

# GREEN GONE BAD

Featured Ornamental Plant: *Phyllostachys aurea* (Golden Bamboo)

Some exotic ornamental plants behave badly when they escape from the place they are planted. Infestations of these plants have negative impacts on natural environments. One of these plants is *Phyllostachys aurea*; common name: Golden Bamboo.



*Phyllostachys aurea*, or Golden bamboo, is native to Southeast China and is a member of the grass family. In 1882, Golden Bamboo was introduced into the United States, specifically Alabama. Grown for its screening abilities, golden bamboo provides visual as well as noise barriers. Golden Bamboo is fast growing and can quickly colonize an area if not contained. Several hundred species of bamboo have been imported into this country for use as ornamental plants. Twenty-four of these are in the genus *Phyllostachys*, the most invasive of these plants.



*Phyllostachys aurea* is one of the most common bamboos in the United States. The plant can reach a height over 40 feet. Culms (stems) are typically green, but will turn yellow when exposed to sunlight. Short swollen internodes at the base of the culms are a characteristic used to distinguish Golden bamboo from other bamboos. The leaves are lanceolate in shape, roughly 15 cm long and 1 to 2 cm wide. Golden bamboo flowers infrequently and may not flower for several decades. *P. aurea* spreads by rhizomes and culms grow from side shoots at alternate nodes of the rhizome.



Rapid growth in all directions from the point of establishment and tolerance of a wide variety of conditions enable *Phyllostachys aurea* to invade and threaten natural areas. This bamboo is fast growing and will quickly spread via underground rhizomes. Rhizome growth by clones can result in the development of dense thickets and colonies that shade out native plants, reduce biological diversity, and degrade wildlife habitat quality. A single golden bamboo clump can produce up to 9.3 miles (15 km) of stems in its lifetime. Despite containment efforts, the rhizomes of Golden bamboo will often find their way out of confinement to infest nearby areas (they may be discarded in yard waste). In southern forests, a report estimated that non-native bamboos (*Phyllostachys* spp.) occupied 71,560 acres (28,960 ha) in 2008. For removal and control options, please visit this internet page: [http://www.na.fs.fed.us/fhp/invasive\\_plants/weeds/golden-bamboo.pdf](http://www.na.fs.fed.us/fhp/invasive_plants/weeds/golden-bamboo.pdf)



It may not be widely known among horticulturalists and landscapers that this plant can be harmful to natural habitats. Please consider removing this species from your inventory. There are several



attractive and wildlife friendly native species that can be sold and planted in its place. Grasses include: *Arundinaria gigantea* (Switchcane), *Chasmanthium laxum* (River Oats), *Tripsacum dactyloides* (Eastern Gama Grass), *Panicum virgatum* (Switchgrass), *Spartina bakeri* (Sand Cordgrass), or native evergreens that act as a screen such as *Juniperus virginiana* (Eastern red cedar), *Morella cerifera* (wax myrtle), *Chamaecyparis thyoides* (Atlantic white cedar), *Ilex vomitoria*, *I. glabra*, or *I. cassine* (yaupon holly, gallberry, or Dahoon holly).

Visit <http://www.invasive.org/browse/subinfo.cfm?sub=3063> for details

See also: <http://www.se-eppc.org/southcarolina/> and <http://www.se-eppc.org/>

