

Connecticut Invasive Plant Working Group (CIPWG) 2013 Annual Report

The Connecticut Invasive Plant Working Group (CIPWG) is a consortium of individuals, members of environmental organizations, and affiliates of municipal and state agencies whose mission is to promote awareness of invasive plants and their non-invasive alternatives. Formed in 1997 as an ad-hoc group, CIPWG is now in its 16th year of operation. The working group meets 1 to 2 times per year to collaborate and share information on the presence, distribution, ecological impacts, and management of invasive plants affecting Connecticut and the region and to promote uses of native or non-invasive ornamental alternatives. The working group includes federal, state, and town agency staff, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), researchers, nursery growers, educators, master gardeners, community members, and interested citizens. Donna Ellis (University of Connecticut Department of Plant Science & Landscape Architecture) and Penni Sharp (Connecticut Botanical Society) serve as Co-Chairs.

Since 2002, CIPWG has hosted biennial invasive plant symposia. The seventh biennial symposium is in the planning stages for fall 2014. Previous symposia have attracted up to 475 attendees. CIPWG's news and events list serve has approximately 730 members. The CIPWG website moved to a newer server at the University of Connecticut in 2012 and is now accessible at www.cipwg.uconn.edu. The website provides information on invasive plant topics that include identification, management, the Connecticut list of invasive plants, photos of invasive plants, invasive alternatives, resources, legislative updates, and much more. The CIPWG list serve also resides on a University of Connecticut server. Online reporting forms for mile-a-minute vine (*Persicaria perfoliata*), giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*), and purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*) allow website visitors to provide distribution information on these species. CIPWG provides links to the Early Detection and Distribution Mapping System (EDDMapS; www.eddmaps.org) to accept additional reports of any other invasive plant. New features continue to be added to expand the CIPWG website, including a scrolling photo gallery of Connecticut invasive plants, early detection information, an event calendar, and new links to invasive plant fact sheets and management information. The design and layout of the site were also upgraded in 2013.

The Connecticut Invasive Plant Working Group maintains the following subcommittees:

- Education and Outreach (educational outreach about invasive species and their alternatives)
- Management (develop and disseminate information on invasive plant control options)
- Native Alternatives (explore and promote use of native plant species as alternatives to invasives)
- Volunteer (organize and provide assistance for pulling parties and other invasive plant activities where volunteers are needed).

Two invasive plant pulling parties for control of mile-a-minute vine were conducted in Sprague, CT on July 12 and July 24, 2013. Approximately 15 volunteers and project coordinators attended the events, which were co-sponsored by CIPWG, DEEP, the University of Connecticut, and the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station.

CIPWG maintains a list of speakers who are available to give presentations on many aspects of invasive plants, including identification, control, and non-invasive alternatives. These speakers and other CIPWG members presented many lectures, workshops, demonstrations, and guided field walks during 2013. Two CIPWG exhibits developed in 2011 that feature terrestrial plants and aquatic species continue to be displayed at many public events.

Other CIPWG member activities:

- Charlotte Pyle (USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service) provided invasive plant educational materials to the Woodbridge Conservation Commission (5 members).
- Rose Hiskes (The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station) gave invasive plant talks at the Long Hill Garden Club in Trumbull (50 attendees) and the Orchard Valley Garden Club in Southington (47 attendees).
- Cynthia Boettner (Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge) reported that the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) and the Conte Fish and Wildlife Refuge continued their long-term collaboration to control water chestnut in the Connecticut River watershed with the help of volunteers. The Tidewater Institute and the Lower CT River Valley Council of Governments joined the effort in 2010. Program highlight: During 2000, 50 tons of water chestnut plants were removed in the Upper Hockanum River through mechanical harvesting and 684 hours of hand-pulling. In 2013, only 40 pounds were found and removed.

