

HOME & GARDEN

Create a healthy ecosystem in the yard

(StatePoint) — Gardeners and landscapers can help promote a healthy ecosystem by learning to identify and control damaging plants and insects in their yard.

Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment (RISE) offers information on non-native weeds and insects, which can out-compete native species, changing the local ecosystem. Many varieties, first introduced in gardens, can be confused with similar, native varieties.

In eastern Oregon, Master Gardner Bill Dochnahl said in this drier climate it is often ground covers like ivy that crowd other plants out of an ecosystem. His list to watch out for includes ivy, periwinkle, ajuga and lamium (also known as purple dragon). None of those are on any official "invasive species" list but Dochnahl said he has seen them harm a yard's ecosystem nonetheless.

"Any of those are fine for slopes where you want to stop erosion, but in a garden they take over," he said.

Other plants that are "beautiful" but can easily spread much farther than the gardener intended are bamboo, butterfly bushes and burning bushes, Dochnahl said. He cautioned against going online to buy invasive, non-native species that can't be sold locally because they can send out deep ground runners several feet in each direction that make the plant very hard to eradicate or keep in check.

He said home gardeners can use certain plants like periwinkle to great effect in a planter or isolated area but shouldn't plant them mixed in with other kinds of plants that could soon be overrun.

"It's a matter of the right plant in the right place," he said.

RISE adds purple loosestrife, a plant native to Europe that can

produce more than two million seeds annually, and the ornamental tree-of-heaven from China as two to watch out for despite being widely planted in the United States. Both of them look similar to non-native plants but are more likely to take over a yard or garden.

The organization also notes that invasive insects can have a severe negative impact on native species by out-competing them for food and resources. Many also cause and carry disease and prey on native species. A common one to look out for is the Emerald Ash Borer, native to Asia but now found commonly across the United States. The larvae do the most damage, killing ash trees by feeding on the inner bark.

Zebra mussels, while technically not an insect, are native to Russia but is found in hundreds of waterways throughout the United States. The species commonly

clog water intakes, damage boats and can cause cuts and scrapes if they grow on rocks, swim rafts, and ladders.

Native plants and insects can also cause damage. According to RISE:

- Ticks can transmit Lyme disease and Rocky Mountain spotted fever. Left untreated, Lyme disease infects the joints, heart, and nervous system. After time spent outdoors, check for ticks, especially in and around your ears, inside your belly button, behind your knees, around your waist, on your scalp and in your hair.

- Mosquitoes can carry West Nile Virus. While most people may show few symptoms, 20 percent of people develop a fever along with headaches, body aches, joint pains, vomiting, diarrhea or rash, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Pre-



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Invasive weeds, such as the Purple Loosestrife, can out-compete native species.

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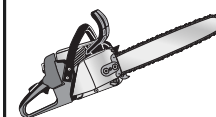
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