

Invasive Species Community of Practice

by Karan A. Rawlins, Samuel Chan, Charles T. Barger, and Karen Jeannette

eXtension is an Internet-based collaborative learning environment where participants from the nation's Land Grant Universities work and learn together to create educational content through groups called Communities of Practice (CoP). Each CoP focuses on identifying and providing information to specific interest-based audiences. The eXtension Invasive Species CoP has developed and maintains a national website at www.extension.org/invasive_species. This website is designed to connect and mobilize audiences and groups through an Invasive Species Learning and Action Network. It is through this network that the Invasive Species CoP seeks to involve or connect Cooperative Extension invasive species educators, researchers, and outreach and communications experts from leading universities across the U.S. with Master Gardeners, outdoor hobbyists, natural resources professionals and decision-makers. Our goal is to deliver current, practical, research-based information from a wide array of sources, enabling people to make informed decisions regarding the prevention and mitigation of the environmental, economic, and health impacts from invasive species.

The initial launch of the Invasive Species CoP website has been focused on invasive plants. Invasive animals and other organisms will also be included. The Invasive Species CoP will continue to grow as more people join the community and as additional species, resource links, training events and educational materials are added. Information on how to join the Invasive Species CoP is at the end of this article.

Invasive Species Profiles

Information for each invasive species is arranged in a species profile. Species descriptions, identification, taxonomy and images aid in identification and verification. Distribution maps show which invasive species are found in a specific region. Because the maps provide information from across the U.S., you can also see which invasive species are found near your region that may be headed your way. Information on how and where to report different types of invasive species is included in each profile. There are links to prevention, management and control recommendations from both university and government resources. Because some invasive species are found across the United States in a variety of habitats, control recommendations can differ from region to region. A variety of reliable resources allows the user to choose the information and plan to best fit their needs and situation.



Kudzu (*Pueraria montana* var. *lobata*) overtaking a structure.

REBEKAH D. WALLACE, UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA, BUGWOOD.ORG

Got a Question? Ask an Expert!

“Ask an Expert” is another resource available through eXtension. Search Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) to find simple, clear, research-based answers from invasive species experts. New or regionally specific questions may be submitted, as well. They will go directly to an invasive species expert. Experts from around the country, including invasive species researchers, educators and Master Gardeners, have volunteered to assist with the “Ask an Expert” program. With 50

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states and so many invasive species to cover, we will need more experts to help. If you would like to volunteer, please join the Invasive Species CoP.

Calendar of Invasive Species Events

Check the calendar for invasive species events and training opportunities in your area. Events cover a wide range of activities from workshops with hands-on training in identification or management of invasive species to help in removing invasive plants from your local park. If you know of an invasive species related event in your area that has not been posted, please send us the information so we can share it.

>> http://www.extension.org/invasive_species <<

Invasive Species Articles

Articles in eXtension Invasive Species CoP discuss:

- Why people should care about invasive species
- How to identify and learn more about invasive species
- “Priority” early-detection species to look out for and how to report them
- Prevention, avoidance, monitoring, and suppression of invasive species
- Instructional videos, on-line training courses, and other tools
- How to help with invasive species efforts in your community
- Links to additional web-based resources and printable public outreach and educational materials are also provided.

Thank You Master Gardeners

Thank you to the Master Gardeners and Master Gardener Coordinators across the U.S. who participated in our initial survey. 196 people gave us their advice on information they thought would be most helpful on invasive species. Images were deemed the most important by well over half the survey participants. Many also provided helpful advice along the way, such as the best format to use for the invasive species profiles. Their help, advice and encouragement were invaluable.

Instructions to Join

All are invited to join the Invasive Species CoP in eXtension. Professionals with a Cooperative Extension affiliation (personnel with U.S. Cooperative Extension, Land-Grant Institutions, U.S. Government personnel affiliated with Cooperative Extension, Extension-related organizations working on projects with Cooperative Extension staff, and State colleges) are encouraged to contribute their expertise to the Invasive Species CoP by signing up at www.extension.org/people/signup. Check Invasive Species as one of your Communities of Practice.

People without a Cooperative Extension affiliation should contact Karan Rawlins (krawlins@uga.edu). This includes

- Invasive species management professionals
- Land managers
- Land owners
- Citizen scientists
- CISMA/PRISM/CWMA members
- Volunteers collecting data on invasive species distribution
- Volunteers working to manage invasive species

The public is encouraged to use the Invasive Species Community of Practice. Homeowners and other non-professionals can look up information on a specific invasive plant without joining the community. Please visit www.extension.org/invasive_species

Karan A. Rawlins, *Invasive Species Coordinator, University of Georgia, Center for Invasive Species and Ecosystem Health; krawlins@uga.edu;*
Samuel Chan, *Oregon Sea Grant, samuel.chan@oregonstate.edu;*
Charles T. Bergeron, *Technology Coordinator, University of Georgia, Center for Invasive Species and Ecosystem Health, cbergero@uga.edu;*
Karen Jeannette, *Community of Practice Support, eXtension Initiative*



APRIL 16-19, 2012 | OCALA, FLORIDA

The Florida Chapter of The Wildlife Society in conjunction with the Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council will hold their Spring Conference in Ocala, Florida, April 16-19, 2012.

The conference will feature:

- “Invasive Wildlife” symposium
- “Invasive Species Policy” plenary session
- oral presentations
- poster session
- field trips
- workshops

Social highlights include:

- outdoor feast
- concert by *The Weeds*
- awards ceremony
- banquet dinner

This meeting provides an excellent opportunity for students and professionals working on wildlife and/or invasive species research, management, and control in Florida to present results of recent studies, discuss works in progress, and share ideas.

For more details go to the FLTWS website at

<http://www.fltw.org/>

