (*Wisteria sinensis*), air potato (*Dioscorea alata*) and Japanese climbing fern (*Lygodium japonicum*) were cut off in mid-air before their bases were sprayed.

But the Suwannee River folks aren't getting all this help for nothing. Now that they've been shown the ropes, they're helping to put parts of Wayne's world into better botanical order. Many of the same problem plants are being dispatched in similar cooperative outings on SJRWMD properties in the Jacksonville area. — Mike Bodle

JAPANESE CLIMBING FERN— NO PROBLEMA? THINK AGAIN.

We stepped across the old wooden bridge onto Florida River Island, created by creek tributaries in the renown Apalachicola River floodplain of northern Florida, and were aghast, awestruck even (but not speechless, of course—being a group of pest plant managers). Here was a rich floodplain forest (easily over 20 tree species in the overstory) swaddled up to its neck in a dense light-green blanket of Japanese climbing fern (*Lygodium japonicum*). On the ground, the blanket covered well over 50% of the area in sight, encroaching on native herbs such as a patch of rare spiderlily, and smothering overstory recruits. The seedlings and saplings bowed with the weight of the viney fern; beneath that weight they were leafless, dying brown, or dead. Gee, no recruits, eventually no forest—and so dies this fern's reputation as a "wimp" compared to its sister scourge of south Florida, *Lygodium microphyllum* (Old World climbing fern). Needless to say, the Northwest Florida Water Management District plans to stem the rising flood of *japonicum* in this river basin famous for its endemism—at least in this spot, at least for a time.— K.C. Burks