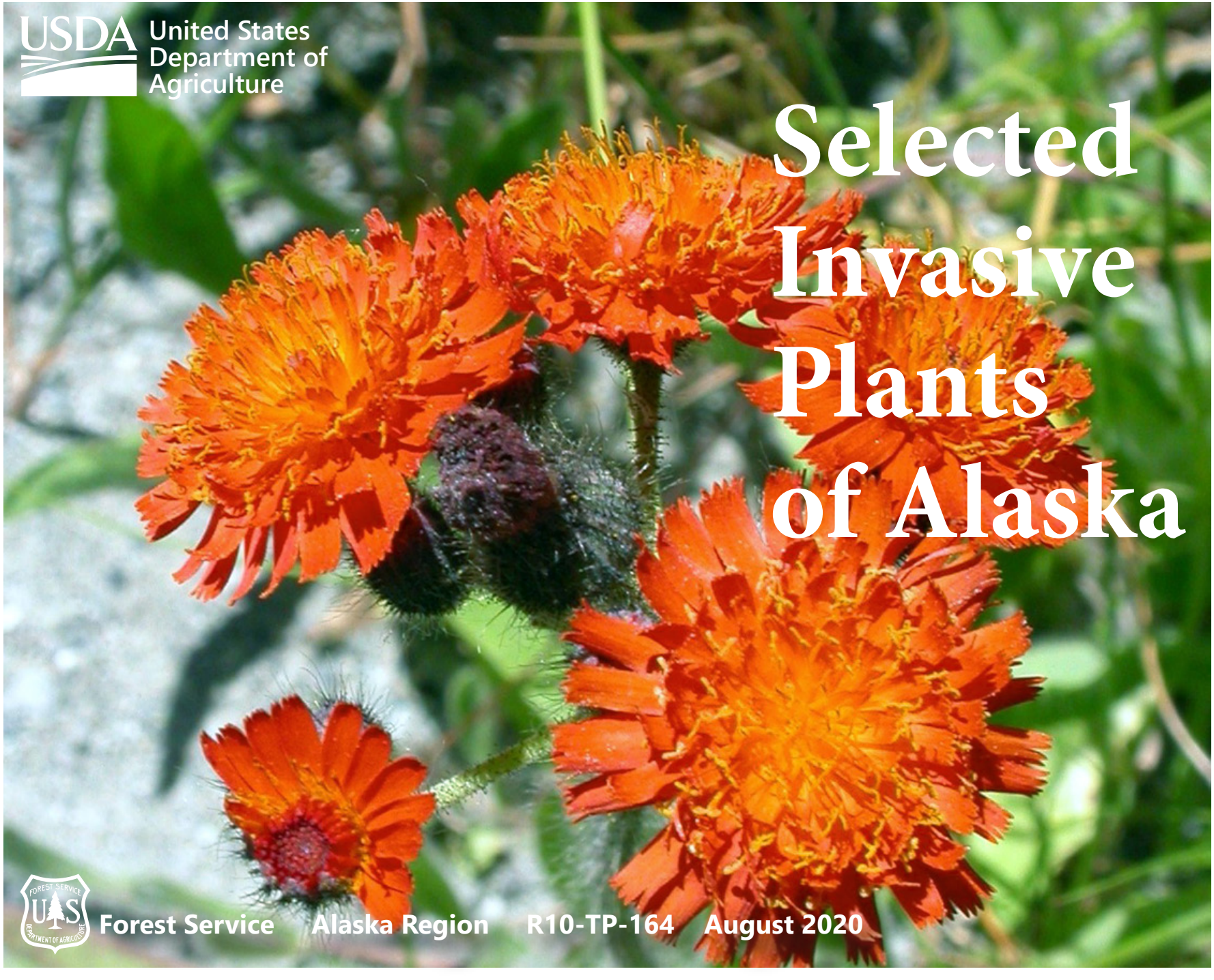


USDA United States Department of Agriculture

Selected Invasive Plants of Alaska

Forest Service Alaska Region R10-TP-164 August 2020

On the cover: Orange hawkweed

Photo taken by Michael Shephard, USDA Forest Service, Bugwood.org

Orange hawkweed is a perennial plant with orange-red flowers that aggressively invades meadows, forming dense mats and crowding out native plants. It spreads by stolons, rhizomes, and seed and has been planted by unwary gardeners.

