



**Weeds Won't Wait: Don't Hesitate**

**For Immediate Release  
July 16, 2007**

**Contact:** Kimberly Mulcahy  
630.393.0732  
kimberly@achievainc.com

## **FOUR THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT WHAT MAY BE LURKING IN YOUR GARDEN**

(LAWRENCE, Kan.) — You've just finished a long day of gardening, taking great care to meticulously prune the trees and shrubs, painstakingly weeding the lawn and all the flower beds. But before you sit back and congratulate yourself on a job well-done, you may want to take a closer look at some of the varieties of plants growing in your yard. Some of the very plants you lovingly care for and toil over each weekend may actually be harmful to the environment.

### **1. What Happens in Your Yard Doesn't Always Stay in Your Yard**

“What many homeowners and gardening enthusiasts may not know is that some popular garden varieties of plants may actually be considered invasive weeds,” says Alan Tasker, Ph.D., National Noxious Weed Program Manager at the USDA Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service. “They're considered invasive because they can take root in a particular area and spread unchecked, possibly choking out other plant species natural to that area.” Invasive plants spew copious amounts of seeds that travel by wind or animals, eventually settling in other areas. So what you plant in your backyard could show up in other environments miles away.

### **2. A Rose by any Other Name...**

Usually we remove weeds we consider unattractive or that show up where we don't want them. However, home gardeners should also focus on those plants that may pose a future threat to the balance of native plant species in their area.

What makes things confusing is plants can be star performers in one region yet pose a serious threat if introduced into another. So it's worth a trip to your local nursery or visiting your state's department of natural resources website to find out if your yard is harboring any potential invasive species. Some examples of invasive backyard species include:

- Some Wildflower Mixes
- Certain Seeds from Bird Seed Mixes (can contain notoriously invasive thistle seeds)
- Multifloral Rose (Rambler Rose)
- English Ivy
- Purple Loosestrife
- Oxeye Daisy
- Orange Daylily
- Baby's Breath
- Tree of Heaven
- Melaleuca
- Buckthorn
- Golden Bamboo

more

## WHAT'S LURKING IN YOUR GARDEN / ADD TWO

The call to control the unknowing use of beautiful yet destructive species is beginning to catch on. Meijer stores have removed Norway maple and Lombardy poplar from their inventories because they are known to be invasive in the Midwest. They also have tagged some of their stock "Recommended Non-Invasive" to help customers identify the proper species to plant in their area. Lowe's also worked with organizations in Florida to eliminate potentially invasive plants from their stores in that state and are currently working on a similar initiative in California.

### **3. Controlling Weeds is Nothing to Sneeze At**

Many common weeds are notorious allergens. Because their seeds and spores are readily disseminated over wide areas, increased pollen levels can wreak havoc with allergy and asthma sufferers. Ragweed, pigweed, Russian thistle and sage brush, along with poison ivy, oak and sumac, are just a few invasive species that irritate allergies. Another weed, giant hogweed, actually blocks the skin's resistance to ultraviolet light, often leading to serious sunburn.

### **4. Weeds can be Quite Pricey**

Invasive plants, or biological pollution, cost an estimated \$34.7 billion annually, according to a Cornell University report, devouring three million acres a year in the U.S. "Invasive weeds can take over cattle grazing areas, as leafy spurge has done in the northern plain states or overrun crops, much like cocklebur in corn and soybean crops throughout North America," says Dr. Tasker. An interesting site from the University of Nebraska, Kearney ([www.unk.edu/acad/biology/hoback/escape/home.html](http://www.unk.edu/acad/biology/hoback/escape/home.html)) features a cost calculator that tracks the cost of invasive species in the U.S. in real time. (Note this site tracks the cost of all invasive species, including plants, animals and insects.)

We all play a part in containing these overpowering species from destroying our natural lands. Awareness is the first step. Contact your state's department of natural resources to find out more about invasive species in your area or log on to [www.wssa.net](http://www.wssa.net) for more information.

To learn more about invasive plants, contact Lee VanWychen, Director of Science Policy, at (202) 408-5388 or Kimberly Mulcahy, Media Communications Representative, at (630) 393-0732.

#### *About the Weed Science Society of America*

*The Weed Science Society of America, a non-profit professional society, was founded in 1956 to encourage and promote the development of knowledge concerning weeds and their impact on the environment. The Weed Science Society of America, promotes research, education and extension outreach activities related to weeds; provides science-based information to the public and policy makers; and fosters awareness of weeds and their impacts on managed and natural ecosystems. For more information, visit [www.wssa.net](http://www.wssa.net).*

###