

BEST PRACTICES



Habitat Restoration Begins at Home

One of the best ways you can help protect and restore Thurston County's forests and natural areas starts in your own backyard! Invasive plants are not only problematic for the landscaping around your home, they are also a source of infestations in our public spaces. Many problem weeds are in fact garden plants that have been transported outside of our own yards. Once they escape, they become invaders that crowd out native plants and damage local ecosystems. Problem weeds can quickly overtake surrounding natural areas and stormwater facilities. Some are toxic to humans, pets, and livestock.

Removing invasive plants at home is the first step in habitat restoration. Here is what to do:

- Identify and remove invasive plants
- Replant the area with native understory plants to help keep invasive plants from returning
- Avoid wildflower seed mixtures (these can contain up to 90+% invasive weed seeds)
- Remove spent flower heads from problem weeds to reduce propagation
- Remove any volunteer seedlings that emerge

Invasive Plants

Invasive plants tend to grow and mature quickly and are well adapted to our environment. They have no natural predators to keep them in check. Here's a list of invasive plants to look for:

- Butterfly bush
- Yellow archangel
- Periwinkle
- Ajuga
- Himalayan blackberry
- English ivy
- Tansy ragwort
- Herb Robert
- Scotch broom
- Knotweed



Clockwise from top left: Yellow Archangel, Periwinkle, Tansy ragwort, Herb Robert

Invasive Trees

You might be surprised to learn there are also invasive tree species in our region. They are more common than you may think. Some invaders like English holly and laurel can grow in dense shade and produce fruit that attract birds. Birds carry the seeds to nearby yards, forests and natural areas where they displace beneficial plants and trees. Please avoid planting these trees:

- English (or cherry) laurel

- English holly
- European hawthorn
- Black locust
- European mountain ash

Invasive Plant Disposal

Invasive plants must be bagged and disposed of in the trash. Never put them in the compost or yard waste bin or dump them in natural areas! Some problem weeds can be disposed of for free at the Thurston County Waste and Recovery Center and Drop boxes. To find out what to do with knotweed, Scotch broom, blackberry, English Ivy and other invasive weeds, visit co.thurston.wa.us/tcweeds/docs/bad-weeds.pdf. For more information about identifying, removing, and replacing problem weeds, visit co.thurston.wa.us/tcweeds or visit Stream Team's reference library at streamteam.info/home-stewardship-reference-library.

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