When trying to identify an unknown plant, color photos often help. This pocket guide provides a selection of invasive plants found across Alaska today. This guide is not intended to take the place of more comprehensive reference guides, but to help those unfamiliar with these species to begin to recognize them, as the first step towards taking action.

This document was modified from the original 2007 version, produced by USDA Forest Service, State & Private Forestry, and the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) Cooperative Extension Service.

2020 additions were provided by the following organizations: USDA Forest Service, State & Private Forestry; UAF Cooperative Extension Service; University of Alaska Anchorage-Alaska Center for Conservation Science, and Southeast Alaska Watershed Coalition.

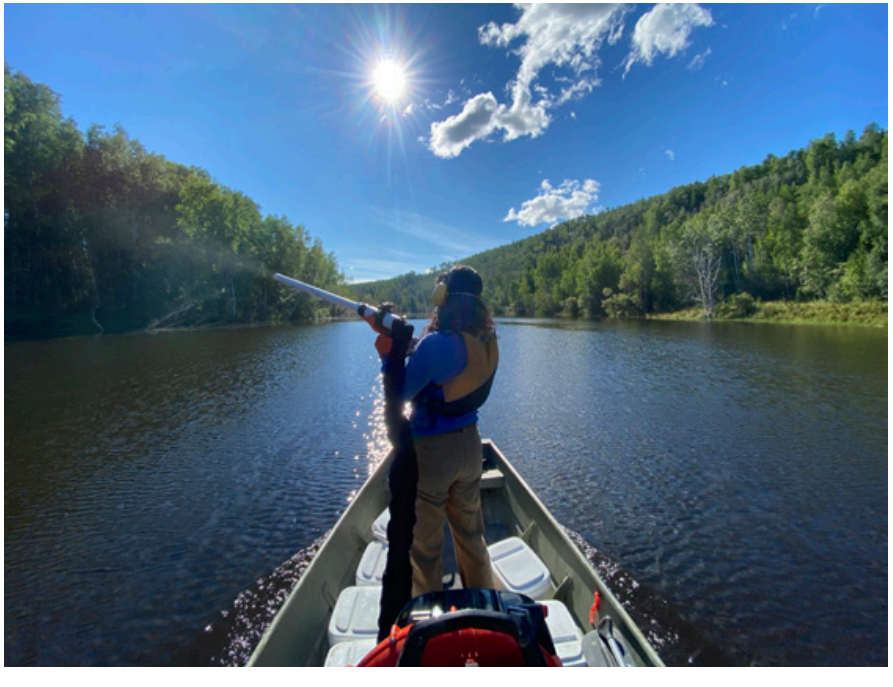
Why Should I Care About Invasive Species in Alaska?

The lower 48 states have extensive problems with invasive species, both terrestrial and aquatic. In the lower 48, these invasive species are causing severe environmental and economic damage. In most cases, once an invasive species is widely established, getting rid of it is impossible.

The situation in Alaska is different. At present, most of Alaska is free of invasive species. The invasive species currently established are found mostly on the "human footprint," or developed areas such as the road system, towns, cities, mines, and airstrips. People and vehicles generally spread invasive species from the human footprint outwards along transportation routes (roads, airports, float ponds, trails, and rivers) as they move materials and goods. Invasive species are also commonly found along well-used trails and at cabin sites that may be off the beaten path. Although not as widespread as in the lower 48, invasive species still pose serious threats to Alaska's agriculture, tourism, wildlife, fisheries, and subsistence resources. These invasive plants profiled in this guide can aggressively invade and spread in natural areas where they can disrupt ecosystem processes. By taking care to avoid introducing new species to the state, or spreading nonnative species already present to new areas, we all have the opportunity to prevent the extensive invasive species problems that plague the rest of the U.S.

