

Connecticut Invasive Plant Working Group (CIPWG) 2014 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 17th 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 (UConn 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 was presented on October 7, 2014 at UConn in Storrs, CT. The theme of the all-day conference was *Invasive Plants 2014: Where Are We Now?* As occurred in 2012, this year's conference also sold out, with 500 registered attendees. The symposium featured national, regional, and local experts as well as citizen volunteers sharing practical solutions for managing invasive plants, promoting non-invasive plants, and improving wildlife habitat. Nationally-recognized speaker Dr. Sarah Reichard, Orin and Althea Soest Professor of Urban Horticulture and Director, Botanic Gardens, University of Washington delivered the Keynote address, "Five-year Target: A down-to-earth vision bridging policy, research and management". Michael O'Neill, Associate Dean and Associate Director, UConn Extension welcomed the symposium attendees. Clark Chapin, Connecticut State Senator, provided opening remarks, and William Hyatt, Natural Resources Bureau Chief, Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, gave an update on the Connecticut Invasive Plants Council. Kathleen Nelson (Mad Gardeners; CIPWG) was the recipient of the Leslie J. Mehrhoff Award. David Gumbart from the Connecticut Chapter of The Nature Conservancy delivered closing remarks. Concurrent afternoon sessions included tips for successful invasive plant management projects; alternative plants for improving gardens and other areas as wildlife habitat; priorities and partnering for invasive plant management; aquatic invasive plant updates; Early Detection – curbing the spread; and species-specific invasive plant identification, management, and alternative plants. Research posters, an invasive plant identification area, and other educational exhibits were featured throughout the day.

CIPWG's news and events list serve has approximately 760 members. The CIPWG website moved to a newer server at UConn recently 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 UConn server. Online reporting forms for mile-a-minute weed (*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 other invasive plants. 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 recently.

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)

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 2014. Two CIPWG exhibits recently developed that feature terrestrial plants and aquatic species continue to be displayed at many public events.

Other CIPWG member activities:

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 2014:

- Ag Day at the Capitol
- Babcock Library (Ashford) sponsored talk (12 attendees)
- CIPWG general meeting, East Hartford (40 attendees)
- Columbia Conservation and Agriculture Committee sponsored talk (19 attendees)
- Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station Plant Science Day, Hamden (1,000 attendees)
- Connecticut Association of Conservation and Inland Wetlands Commissions Annual Meeting, Wallingford (250 attendees)
- Connecticut Christmas Tree Growers Association meeting (30 attendees)
- Connecticut Conference on Natural Resources, Storrs (200 attendees)
- Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection Headquarters, Hartford
- Connecticut Flower and Garden Show, Hartford (37,000 attendees)
- Connecticut Grounds Keepers Association Turf and Landscape Conference (150 attendees)
- Connecticut Nursery and Landscape Association Summer Field Day, North Branford (400 attendees)
- Connecticut Nursery and Landscape Association Winter Symposium and Expo, Manchester (500 attendees)
- Connecticut Wild Ones Program, New London (20 attendees)
- Early College Learning Experience 2014 Summer Camp at UConn (44 students)
- Easton Garden Club (25 attendees)
- Forest Health Monitoring Workshop, New London (60 attendees)
- Hamden Earth Day Celebration (4,000 attendees)
- K-8 School Grounds Ornamental Plant Management Workshop, Newtown (150 attendees)
- Lebanon Fair (8,000 attendees)
- New England Grows Great Ideas Pavilion, Boston, MA (15,000 attendees)

- Ornamental and Turf Short Course; 3 locations in East Haven, North Haven, and West Hartford (70 attendees)
- Redding Garden Club (52 attendees)
- Responsible Land Management Workshop, Hartford (60 attendees)
- UConn Cornucopia Fest, Storrs (5,000 attendees)
- UConn Extension Legislative Reception (150 attendees)
- UConn Garden Conference, Storrs (270 attendees)
- UConn Perennial Plant Conference, Storrs (270 attendees)

Submitted by Donna Ellis (UConn Department of Plant Science and Landscape Architecture; CIPWG Co-chair), with contributions from Nicole Gabelman, Rose Hiskes, Todd Mervosh, Charlotte Pyle, and Logan Senack

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