

INVASIVE SPECIES IN NEW YORK

What is an invasive species?

Invasive alien species are plants, animals, or other organisms that are introduced to a given area outside their original range and cause harm in their new home. Because they have no natural enemies to limit their reproduction, they usually spread rampantly. Invasive alien species are recognized as one of the leading threats to biodiversity and impose enormous costs to agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and other human enterprises, as well as to human health.



- The cost to control invasive species and the damages they inflict upon property and natural resources in the U.S. is estimated at **\$137 billion** annually.

Invasive Species in New York: A Quick Look

New York has been invaded by a number of harmful exotic plants and animals. Here is a quick look at some of the worst current and potential invaders:

Name	Type	Origin	Extent	Damage
Zebra mussel	Mollusk	Caspian Sea region of Asia; accidentally released into Lake St. Clair in 1988 in ship ballast water	Found in Lake Ontario, Erie, all Finger Lakes and Hudson Valley	Voracious filter feeders that out-compete native animals; fouls boats & clogs intake pipes at power plants and municipal water sources
Purple loosestrife	Wetland plant	Europe and Asia; introduced in 1800s as ornamental and medicinal plant in 1800s	Found throughout NY, especially in central region	Displaces native wetland plants; has less food and habitat value for waterfowl and other wildlife
Asian long-horned beetle	Insect	China; entered in 1996 as a “hitchhiker” on wood packing material	4,600 trees in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, and Long Island	Controlling NYC infestations has cost \$180 million; if beetle escapes, it could devastate timber, tourism, maple syrup and street trees in northeast
West Nile virus	Virus	Uganda; first reported in NY and CT in 1999	Found in every county in New York	New York has reported 193 human cases and 17 deaths; WNV has also killed thousands of birds and over 100 horses
Garlic mustard	Weed	Europe; brought by settlers as a vitamin-rich winter herb	Throughout NY south of Adirondacks	Grows earlier in spring than native plants, allowing it to dominate forest understory and crowd out natives
Chestnut blight	Fungus	China; probably introduced on nursery stock in the 1890s. It was first detected in New York city in 1904.	By 1926, the disease had devastated chestnuts from Maine to Alabama	Chestnut once comprised one-fourth to one-half of eastern U.S. forests, and was prized for its durable wood, and as a food for humans, livestock and wildlife. Today, only stump-sprouts from killed trees remain.

Name	Type	Origin	Extent	Damage
Golden nematode	Roundworm	Peru; spread from there to Europe and then to U.S. after World War I	Found in Long Island and 7 upstate counties	A hard-to-eradicate pest of potatoes, tomatoes and eggplant
Multiflora rose	Weed	Japan & China; promoted in 1900s as a “living fence”	Found throughout New York	Forms dense thickets that crowd out native species, also a weed in crop and pasture lands

What Congress Can Do:

A. Make Prevention Our Top Priority

- Reverse current U.S. policy on the intentional import of live plants and animals, that is, switch from a “dirty” to a “clean” list approach that requires screening for invasiveness before import and which keeps out or limits import of species so as to prevent harm to native species or ecosystems – and make the legislative changes to do so.
- Substantially cut the unintentional introduction of aquatic invaders by overseeing federal standard-setting on the discharge of ballast water in the United States, supporting the development of technology to meet these standards; ensuring that agencies monitor and enforce compliance; and reauthorizing the 1996 National Invasive Species Act in the strongest and most comprehensive form.
- When considering, reviewing, or approving trade agreements, rigorously address invasive species, e.g., by allowing for restriction of imports of non-native species that are invasive elsewhere and by identifying pathways by which inadvertent introductions travel so that they may be interrupted.

B. Make Federal Agencies More Effective

- Use oversight authority to ensure that all federal agencies immediately and strongly implement that part of Executive Order 13112 that asks them to identify and reduce actions that introduce or spread invasive species in the United States or elsewhere.
- Appropriate adequate funds so that federal agencies have the resources to address invasive species problems promptly and comprehensively over the long-term.
- Strengthen the structure and leadership of the National Invasive Species Council and prompt more aggressive implementation of its National Management Plan.
- Oversee the work of the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service to ensure that the agency and its Administrator are committed to protecting biological diversity as well as agriculture.
- Evaluate the serious problems with border inspection for pests, weeds, and pathogens, e.g., in staffing and cross-department coordination, exacerbated by moving these functions into the Department of Homeland Security and amend its authorizing legislation if needed.

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