A knotweed infestation on Douglas Island near Juneau. Photo credit: John Hudson.

Aquatic herbicide (fluridone) pellets being dispersed by Aditi Shenoy of the Fairbanks Soil and Water Conservation District to eradicate an Elodea infestation in Hot Springs Slough in Manley Hot Springs. Photo Credit: Colin McKenzie.



In Alaska we are concentrating on prevention, early detection, and rapid response.

Prevention:

Keeping these invasive plant species from becoming established in Alaska is the highest priority. This booklet is a tool to help identify some of the invasive plant species of greatest concern in Alaska.

Early Detection & Rapid Response:

Not only is it important to recognize these plants, but it is imperative that we find small infestations before they become too difficult to control.

The Alaska Soil and Water Conservation District, and many partner organizations have formed “Cooperative Weed Management Areas” (CWMAs) or “Cooperative Invasive Species Management Areas” (CISMAs) across the state to detect, monitor and treat invasive plant populations.

http://www.alaskaconservationdistricts.org/invasive-plant-program

For additional information about invasive plants in Alaska:

Contact your local UAF Cooperative Extension Service office or appropriate local land management agency.

Or visit:

www.alaskainvasives.org
www.fs.fed.us/r10/spf/fhp
http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/R10/SelectedInvasivePlants
http://plants.alaska.gov/invasives/index.htm

To view the state-wide list of non-native plants visit https://accs.uaa.alaska.edu/invasive-species/non-native-plant-species-list/ An invasiveness rank has been given to each of these species that helps evaluate the potential invasiveness and impacts of these plants to natural areas in Alaska. The ranking is based on a 0-100 scale with 0 being not invasive and 100 being most invasive. More information on the ranking system is found here: https://accs.uaa.alaska.edu/wp-content/uploads/Invasiveness_Ranking_System_for_Non-Native_Plants_Alaska.pdf.

To contribute to the state-wide database of non-native plants use the AK Weeds ID App
https://apps.bugwood.org/apps/alaska/

Selected Invasive Plants Species of Alaska

Creeping Thistle (*Cirsium arvense*) Sunflower Family

Creeping Thistle (*Cirsium arvense*) Sunflower Family

Invasiveness Rank: 76

- A perennial that grows to five feet tall with erect, ridged, branching stems. Leaves curled, wavy, oblong, alternate on stem with woolly hairs on underside. Leaves arise directly from the stem without a distinct leaf stalk. Flowers are purple-pink in clusters at the ends of branches.

- Forms colonies via an extensive horizontal and vertical root system; can eventually cover acres. Also spreads by wind-blown seeds. Young plants appear as basal rosettes that bolt in late summer. Grows in fields, pastures, forests, and along roadsides, ditches, and river banks.

- **Restricts recreational land use, scratches and infects animal skin, and produces allelopathic chemicals to suppress surrounding vegetation. Very difficult to eradicate once established.**

Bull Thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*) Sunflower Family

Photos by Michael Shephard, USDA Forest Service, Bugwood.org.

Bull Thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*) Sunflower Family

Invasiveness Rank: 61

- Biennial erect plant rises from a fleshy taproot. A large, flat rosette forms in the first year, and flowers and stems elongate in the second year. Stem grows 2 to 5 feet tall with many spreading branches. Leaves hairy and prickly on upper side, and cottony underneath. Stems have irregular spiny "wings." Flower heads are 1.5 to 2 inches, urn shaped, purple ray florets. Bracts under flowers are fleshy and tipped with spines.

- Found on disturbed sites, roadsides, and riparian areas. Found in Anchorage and Southeast Alaska.

- **Restricts recreational land use, decreases land value, and competes with native vegetation for water, space, and light.**

Oxeye Daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*) Sunflower Family

Photos by Mary Ellen (Mel) Harte, Bugwood.org.