The CIPWG exhibits were displayed, invasive plant talks were presented, and/or invasive plant educational materials were provided at the following local, statewide, and regional events during 2013 (reported by Donna Ellis, Logan Senack, and the UConn Master Gardener Program):

- Ag Day at the Capitol
- CIPWG general meeting, East Hartford (40 attendees)
- CT Agricultural Experiment Station Plant Science Day, Hamden (1,000 attendees)
- CT Association of Conservation and Inland Wetlands Commissions Annual Meeting, Cromwell (250 attendees)
- CT Conference on Natural Resources, Storrs (200 attendees)
- CT DEEP Headquarters, Hartford
- CT Flower and Garden Show, Hartford (37,000 attendees)
- CT Grounds Keepers Association Turf and Landscape Conference (150 attendees)
- CT Nursery and Landscape Association Summer Field Day, Hamden (400 attendees)
- CT Nursery and Landscape Association Winter Symposium and Expo, Manchester (496 attendees)
- Durham Fair (15 attendees)
- Fairfield Earth Day
- Fall Garden Day, Norwich (150 attendees)
- Farmer's Markets in Norfolk (1,000 attendees)
- Flanders Farm Day, Bethlehem (218 attendees)
- Gillette Castle, Haddam (405 visitors)
- Glastonbury Partners in Planting Invasive Plant Presentation and Walking Tour (50 attendees)

List of 2013 outreach events, continued:

- Goshen Fair (30,000 attendees)
- Hamden Earth Day Celebration (4,000 attendees)
- Haddam Neck Fair (30 attendees)
- Harwinton Fair (26,000 attendees)
- Hebron Plant Sale
- Invasive Plant Presentation, Ridgefield (40 attendees)
- K-8 School Grounds Athletic Field Management Workshop, East Haddam (70 attendees)
- K-8 School Grounds Ornamental Plant Management Workshop, Madison (42 attendees)
- Lebanon Fair (8,000 attendees)
- Ledyard Agricultural Fair (20 attendees)
- Les Mehrhoff Invasive Plant Walk installation (a National Trails Day event), Mansfield
- Lyme Garden Club (35 attendees)
- Mile-a-minute Weed Biological Control Cooperators' Meeting, Trenton, NJ (100 attendees)
- National Garden Clubs New England Regional Symposium, Westbrook (130 attendees)
- New England Grows Great Ideas Pavilion, Boston, MA (15,000 attendees)
- North Stonington Agricultural Fair
- Ornamental and Turf Short Course; 3 locations in East Haven, North Haven, and West Hartford (70 attendees)
- Riverton Fair (18,000 attendees)
- Simsbury Garden Club meeting (60 attendees)
- UConn Advanced Master Gardener Program, Bethel (20 attendees)
- UConn Cornucopia Fest, Storrs (5,000 attendees)
- UConn Garden Conference, Storrs (300 attendees)
- UConn Master Gardener Program; 5 locations in Bethel, Brooklyn, Haddam, Stamford, and West Hartford (225 attendees)
- UConn Master Gardener Summer Tour, Storrs (40 attendees)
- UConn New London County Master Gardener Plant Sale, Norwich (100 attendees)
- UConn Museum of Natural History Invasive Plant Presentation and Guided Tour (10 attendees)
- UConn Perennial Plant Conference, Storrs (325 attendees)
- Vernon Conservation Commission Earth Day Event, Vernon
- WMRD/WLIS Radio Program, CT Outdoors with Suzanne Thompson, Middletown

Submitted by Donna Ellis (University of Connecticut Department of Plant Science and Landscape Architecture; CIPWG Co-chair), with contributions from Cynthia Boettner (Silvio Conte National Fish & Wildlife Refuge), Rose Hiskes (Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station), Charlotte Pyle (USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service), Logan Senack (University of Connecticut), Penni Sharp (Connecticut Botanical Society; CIPWG Co-chair), and University of Connecticut Master Gardener Coordinators Patricia Eldredge, Susan Munger, and Gail Reynolds.

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