

SUBJECT: Federal Import Quarantine Order for the Climbing Ferns *Lygodium microphyllum* and *Lygodium flexuosum*

Effective immediately, Plant Protection and Quarantine is issuing a Federal Import Quarantine Order (copy attached) restricting the importation of *Lygodium microphyllum* (Old World climbing fern) and *Lygodium flexuosum* (maidenhair creeper). The restrictions apply to any parts capable of propagation, including spores and leaves (fronds) of these climbing fern species.

L. microphyllum occurs in Florida where it is damaging habitats for federally-listed threatened and endangered species in the Everglades National Park, National Wildlife Refuges, and other conservation areas. Native to Asia and Australia, Old World climbing fern climbs into trees and shades out native vegetation in hundreds of acres in east-central Florida. Dense growth of the plant can also be a fire hazard, frequently enabling small ground fires to reach into tree canopies where it can kill growing branches. *L. microphyllum* is a Florida State noxious weed, subject to control. Areas of the United States at risk from infestation by *L. microphyllum* include the uninfested areas of Florida, and coastal regions of Texas, Louisiana, Alabama, and Mississippi.

L. flexuosum, a weed of rice, plantation crops, and natural lowland vegetation in eastern Asia, is not known to occur in the United States. This robust species spreads by rhizomes and by climbing over other vegetation. Like *L. microphyllum*, it has the potential to cause serious environmental and economic damage in the southernmost areas of the United States.

For additional information regarding this Federal Order, you may contact Ms. Polly Lehtonen at (301) 734-4394 or polly.p.lehtonen@aphis.usda.gov.

/s/ John H. Payne /for

Rebecca A. Bech
Deputy Administrator
Plant Protection and Quarantine

Attachment:
Federal Import Quarantine Order

FEDERAL IMPORT QUARANTINE ORDER:
Lygodium microphyllum and *Lygodium flexuosum*

May 30, 2008

The purpose and goal of this Federal Order is to prevent the entry from all foreign countries into the United States of two harmful noxious weeds, *Lygodium microphyllum* (Cav.) R. Br. (Old World climbing fern) and *Lygodium flexuosum* (L.) Sw. (maidenhair creeper). This Federal Order is issued pursuant to Section 412(a) of the Plant Protection Act of June 20, 2000, as amended, 7 U.S.C. 7712(a), which authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to prohibit or restrict the importation or entry of any plant, plant part, noxious weed or article if the Secretary determines that the prohibition or restriction is necessary to prevent the entry of a plant pest or noxious weed into the United States.

This action is necessary because the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has determined that these climbing fern species are harmful noxious weeds that pose a serious environmental and economic threat to the United States. Recently, APHIS learned of commercial interest in importing *Lygodium microphyllum* as cut flower greenery. Fertile *Lygodium* leaves contain reproductive structures filled with spores that may be windblown, spreading the plant into uninfested areas. Additionally, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection has requested that APHIS regulate *Lygodium microphyllum* to support Florida control efforts and *Lygodium flexuosum*, to prevent its introduction.

Within the United States, Old World climbing fern is only known to occur in the State of Florida where it is currently regulated and controlled. Maidenhair creeper is not known to occur in the United States. These climbing ferns spread prolifically, climbing and scrambling over vegetation, creating a fire hazard, smothering native plant communities and causing other harmful environmental and economic impacts.

In order to prevent the entry of *Lygodium microphyllum* (Cav.) R. Br. and *Lygodium flexuosum* (L.) Sw., the APHIS Administrator has determined that it is necessary to no longer allow the importation of plant material capable of propagation, including nursery stock, spores, and leaves (fronds) of these climbing fern species, unless authorized by a PPQ permit for specified research in containment. Due to the seriousness of the potential for the spread of these very harmful noxious weeds, this Federal Order is effective immediately upon issuance.

Prohibited Plant Species:

Lygodium microphyllum (Cav.) R. Br. (Old World climbing fern) and *Lygodium flexuosum* (L.) Sw. (maidenhair creeper).