Oxeye Daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*) Sunflower Family

Invasiveness Rank: 61

- A short-lived showy perennial that spreads vegetatively by rhizomes or from seeds. Heads solitary at the ends of branches, consisting of ray and disc flowers. White ray florets 0.5 to 1 inch long. Yellow discs 0.5 to 1 inch across. Leaves hairless to sparsely hairy, alternate along the stem, becoming progressively smaller towards the top, spoon shaped, with scalloped to lobed margins. Upper leaves toothed, lacking a petiole.

- Common on roadsides, disturbed areas, beach meadows, and landscaped areas. Frequently a component of wildflower seed mixes.

- **Forms dense colonies, is unpalatable to grazing animals and insects, and hosts several plant viruses. Heavy infestations can cause soil erosion.**

Spotted Knapweed (*Centaurea stoebe*) Sunflower Family

Photos by Michael Shephard, USDA Forest Service, Bugwood.org.

Spotted Knapweed (*Centaurea stoebe*) Sunflower Family

Invasiveness Rank: 86

- Biennial or short-lived perennial. Plants grow to three feet tall from a stout taproot. Basal rosettes have deeply lobed gray-green leaves. Flower heads solitary at the ends of branches. Involucral bracts beneath flowers are stiff and topped with dark comb-like fringe giving a spotted appearance. Flower heads pink-purple, consisting of ray florets only, solitary at the end of stem branches.

- Spreads only by seeds. Adapted to well-drained soils. Seeds dispersed near the parent plant or transported by people, wildlife, vehicles, and in soil, crop seed, and contaminated hay. Look for this plant along roadsides in Alaska. Found in Anchorage, Valdez, and numerous locations in Southest Alaska.

- **Responsible for millions of dollars in economic loss and environmental damage in the western United States.**

Orange Hawkweed (*Hieracium aurantiacum*) Sunflower Family

Photos by Michael Shephard, USDA Forest Service, Bugwood.org.

Orange Hawkweed (*Hieracium aurantiacum*) Sunflower Family

Invasiveness Rank: 79

- A perennial with colorful orange-red flowers about one inch in diameter. Flower heads are red on the edges and orange in the center. Flowers consist of ray florets only with upper margins of rays notched. Leaves clustered in a basal rosette. A few small leaves may be found on the 6 to 8 inch long stem, but often stems remain leafless. Leaves are covered with soft white hairs. Stems have shorter dark colored hairs. Leaves are darker green on the upper surface than the lower surface. Stems 2 to 12 inches long, occasionally growing to two feet long. Leaves and stems produce a milky sap when broken.

- Spreads by stolons, rhizomes, and seed. A favorite flower of unwary gardeners and wildflower enthusiasts. Found along roads, riparian areas and beaches.

- **Moves into forb meadows and wetlands where it spreads aggressively. Forms dense mats, crowding out native plants.**

Non-Native Yellow-flowered Hawkweeds

Sunflower Family

Photos by Michael Shephard, USDA Forest Service, Bugwood.org.

	Invasiveness Rank:
Meadow Hawkweed (*Hieracium caespitosum*)	79
Mouse-ear Hawkweed (*H. pilosella*)	63
Narrowleaf Hawkweed (*H. umbellatum*)	51
Common Hawkweed (*H. lachenalii*)	57

- Both native and non-native species of hawkweed exist in Alaska. Native Alaskan hawkweeds lack stolons (horizontal stems that root at points to form new plants), have branched stems with many leaves, and generally are found in high-elevation meadows.

- Similar in appearance to orange hawkweed, meadow hawkweed grows to 3 feet, its stem covered in coarse black gland-tipped hairs, and bearing multiple yellow flowers.

- Mouse-ear hawkweed has a solitary yellow flower.

- Narrowleaf hawkweed has hairy leaves with serrated margins.

- Common hawkweed has 7-10 stem leaves that are strongly toothed and tapering to the narrowing stem.

