



# PULLING TOGETHER IN ALASKA: A VOLUNTEER'S GUIDE TO COMMUNITY WEED PULLING EVENTS



UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA  
**FAIRBANKS**

College of Rural Alaska

**Cooperative Extension Service**

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# INTRODUCTION

Have you ever thought about a gardener's worst nightmare? It would include walking into the garden and finding alien plants taking over and scratching at your ankles. Unfortunately, this nightmare isn't very far from the truth. There are noxious and invasive plants in Alaska that destroy crops and natural and recreational areas.

Eradication and management of unwanted plants is a global issue requiring coordination of many groups working across political and geographical boundaries. The Committee for Noxious and Invasive Plants Management (CNIPM) was formed in 2000 to encourage and support management efforts in Alaska. The University of Alaska Fairbanks Cooperative Extension Service is an active partner in CNIPM.

The partnership is statewide, with participants from many Alaska communities. Land managers, wildlife biologists, farmers, conservationists, and people who enjoy the beauty of Alaska's native plants work together to control the damage noxious and invasive plants cause.

CNIPM partners seek to provide information on plant management and control, good land stewardship practices, awareness of noxious and invasive plants, and cooperative management programs to help Alaskans achieve healthy, sustainable ecosystems. Invasive weeds have no place in healthy ecosystems.

CNIPM encourages all Alaskans to help protect Alaska's ecosystems from invasive plants. Community weed pulls are one way citizens can get involved.



**NOT ALL ALIEN INVADERS ARE FROM OUTER SPACE!**

Read more on page 19!

This guide will help you act on your interest in stopping the spread of noxious and invasive plants through leading volunteer teams during weed pulling events.

Participation in community pulling events increases community awareness as well as provides management of very real and threatening weed infestations. Volunteers work with state, federal, and private agencies to contain and eradicate infestations.

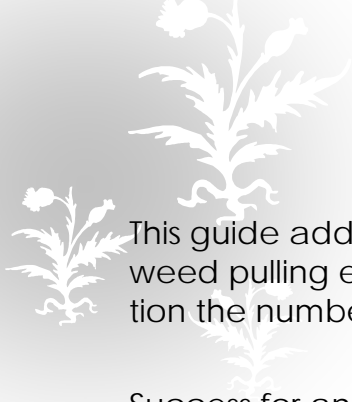
Volunteers contribute valuable time and energy to weed management and invasive weeds awareness. As a volunteer team leader, your role is doubly important and greatly appreciated.

Inside this Guide:	
Introduction	1
Partnerships and Teamwork	3
Spread the Work, Not the Weed	5
Volunteers	6
Dress for Success and Comfort	11
Risk Management and Safety	13
Materials and Services	15
The Pull	17
Going Home for the Day	18
Words on Weeds	19
Not in My Backyard	20
For More Information	21



Butter 'n' eggs (*Linaria vulgaris*) is an invasive plant found in Alaska communities. The flowers look like yellow snapdragons. Unlike garden snapdragons these invaders spread out of control by seed and creeping roots.  
Photo by Marta Mueller, CES

# PARTNERSHIPS AND TEAMWORK



This guide addresses many topics to ensure your community weed pulling event is effective and safe. Without cooperation the number of tasks involved may seem overwhelming.

Success for annual community events such as clean-up days (litter or weeds!) requires many hands. Coordinating volunteers for community events relies on your participation in a team.

Your team will include people who can work on gathering materials, recruit a labor crew, keep your crew safe, and spread the word on weeds.

As a team coordinator, your job description includes:

- Identifying community partners
- Getting the word out
- Recruiting a volunteer labor crew of 10-15 people
- Making sure your team shows up with proper clothing and equipment
- Considering risk management and safety
- Providing materials and services
- Supervising your volunteer labor crew
- Cleaning clothing and equipment so you don't bring invaders home
- Providing additional invasive plant information to participants and other community members

The people on my team are:

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# COMMUNITY PARTNERS



Cooperation is useful for sharing resources and sharing successes of a job well done. Working with agency partners will help obtain information on identification and location of weed infestations. There are many agencies in your community that can work together to make sure volunteers have the materials and information they need for this event.

