

Gardening: Best Practices to Keep Invasive Plants Out

Invasive plants can destroy the natural habitat of Lake of Bays by spreading rapidly until they crowd out, displace and eventually replace native plants. Changes at one level of the food chain have a ripple effect on all the other creatures and organisms. Here are some tips to follow when landscaping your property:

- Purchase plants from reputable suppliers that understand the difference between native, non-native and invasive plants
- Learn how to identify invasive plants
- Check that any plants that you share, or that you received from a friend, are not invasive
- Ensure that the soil around the roots of shared plants contains no seeds, roots and/or rhizomes of hitchhiking invasive plants or, better yet, rinse it off before planting
- Learn how to properly remove invasive plants
- Do not compost invasive plants
- Place invasive plants in yard waste paper bags before disposal in the garbage
- Dispose of annuals in the garbage
- Never throw plant material in natural areas or waterways
- Share your knowledge

What is the difference between native, non-native and invasive species?

Native/Indigenous Species:

A species that existed in a given area prior to European settlement.

Non-native/Alien Species:

A species that was introduced by human action from another geographic region to an area outside its natural past or present distribution.

Invasive Species:

Harmful non-native/alien species whose introduction or spread threaten the environment, the economy, or society, including human health.

Invasive Species

Japanese Knotweed was introduced from Asia as an ornamental species in the late 19th century.

It escaped cultivation in some areas and can be found scattered across Ontario.

It is an aggressive plant with shoots and roots that can grow through asphalt and concrete.

It grows in clumps, reaches heights of one to three metres, and has hollow, semi-woody stems. Dense thickets of Japanese Knotweed displace native species and threaten habitats.



Alternative Species

Garden use: hedgerow; screen; erosion control

Growing conditions: full sun – part shade; moderate – well drained soil

Size and shape: shrub to small tree; 1 – 8 m in height; suckers to form colonies

Flower and fruit: small white flowers in spring; small, round purple fruit appears in early summer

Leaves: oval to almost circular leaves are 2 – 6 cm long and 1 – 5 cm wide

Additional info: edible berries can be consumed fresh from the shrub or used in jams, pies, wines and cider



This medium sized tree is prized for its dense crown and ability to tolerate difficult urban conditions.

The prolific seed production of most cultivars, coupled with the species' ability to grow in dense shade, make Norway maple especially invasive and threatening to natural habitats.

Many urban ravines and parks exhibit nearly pure stands of this species.

The dense shade in these stands prevents sunlight from reaching the ground, making it difficult for groundcovers and shrubs to grow. Wildlife habitat is compromised and bare soil becomes susceptible to erosion.



Garden use: shade tree; specimen planting

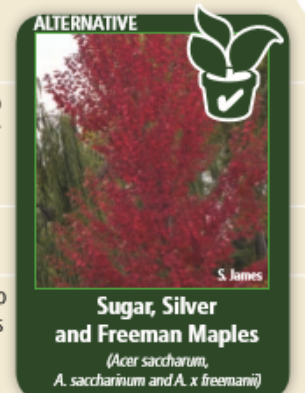
Growing conditions: full sun to partial shade; moist soils for silver and Freeman maples; deep, rich soils for sugar maple

Size and shape: 30 – 35 m tall; upright to rounded crown

Flower and fruit: small, yellow to red flowers emerging before leaves in early spring; paired, winged maple "keys" developing in spring on silver and Freeman maples, and in fall on sugar maples

Leaves: medium to light green deeply lobed leaves; fall colours from brilliant yellow to red

Additional info: silver and Freeman maples are well-adapted to difficult urban conditions; silver maple has an aggressive root system and should not be planted near pipes and foundations; Freeman maple is a natural hybrid of red and silver maple and exhibits some of the best attributes of both species



Periwinkle is native to Europe, but can now be found in gardens throughout North America.

Its popularity is based on its ease of care, dense growth, and its ability to grow in dry shade - a difficult gardening situation. Periwinkle grows to a height of 3-6 in (7-15 cm) and is characterized by glossy evergreen foliage and long-lasting blue-violet flowers.

It has few pests or diseases outside its native range, which contributes to its persistence. It spreads via its shallow root system.



Garden use: groundcover for shady woodland garden

Growing conditions: sun to partial shade; dry to moderate; sand or clay

Size and shape: 30-60 cm tall; clump-forming

Flower and fruit: showy pink or magenta blooms in late-spring and early-summer

Leaves: loose mounds of deeply-lobed leaves

Additional info: nectar source for hummingbirds; often forms colonies