Perennial Sowthistle (*Sonchus arvensis*) Sunflower Family

Perennial Sowthistle (*Sonchus arvensis*) Sunflower Family

Invasiveness Rank: 73

Related Species:

Common Sowthistle (*Sonchus oleraceus*)	46
Spiny Sowthistle (*Sonchus asper*)	46

- Perennial with flowers and leaves similar to the dandelion. Plants to 4 or 5 feet tall. Flower heads are 1 to 2 inches across. Long stems arise from a basal rosette of dandelion-like leaves. Stems are branched only at the top. Basal and stem leaves have prickly margins. Leaves on the stem are less numerous, and clasp the stems at the base. Plants exude a milky sap when broken. Bracts below flowers have numerous gland tipped hairs.

- Commonly found in waste areas, meadows, woods, lawns, roadsides, beaches, ditches, and river and lake shores.

- At high densities, perennial sowthistle drastically reduces water resources and possibly decreases the number of plant species in communities.

Common Tansy (*Tanacetum vulgare*) Sunflower Family

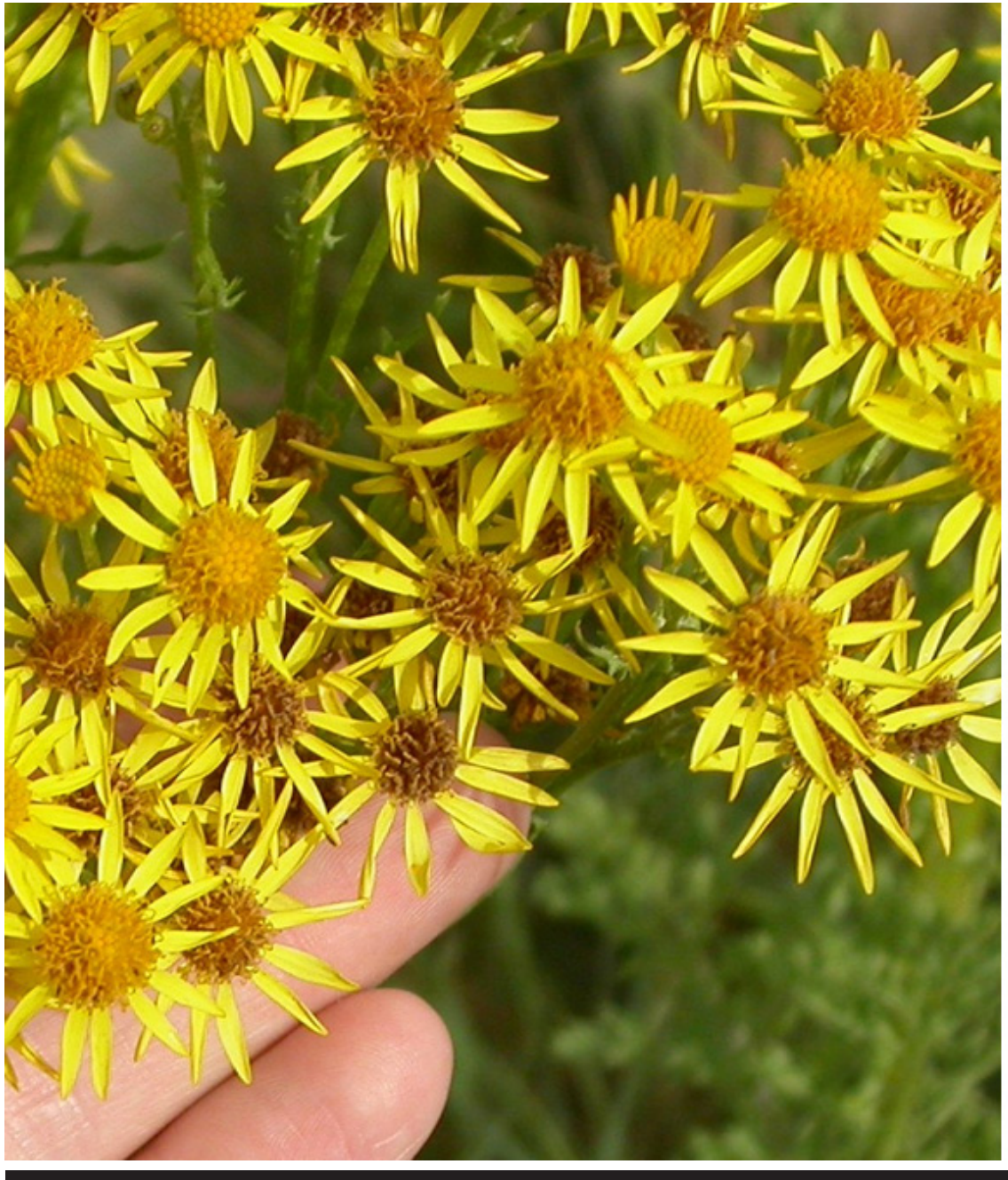
Common Tansy (*Tanacetum vulgare*) Sunflower Family