- Alaskans for Litter Prevention and Recycling
- University of Alaska
- Soil and Water Conservation Districts of Alaska
- Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
- United Way of Alaska
- Alaska Department of Natural Resources  
Community Forestry Program
- UAF Cooperative Extension Service Land Resources Program
- UAF Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Program
- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
- USDI Bureau of Land Management
- Anchorage Waterways Council
- USDA Forest Service State and Private Forestry
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Earth Team Program
- Municipality of Anchorage Solid Waste Services
- Fairbanks North Star Borough Solid Waste Division
- Capital Disposal, Juneau
- Juneau Invasive Plants Action



Japanese knotweed (*Polygonum cuspidatum*) is an invasive shrub that is rapidly increasing its range. It is a perennial plant that grows from creeping roots. It competes with important wildlife browse species such as willow. Japanese knotweed was introduced from Asia as an ornamental plant.

Photo by Bradley Kriekhaus, USDAFS

# SPREAD THE WORD, NOT THE WEED

Publicity for community weed pulling events helps identify volunteer heroes as well as increases awareness of problem weeds in your area.

Although community weed pulls may be held on a variety of dates, many of these events occur during Alaska Invasive Weed Awareness Week, traditionally in July.

Get the word out in your neighborhood or organization:

Community calendars

Newsletters

Block parties

Email lists serving organizations where you are likely to recruit volunteers

Greenhouses or nurseries

Community councils or associations

My team's contact for  
Publicity is:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Don't forget to include this information when sharing information:

Name of Event

Date

Time

Place

Contact Name

Address

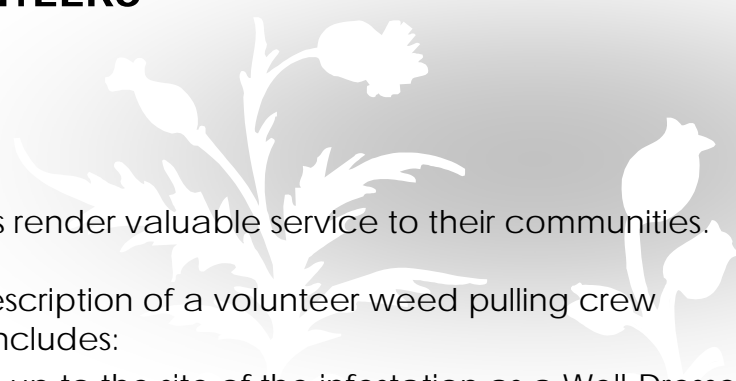
Phone Number

E-mail Address

"For More Information" visit [www.cnipm.org](http://www.cnipm.org)

Local contacts for your community, including name, e-mail address, and phone number (see back page).

# VOLUNTEERS



Volunteers render valuable service to their communities.

The job description of a volunteer weed pulling crew member includes:

- Showing up to the site of the infestation as a Well-Dressed Weed Warrior
- Working with agency partners and team coordinators to identify problem weeds
- Pulling problem weeds and bagging them
- Driving weeds to transfer sites or land fills

There are many groups in your community that participate in service projects. These people are often willing volunteers.

- Environmental groups
- Wildlife conservation groups
- Recreation groups
- Master Gardeners
- Recreational facility user groups
- Sports teams
- Student or youth clubs
- Adopt-a-Highway or Adopt-a-Park litter patrols

My team's contact for volunteer Recruitment is:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

The next page is a handy place to maintain volunteer contacts.

# VOLUNTEER TEAM



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact \_\_\_\_\_

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# VOLUNTEER TEAM



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Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Thanks for agreeing to participate on a volunteer weed pulling team! I will use your phone number or email address to contact you during Invasive Weeds Awareness Week for weed pulling events in our community.

# VOLUNTEER TEAM



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

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# VOLUNTEER TEAM



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Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

*Got my  
shovel, got  
my gloves!  
Got the job  
no weed  
loves!*

# DRESS FOR SUCCESS AND COMFORT

Dress for working outside in rough terrain.

