Backyard Wildlife

WILDLIFE HABITAT NOTES:
Invasive Exotic Plants in Kentucky

Over the past 200 years, settlers to Kentucky have introduced many species of plants, both intentionally and unintentionally, form other parts of the globe. The Atlas of Vascular Plants of Kentucky estimates that such species, termed "exotics", today comprise 15 to 20 percent of Kentucky's flora. Many beneficial exotic plants have been intentionally introduced for agriculture, horticulture, erosion control, or wildlife. Others (e.g., dandelion, ground ivy, garlic mustard) arrived unintentionally. Some exotics have escaped from cultivation to become naturalized (i.e., able to survive beyond human cultivation and control) on disturbed lands. Those that are invasive in natural habitats quickly displace the native flora and cause a reduction in biodiversity.

The following is a list of invasive exotic plants that are commonly used in Kentucky and considered by biologists as serious pests in one or more regions of the state. To protect the native flora, the use of these species should be avoided, and when possible they should be systematically removed from the landscape to enhance wildlife habitat. In most cases there are one or more native species equally suitable for the intended purpose that can be used instead. Native substitutes are suggested where appropriate. While some substitute species are not yet widely available, hopefully growers will begin to offer more of these species in the future.

Invasive Exotics		Native Substitutes	
Asian bittersweet	*Celastrus orbiculatus*	American bittersweet	*Celastrus scandens*
Burning bush	*Euonymus alatus*	Strawberry bush Wahoo	*Euonymus americanus* *Euonymus atropurpureus*
Creeping euonymus	*Euonymus fontunei*	Running strawberry bush	*Euonymus obovatus*
Crown vetch	*Coronilla varia*		
Dame's rocket	*Hesperis matronalis*	Tall phlox	*Phlox paniculata*
English ivy	*Hedera helix*		
Honeysuckle, Japanese	*Lonicera japonica*	Trumpet honeysuckle	*Lonicera sempervirens*
Honeysuckle, shrubby	*Lonicera spp.*	Gray dogwood Fragrant sumac Spicebush Viburnums	*Cornus racemosa* *Rhus aromatica* *Lindera benzoin* V*iburnum spp.*
Ky 31 fescue	*Festuca arundinacea*	Winterberry	*Ilex verticillata*

Invasive Exotics		Native Substitutes	
Kudzu	*Pueraria lobata*	see list of native grasses and legumes	
Lespedeza, sericea	*Lespedeza cuneata*	Groundnut Bush clover Partridge pea Prairie clover	*Apios americana* *Lespedeza capitata, L. hirta, L. virginica* *Cassia fasciculata* *Petalostemum purpureum, P. candidum*
Olive, autumn	*Eleagnus umbellata*	Gray dogwood Flameleaf sumac Hawthorns Wild plum	*Cornus racemosa* *Rhus copallina* *Crataegus crugalli, C. mollis C. phaenopyrum* *Prunus american*
Olive, Russian	*Eleagnus angustifolia*	see Olive, autumn	
Oxeye daisy	*Chrysanthemum leucanthemum*		
Periwinkle	*Vinca minor*	Green and gold Pachysandra Wild ginger	*Chrysogonum virginianum* *Pachysandra procumbens* *Asarum canadense*
Princess tree	*Paulownia tomentosa*	Basswood	*Tilia americana*
Privet	*Ligustrum spp.*	Fragrant sumac Common alder see list of berry-producing trees, shrubs and vines	*Rhus aromatica* *Alnus serrulata*
Purple loosestrife	*Lythrum salicaria*		
Queen Anne's lace	*Daucus carota*		
Rose, multiflora	*Rosa multiflora*	Rose, Carolina Rose, prairie	*Rosa carolina* *Rosa setigera*
Sweet Clover	*Melilotus spp.*		
Tree of heaven	*Ailanthus altissima*	Kentucky coffee tree Staghorn sumac	*Gymnocladus dioicus* *Rhus typhina*

Note: Native warm season grasses provide food and cover for wildlife and have extensive fibrous root systems for excellent, long-term erosion control. They are generally slow to establish and should therefore be planted with a quick-establishing nurse crop such as annual rye, seed oats, or winter wheat.

For more information, contact ***Backyard Wildlife***, Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources, #1 Game Farm Road, Frankfort KY 40601; (502)564-4336.