Invasiveness Rank: 60

- Perennial, spreads by seed and by short rhizomes, forming dense clumps. Flat-topped clusters of button-like yellow flowers. Numerous composite flower heads (20 to 200 per plant). Heads composed of disc florets only- flower heads without petals. Upright stems often purplish-red and dotted with glands. Leaves alternate and deeply divided into narrow individual leaflets, giving a feathery appearance. Plants grow to five feet tall. Strong odor reminiscent of creosote.

- Thrives in disturbed habitats in full sun. Found on roadsides, river and stream banks, and beach meadows.

- **Mildly toxic to grazing animals. This plant can grow along streams and restrict water flow.**



Tansy Ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*) Sunflower Family

Tansy Ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*) Sunflower Family

Invasiveness Rank: 63

- Short-lived perennial with one to several stems arising from a taproot. The plant grows 1 to 4 feet tall. Leaves deeply cut. Basal leaves stalked and 2 to 8 inches long. Leaves become smaller and petioles become shorter moving up the stem. Flower heads borne in terminal clusters, heads consist of yellow ray and disc florets. Ray florets number 10 to 13. Petals are 0.25 to 0.5 inches long.

- Forms a low-growing rosette in the first year. Found in waste places, roadsides, clearcuts, meadows.

- **Contains a toxic compound responsible for considerable livestock mortality. It is estimated that the state of Oregon has lost $7 million per year to livestock poisoning by this plant.**

Japanese and Bohemian Knotweed Buckwheat Family

Japanese and Bohemian Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica, F. xbohemica*)

Buckwheat Family

Invasiveness Rank: 87

- An herbaceous perennial that forms extremely dense stands, shading out competing vegetation. Stems to 10 feet tall, hollow, bamboo-like with thickened nodes where the leaf stalks meet the stem. Leaves broadly oval, to 6 inches long, with short petioles. Branched sprays of small white to greenish-white flowers in late August/September. Giant knotweed (*P. sachalinense*) is similar in appearance but has much larger leaves and stems.

- Herbaceous perennial. Dies back, turning bright yellow before dropping leaves in the fall. Reproduces from extensive spreading rhizomes or broken-off pieces of stem. Found on roadsides, stream banks, and beach meadows.

- **Clogs waterways and lowers quality of habitat for wildlife, fish, and the insects on which fish depend. Displaces native salmonberries and thimbleberries along shorelines.**

Garlic Mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*) Mustard Family

Garlic Mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*) Mustard Family

Invasiveness Rank: 70

- Herbaceous biennial plant. Strong garlic odor when crushed. First year plants are rosettes of dark green kidney shaped leaves arising from a common base with distinct leaf veins and scalloped edges to 4 inches in diameter. Second year plants with few to several-branched stems to 3 feet tall. Second year plants have alternate triangular leaves, decreasing in size toward the top of the stem. Flowers white, 0.25 inches in diameter, with four petals. Plants flower in April-June with seeds produced June-August. Seeds 8 to 10/pod, shiny-black, cylindrical. Very tolerant of cool temperatures and low light. Allelopathic by producing chemicals that inhibit growth of other plants and mychorrizal fungi.

- Thrives on the moist, shaded soil of river floodplains, forests, roadsides, edges of woods, trails, and forest openings.