Cover up to reduce exposure to biting insects and scratchy or sticky sap-filled plants. Insect repellents can make you more comfortable, but follow the label directions and spray lightly.

***Wear leather gloves to protect your hands!*** Many of these weed invaders have spines, barbs, hairs, or chemicals that will prick, scratch, or irritate your skin. These noxious weeds may cause allergic reactions.

Protect your feet from dampness and uneven surfaces by wearing sturdy boots. This can help keep you from turning ankles.

Protect your eyes and face from exposure to the sun by wearing hats with brims, sunglasses, and sunscreen.

Working outdoors requires energy and water. Bring along water bottles to keep hydrated. Have a supply of fresh water to refill bottles. Pack wholesome snacks for an energy boost.

Pulling weeds in your own garden is tiring. Pulling weeds in parks and hauling trash bags full of debris is tiring too. Plan on having volunteers work for 3 hours and then let them enjoy the rest of their day.



Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*) is a noxious weed with thorns that make removal by pulling a challenge. There have been control effort on this spiky purple thistle in Delta Junction, Fairbanks and Anchorage. It is a weedy pest of agricultural and recreational areas. Canada thistle is a perennial that spreads by seed and creeping roots. It was introduced from Europe.

Photo by Corlene Rose, CES

# DRESS FOR SUCCESS AND COMFORT



For comfort and safety while working the Well-Dressed Weed Warrior wears:

- Hat with brim
- Sturdy gloves
- Long-sleeved shirt
- Long pants
- Sturdy boots with hard soles (waterproof if pulling in wet areas)

**Preferred accessories:**

- Water bottle
- Insect repellent
- Shovel
- Orange safety vest
- Sunglasses
- Sunscreen
- Raincoat
- Enthusiastic smile

Photo by Marta Mueller, CES

# RISK MANAGEMENT AND SAFETY



**Liability** Accidents do happen. Weed pulling is a physical activity that requires lifting, walking, and bending. You may be working on road sides, steep banks, or near water. You may help transport bags of weeds. It pays to pay attention.

Paying for medical services can be difficult with escalating medical bills in an increasingly litigious society. If you are working with an established organization, review your risk management and liability policies.

In some cases this may mean restricting volunteers to people 14 years of age or older, signing liability release forms, developing event plans, or seeking supplemental insurance.

If you are not affiliated with an organization, some agencies sponsor volunteer programs. The Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Cooperative Extension Service are two options.

My team's contact for Risk Management and Safety is:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

To reduce risk to your crew, be aware of the risks of working outdoors with biting insects, scratchy plants, and traffic.

**Emergencies** Maintain contact lists for all volunteers in case medical attention is warranted, particularly for minors.

Make a list of emergency service numbers before you start pulling. If you do have an emergency, you will not waste valuable time scrambling for phone numbers.

Bring a first aid kit, a charged cell phone, some wholesome munchies, and extra bottles of water.

# WORKING ALONG ROADS



**Pulling in Right-of-Ways** Weed pulling should be restricted to areas of road right-of-way outside of the pavement and shoulder area.

Use Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities cautionary signs and orange vests to make road users aware of work crews along side of the roadway. Contact your local DOT&PF maintenance and operations office for signs and vests.

Work on one side of the road at a time.

**Transporting Weed Debris** Use good driving skills at all times, including appropriate speed, signals, and awareness of other roadway users and workers in the right-of-way.

When lifting loads into vehicles, use hazard signals or pull off of the roadway completely, and hand things over the side of the vehicle away from the middle of the road.

When transporting bags of weedy material to landfills or transfer sites, make sure loads in pick-up trucks are covered and tied down.

**Parking** Carpool to reduce the number of extra vehicles near the roadway. Use parking lots when available.

Don't park in weedy areas. You may spread weeds with your tires.

