

# News Release

North Carolina Exotic Pest Plant Council  
<http://www.se-eppc.org/northcarolina/>

---



**Date: January 5, 2010**

**Contacts:**

Rick Iverson  
Office: 919-733-6930 x246  
Cell: 919-806-7741  
[rick.iverson@ncagr.gov](mailto:rick.iverson@ncagr.gov)

Johnny Randall  
Office: 919-962-0522  
[jrandall@email.unc.edu](mailto:jrandall@email.unc.edu)

## **Invasive Plants Can Have Devastating Effects on North Carolina Environment**

### ***Invasive Species Awareness Week Set for January 10-14***

RALEIGH – The NC Exotic Plant Pest Council is urging citizens to make themselves aware of invasive plants that can dramatically alter ecosystems. That’s why the council is participating in Invasive Species Awareness Week.

“You can look around and already see what invasive plants have done to our landscape,” says Rick Iverson, President of the NC Exotic Plant Pest Council. “Kudzu is probably the invasive plant that most people can recognize easily. But, even if you can’t name them, you can see any number of invasives that have displaced our native plants, seriously altering our environment. It is too late for us to stop kudzu, but now is the time to be on the lookout for the next kudzu and stop it from spreading, before it becomes a serious problem.”

Invasive non-native species can also have a substantial impact on the economy, infrastructure and human health. NC-EPPC, which is a partnership of government, business and conservation groups, works to generate awareness of invasive plant issues and to support Early Detection and Rapid Response across the state of North Carolina to ensure new invasive plants are discovered and eradicated before they have a chance to become entrenched. Early detection will ensure that eradication measures have a much greater potential for success. See [www.se-eppc.org](http://www.se-eppc.org) for information on invasive plants and the link to NC-EPPC.

Some invasive plants already on the ground in North Carolina are still controllable. Giant salvinia, an aquatic weed that chokes waterways, has been knocked back to one site in Pender County. Tropical spiderwort is a serious invader of row crops and witchweed parasitizes corn. The North Carolina Departments of Agriculture and Environment and

Natural Resources have devoted a great deal of attention to reducing and containing these weeds.

Other invasives haven't yet been found in North Carolina, but they are very close. Cogongrass, which virtually displaces all native species in its path and degrades wildlife habitat, has been found in South Carolina counties bordering North Carolina's Blue Ridge Mountains. Experts believe that cogongrass, which is widespread in Alabama, Florida, Louisiana and Georgia, made its way to upstate South Carolina in hay shipments during the drought.

Like many nasty invasive weeds, cogongrass was once sold as an ornamental plant. Last year the North Carolina Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Services prohibited sale of all varieties of cogongrass, including Red Baron varieties that were once sold by nurseries for use as an ornamental grass. Recent evidence has shown that Red Baron varieties can revert to the wild invasive type of cogongrass creating the potential for escapes and the harm it can cause by degrading wildlife habitats and displacing native vegetation.

"It is winter now, but people are already thinking about their spring yards," says Iverson. "Now is the time to learn about native North Carolina plants. They belong and thrive here, and they greatly enhance rather than negatively affect our economy and natural ecosystems."

---

---

**NOTE TO EDITORS:** The attached list of the NC-EPPC board of directors provides you with additional contacts who can talk with you about invasive plants.