

Connecticut Invasive Plant Working Group (CIWPG) 2011 Annual Report

The Connecticut Invasive Plant Working Group (CIPWG) is a consortium of individuals, organizations, and agencies whose mission is to promote awareness of invasive plants and their non-invasive alternatives. Formed in 1997 as an ad-hoc group, CIWPG 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, 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 (CT Botanical Society) serve as Co-chairs.

Since 2002, CIPWG hosts biennial invasive plant symposia. These events attract audiences of 300 to 400 people for a day of workshops, lectures, and discussions about invasive plants, their impacts on the environment, and non-invasive alternatives. CIPWG's news and events list serve has approximately 700 members. The CIPWG website (www.hort.uconn.edu/cipwg) 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 and website reside on the 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. During 2011 several new features were added to expand the CIWPG website, including a scrolling photo gallery of Connecticut invasive plants, a volunteer corner to recognize individuals or groups who are conducting invasive plant activities, early detection information, an event calendar, and new links to invasive plant fact sheets and management information.

Connecticut Invasive Plant Working Group subcommittees allow members to engage in a wide range of activities, including Native Alternatives (explore and promote use of native plant species as alternatives to invasives), Management (develop and disseminate information on invasive plant control options), Education and Outreach (educational outreach about invasive species and their alternatives), and Volunteer (organize and provide assistance for pulling parties and other invasive plant activities where volunteers are needed).

A CIPWG general meeting held on 30 March 2011 in Windsor, CT was attended by 60 people. Legislative issues were discussed, a presentation was given on interacting with municipalities regarding invasive plants, invasive plant updates were provided, invasive plant early detection was discussed, and a panel discussion on invasive plant control occurred. A second general meeting was held on November 10th in Windsor, CT.

CIPWG, the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), and the University of Connecticut (UConn) co-sponsored a workshop entitled, "Invasive Plants and Habitat Improvement" in Burlington, CT, June 1, 2011. The 100+ people who attended the workshop were affiliated with municipalities, conservation organizations, educational institutions, and the general public. The workshop included an indoor session of presentations and exhibits as well as an outdoor component that featured guided walks to learn about invasive plant control and habitat restoration.

Three invasive plant pulling parties for control of mile-a-minute vine were conducted in Sprague, CT on June 20, July 6, and July 27, 2011. Approximately 45 volunteers and project coordinators attended the three events, which were co-sponsored by CIPWG, DEEP, UConn, 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 2011. Two new CIPWG exhibits feature terrestrial plants and aquatic species. The exhibits were designed by UConn staff and were funded in part by DEEP. The CIPWG exhibits were displayed and/or invasive plant educational materials were provided at the following local and statewide events in Connecticut during 2011:

- Bethel Garden Fair, Bethel (177 attendees)
- CT Agricultural Experiment Station Plant Science Day (1,000 attendees)
- CT Association of Wetland Scientists Annual Meeting (300 attendees)
- CT Conference on Natural Resources (200 attendees)
- CT DEEP
- CT Flower and Garden Show (37,000 attendees)
- CT Grounds Keepers Association Annual Meeting (500 attendees)
- CT Nursery and Landscape Association Summer Field Day (370 attendees)
- CT Nursery and Landscape Association Winter Symposium and Expo (300 attendees)
- CT Vegetable and Small Fruit Conference (165 attendees)
- DEEP Sessions Woods Invasive Plant Workshop (100 attendees)
- Durham Fair (425 attendees)
- Earth Day Fair, New Morning Natural Foods, Woodbury (2,000 attendees)
- Earth Day, Pratt Nature Center, New Milford, (30 attendees)
- Edgerton Park (75 attendees)
- Flanders Nature Center
- Garden Expo, Fairfield (3,500 attendees)
- Girl Scouts of America, Colchester (30 attendees)
- Goshen Fair (30,000 attendees)
- Haddam Neck Fair (275 attendees)
- Hamden Earth Day Celebration (3,000 attendees)
- Harwinton Garden Club
- Lebanon Town Fair (8,000 attendees)
- Lion's Club Duck Race, Newtown (65 attendees)
- Litchfield Farmers' Market (weekly for 20 weeks; 4,000 total attendees)
- Meadow Ridge Retirement Community Green Fair, Redding (48 attendees)
- Middlefield Old Days (160 attendees)
- National Trails Day, Colchester
- Northeast Hunting and Fishing Expo (15,000 attendees)
- North Haven Earth Day (100 attendees)
- Orange County Fair (250 attendees)
- Orange Garden Club May Market (150 attendees)
- Peabody Museum, Yale University (1,600 attendees)
- Pomperaug/Woodbury Valley Garden Club Plant Sale, Woodbury (40 attendees)
- Riverton Fair (18,000 attendees)

- Riverton Grange Fair (350 attendees)
- Town of Harwinton
- University of Connecticut Cornucopia Fest (5,000 attendees)
- University of Connecticut Garden Conference (339 attendees)
- University of Connecticut Master Gardener Plant Sale, Norwich (150 attendees)
- University of Connecticut Perennial Plant Conference (378 attendees)
- White Memorial Conservation Center Family Nature Day (800 attendees)
- Winchester Grange Fair (250 attendees)
- Woodbridge Garden Club (100 attendees)

Submitted by Donna Ellis (University of Connecticut Department of Plant Science and Landscape Architecture), with contributions from Logan Senack (University of Connecticut and Department of Energy and Environmental Protection) and University of Connecticut Master Gardener Coordinators Patricia Eldredge, Judith Hsiang, Victoria McCarthy, and Sandra Wilson.

- 1 November 2011