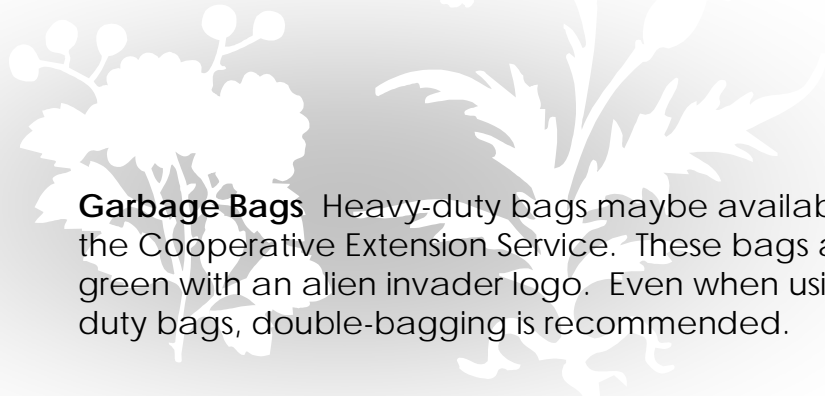
Alaska Department of  
Transportation and  
Public Facilities (DOT&PF)  
Maintenance and  
Operations contacts for  
safety equipment:

Northern Region  
Director's Office  
Fairbanks  
(907) 451-2294

Central Region  
Chief's Office  
Anchorage  
(907) 269-0760

Southeast Region  
Director's Office  
Juneau  
(907) 465-1799

# MATERIALS AND SERVICES



**Garbage Bags** Heavy-duty bags maybe available through the Cooperative Extension Service. These bags are dark green with an alien invader logo. Even when using heavy-duty bags, double-bagging is recommended.

**Invasive Plant Information** It's a good idea to bring along plant identification guides, brochures, and posters.

These materials will help identify which plants to pull and will help spread awareness. Be sure to spread the word to people you encounter who are interested in what you are doing and why.

The Cooperative Extension Service and other agency partners can provide these materials as well as prizes for the volunteers to take home.

My team's contact for Materials and Services is:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

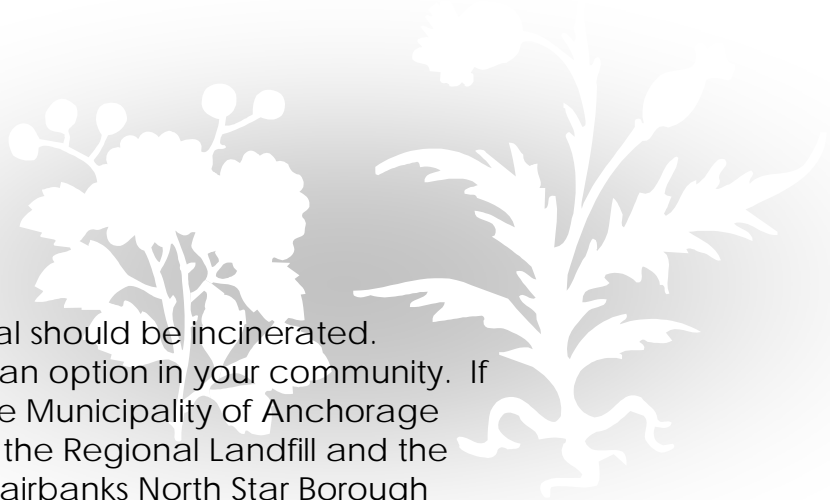
Email \_\_\_\_\_

**Tools** Some noxious or invasive plants will be difficult to remove. Hand trowels, shovels, and clippers will be helpful.

**GPS Units** Bring a Global Positioning System unit to record the location of the infestation. Recording infestations and control efforts will help monitor the spread invasive plants and the success of our actions.

Invasive plant distributions are being compiled in a database called the Alaska Exotic Plant Information Clearinghouse (AKEPIC). For more information, contact your local extension office.





