

Japanese Climbing Fern Found in Pine Straw Bales

Dear Editor,

Recently Japanese climbing fern (*Lygodium japonicum*) was discovered in pine straw shipments at two home improvement stores in Okaloosa County in Northwest Florida. The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Division of Plant Industry (FLDACS/DPI) issued 'stop sales' on these shipments and the trailers were removed by the supplier. At one of the locations, the first replacement shipment also was contaminated with climbing fern. It also was issued a stop



sale by FLDACS/DPI and was removed. The destinations of the contaminated shipments are unknown. Currently, pine straw at both locations appears to be free of any climbing fern.

These shipments of Japanese climbing fern contaminated pine straw are, most likely, not isolated events; the continuation of this practice will only lead to the accelerated spread of this Category 1 invasive species. For concerned citizens who live in an area where pine straw is being sold and are comfortable in identifying climbing fern, a visit to local

pine straw distributors might be in order. If Japanese climbing fern is found in baled pine straw, a call can be made to FLDACS/DPI ((352) 372-3505) to report the incident. An agent will be sent to inspect the pine straw and if climbing fern is documented, a 'stop sale' order will be placed on the shipment. If

a contaminated shipment is found, this needs to be reported as soon as possible. In Okaloosa County, pine straw is a favorite mulch material used in landscapes, and distributors can sell a shipment of ~1000 bales in 2 days.

The majority of local businesses selling pine straw are probably unaware of the noxious weed/invasive species problem with Japanese climbing fern. Most of these pine straw distributors should be eager to correct the situation. Educational material such as brochures with pictures would be excellent visual aids to pass on to business owners, store managers, or employees.

Respectfully,
Dennis Teague

Editor's Notes:

Mr. Teague is an endangered species biologist with Eglin Air Force Base in Northwest Florida, and is responsible for the management of invasive/exotic species on the base's 464,000 acres.

For a related article, see *Japanese Climbing Fern Control Trials in Planted Pine* by Mark Zeller and Drew Leslie in the Summer 2004 issue of *Wildland Weeds*.

To learn to identify Old World Climbing Fern, visit this page from the University of Florida's IFAS Center for Aquatic and Invasive Plants website: <http://plants.ifas.ufl.edu/lygjap.html> or visit this page from the FLEPPC website: http://www.fleppc.org/Lygodium_info.html

Currently, *Lygodium japonicum* is regulated as a noxious weed by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, and in Alabama by the Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries. It is not yet regulated in Georgia, where the pine straw vendor is located. The FLDACS/DPI has contacted the vendor in an attempt to resolve the problem.

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