- **Dominates the understory in forested areas. Reduces forage sites for deer and other grazing wildlife.**

White and Yellow Sweetclover (*Melilotus alba, M. officinalis*) Pea Family

	Invasiveness Rank:
White Sweetclover (*Melilotus alba*)	81
Yellow Sweetclover (*M. officinalis*)	69

- Annual or biennial; the first season of growth produces vegetative shoots, which may reach 12 inches. Upright growth habit. Intolerant of shade. White and yellow sweetclover are very similar, differing primarily in flower color.

- Plants can grow to 6 feet tall, from a taproot. Sweet-scented, with many-branched stems. Leaves toothed, oblong to lance shaped, and compound with three leaflets. Flowers small and white or yellow, in tapering spike-shaped clusters at the end of branches.

- **Rapidly colonizes open waste areas, and spreads quickly along open glacial rivers. Already well established along several major Alaskan rivers.**

Bird Vetch (*Vicia cracca*) Pea Family

Invasiveness Rank: 73

Related Species:
Hairy Vetch (*V. villosa*) 53

- Perennial that reproduces by seed and vegetatively by underground rhizomes. Multiple, branching vine-like stems with alternate, pinnately-compound leaves with 8 to 10 leaflets. Leaflets have coiling, branched tendrils at the ends. Bilaterally symmetrical purple flowers are arranged on a one-sided spike. Flowering occurs from spring to late fall. Seeds contained in inch-long, brown, lance-shaped pods.

- **Bird vetch aggressively climbs fencing, trees, bushes, and other vegetation, monopolizing sunlight, space, and moisture. Spreads along roadsides, south facing forest edges, trails, and other disturbed areas.**

Scotchbroom (*Cytisus scoparius*) Pea Family

Scotchbroom (*Cytisus scoparius*) Pea Family

Invasiveness Rank: 69

- Perennial shrub to 10 feet tall from a forked taproot. Stems strongly angled. Leaves clover-like, deciduous. Flowers numerous, bright yellow, arising from the leaf bases along the stem, similar in appearance to garden pea flowers. Fruits pea like, flattened, brownish-black. Reproduces vegetatively and from seed. Seeds remain viable for up to 80 years.

- Found along forest edges, clearings and meadows. Currently found only in southern Southeast Alaska.

- **Grows into dense impenetrable stands which prevent reforestation, create fire hazard, and eliminate forage for deer and other herbivores.**

Siberian Pea Shrub (*Caragana arborescens*) Pea Family

Siberian Peashrub (*Caragana arborescens*) Pea Family

Invasiveness Rank: 74

- Upright branching shrub or small tree with yellow-green bark on young twigs. Mature branches and trunk have gray to olive-green bark and horizontal lenticels. Leaves are alternate or whorled and compound, with 8 to 12 elliptic leaflets, and without an end leaflet. Young leaves are light green, darkening in summer, and yellow in fall. Stipules are narrow and often persist as spines. Yellow tubular flowers are borne on a stalk that grows from leaf axil. Fruit is borne in pods; green and flattened at first, and sharply pointed, smooth and brown when mature.

- **A popular ornamental shrub, it forms a dense spreading root system, and is now moving into natural areas. A known invader of woodlands and riparian areas in Canada and the northern United States.**

Common Toadflax, Butter and Eggs (*Linaria vulgaris*) Figwort Family

Photos by Michael Shephard, USDA Forest Service, Bugwood.org.