**Disposal** Ideally, plant material should be incinerated. Check to see if incineration is an option in your community. If incineration is not a option, the Municipality of Anchorage charges disposal fees at both the Regional Landfill and the Central Transfer Station. The Fairbanks North Star Borough charges disposal fees at its landfill. Volunteer coordinators may make arrangements to have fees waived for green alien invader bags brought in by designated volunteers during Invasive Weeds Awareness Week. For example, the Juneau Invasive Plants Action group has worked with Capital Disposal, a private company, to incinerate bags of weeds as a donation of goods and services.

Disposal at these three sites should be coordinated in your community.

**Weedy Seeds** Ideally, weed debris should be incinerated. If these services are not available, weed debris should be dumped at landfills with bags intact. It should *not* be composted. The weeds may be able to set seed if left in compost piles. Weed debris deposited in landfills will be covered and the weeds will no longer spread.

*Share the "Not in My Backyard" information on page 20 with your friends and neighbors!*

To keep bags intact, do not overfill them. If tough weeds poke through the plastic, double-bag 'em!

**Transportation** Getting weed debris to landfills or transfer sites requires additional volunteer resources. Recruit landscapers, truck drivers, construction firms, or other volunteers with large trucks. Ask if these folks are willing to help haul bags of weeds.

Put one member of your team in charge of surveying the area after bagging weeds to make sure all of the bags are picked up.

# THE PULL



Communities across Alaska will target different problem weeds in each neighborhood. What species concern you?

**What to Pull** You will pull noxious or invasive plants that are safe to handle. Be aware of plants that have barbs or chemicals that may have serious health effect. Do not pull ornamental plants, native plants, or your neighbor's garden weeds. Pulling may spread the problems in some species whose roots break-up and re-sprout seedlings.

For help identifying plants, there are publications and posters available for the day of the pull from your local Cooperative Extension Office or Conservation District.

**Where to Pull** You may have a specific area that you want to pull in. Otherwise, maps and location information for infestations in your community are available from the CES.

**Be aware of private land ownership in your pulling area. Avoid trespassing on private land unless there has been contact with the landowner. Restrict pulling to public areas.**

**How to Pull** Small infestations may be eradicated by pulling all plant parts, root and all. These plants should be pulled by hand or with a shovel or other tool. Certain plants with creeping roots require a lot of digging. Avoid creating large areas of bare soil which provide sites for weed establishment.

Many species of plants are in such great numbers that they aren't good candidates for controlling the plants over large areas. Remove blossoms to keep seeds from developing and spreading. Keeping infestations from spreading is known as containment.

The CES will help you determine your pulling methods.

My team's contact for identification and location information is:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

# GOING HOME FOR THE DAY

**Don't bring your invaders home.** Check the following items at the weed-pulling site. Knock soil off with a broom or brush at the site into collection bags. If you choose to vacuum items, tie the bag in a garbage bag and dispose of it with the rest of the debris. Inspect the following items:

- Work boots
- Shovels and rakes
- Pant legs
- Socks
- Vehicle seats and interiors
- Vehicle tires

If you are rinsing off boots or raingear, do not let seeds float off-site in rinse water.

**Was the job too big?** There may be help available with larger infestations of problem plants.

Public land managers may need to know they have your support to control these plants. Contact the local and state government departments that maintain areas with invasive weed infestations.

Private land owners may need to know they have invasive plant problems on their property. Encourage your neighbors to contact the Cooperative Extension Service for information on identification and control.

Like-minded folks are found in many places. Groups like Soil and Water Conservation Districts and Juneau Invasive Plants Action appreciate good land stewardship practices. These folks participate in noxious and invasive plants management activities and awareness. Consider joining these groups and adding to the momentum.



# WORDS ON WEEDS

*We're on the web! For more information on invasive plants, visit [cnipm.org](http://cnipm.org)*



Garlic mustard (*Allaria petiolata*) produce scores of seeds from white flowers. Garlic mustard reduces the number of other plant species growing on the forest floor by forming a dense mat of growth. Garlic mustard was introduced from Europe where it was valued as an herb. Photo by Rutgers Cooperative Extension

Unwanted plants may be called invasive, noxious, non-natives, exotics, aliens, non-indigenous harmful species, weeds, or problem plants.

Any plant can vex a gardener, but invasive plants are plants that become established and spread without natural controls. They are often introduced into a new environment in which they did not co-evolve with other plants, diseases, or plant-eating animals. Thus there are no natural enemies to limit the spread of the introduced plants. Invasive plants reproduce and survive in greater numbers than native or desirable plants.

Noxious weeds are plants that are poisonous or troublesome to people and livestock. They have a special legal designation that allows for costly regulation of the plants' movement as seeds. Certified seed lots are free of prohibited seeds.

Noxious and invasive plants cause economic, aesthetic, and environmental damage. The long-term effects of uncontrolled spread can result in higher crop and livestock production costs. The beauty of our wild places and parks is impacted when noxious and invasive plants fill a vista. These plants can also damage the environment when they crowd out native plants and reduce wildlife habitat.

Alaska is not free from invasion, nor the damage noxious and invasive plants cause. A color guide showcasing some of the worst invaders in Alaskan communities is available from the Cooperative Extension Service.

# NOT IN MY BACKYARD!

Invasive weeds can wreak havoc in your own lawn, garden, and landscape as well as serve as a source of infestation for other areas. Avoid these weed sources to prevent new infestations and the spread of these plants in your community. Share this information with your friends and neighbors.

Infestation Sources	How to Avoid Weeds from these Sources
Fill-dirt and topsoil	Do not use fill-dirt from weedy sites or topsoil trucked long distances.
Flower seed mixes	Avoid mixtures of plant seeds if you don't know what kind of species are in the mix. Do not use non-native wildflower seed mixes.
Vehicles and equipment	Avoid driving through weedy areas. Clean equipment before tilling or moving soil into your yard. Brush soil and seeds off clothing and shoes and dispose of debris carefully.
Manure	Compost manure completely. Control weeds growing on manure piles. Avoid weedy manure.
Four-footed friends	Pack animals may gather weedy hitchhikers. Brush animals and clean hooves or feet before loading them up in cars or trailers and dispose of debris carefully.
Recreational equipment	Tents, hiking gear, sports equipment, and clothing collect weed seeds. Shake out materials before leaving a camping site or sports field.
Mulch materials	Avoid weedy straw for mulch. Do not use hay mulch. Purchase certified weed-free products.
Nursery stock	Many invasive species have been brought to the United States intentionally as ornamental plants. Do a little research to see if new and unusual plants are problem weeds elsewhere.
?	Invasive plants are good hitchhikers. Who knows how they might end up in your garden next! Learn about potential invaders in your neighborhood so you can spot them as soon as they arrive!

Don't hesitate to share what you find! The Cooperative Extension Service is interested in your unknown invaders. Call your district office for identification or control options.

# FOR MORE INFORMATION

Pulling Together in  
Alaska: A  
Volunteer's Guide  
to Community Weed  
Pulling Events

Written and compiled by  
Marta Mueller  
CES Program Assistant

Revisions by  
Casie Stockdale  
Land Resources Program  
Assistant

Graphics on page 1 and  
7 by Marta Mueller

With support from these  
cooperating agencies:

The UAF Cooperative Extension Service is an active participant of the Committee for Noxious and Invasive Plants Management. Integrated Pest Management Program (IPM) Technicians in these offices can provide bags, species identification materials, and infestation location information.

Anchorage Extension Office (907)786-6300  
2221 E Northern Lights Boulevard Suite 118  
Anchorage, AK 99508-4143

Delta Junction District Office (907)895-4215  
Jarvis Building  
PO Box 349  
Delta Junction, AK 99737

Fairbanks—Tanana District Office (907)474-2450  
University Park Building  
PO Box 758155  
Fairbanks, AK 99775-8155

Juneau District Office (907)465-8749  
3032 Vintage Boulevard Suite 104  
Juneau, AK 99801

Palmer-Copper River/Mat-Su District Office (907)745-3360  
809 S Chugach Street Suite 2  
Palmer, AK 99645

Soldotna—Kenai Peninsula District (907)262-5824  
34961 K—Beach Road Suite A  
Soldotna, AK 99669-9728



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