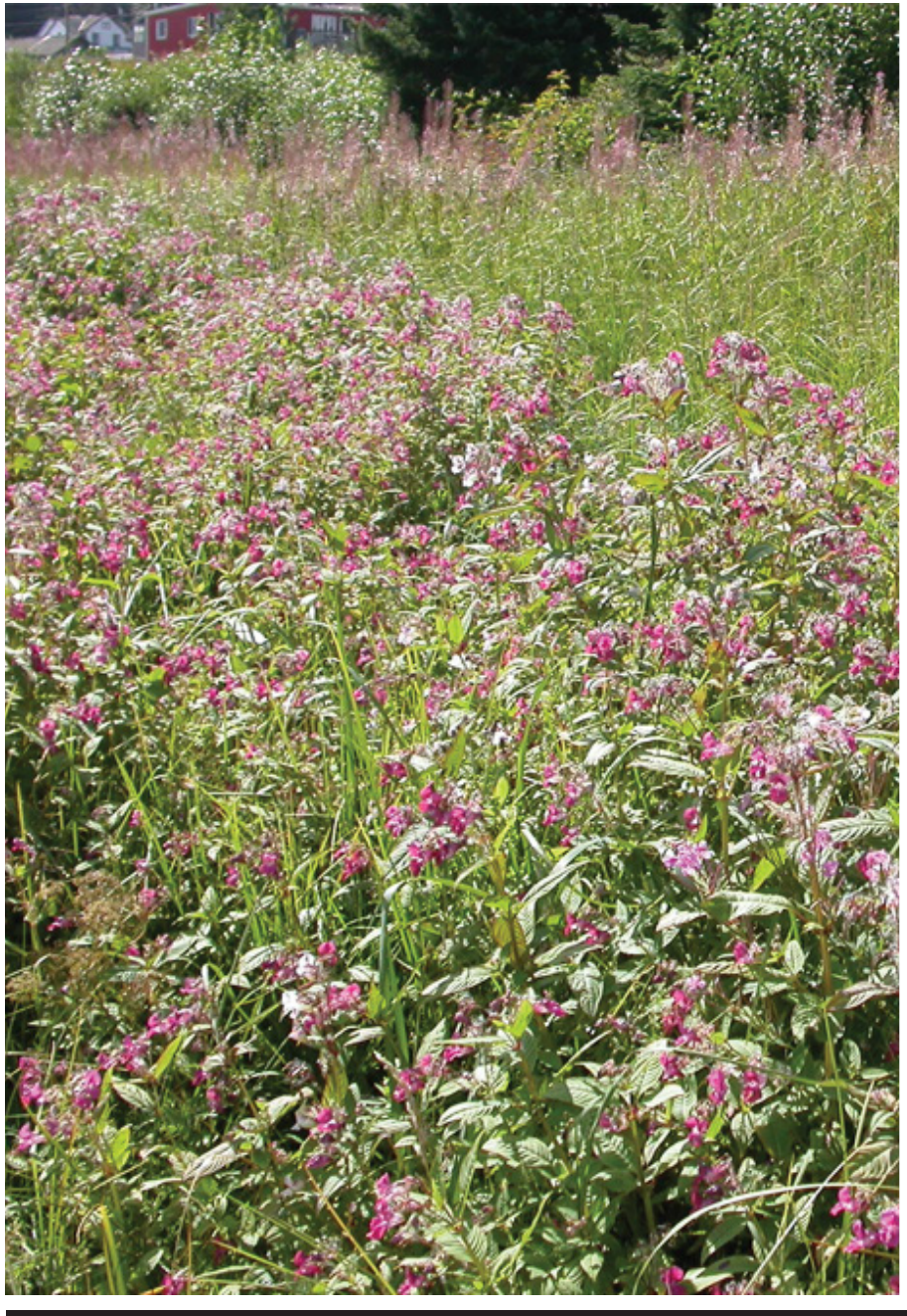
Common Toadflax, Butter and Eggs (*Linaria vugaris*) Figwort Family

Invasiveness Rank: 69

- An aggressive perennial that can reproduce by seeds or rhizomes. It is rarely branched and mature plants grow 2 feet tall with 1-25 stems. Numerous pale green leaves to 3 inches long, alternate, narrow and pointed at both ends. Flowers borne at the end of each stem in spike-like clusters, yellow, with central bearded orange patch, one inch long, similar to snapdragons with a spur extending below the lower lip of the corolla.

- Common in roadsides, waste areas, lake shores, beach meadows, pastures, and edges of forests.

- **A persistent, aggressive invader, capable of forming dense colonies. Toxic to grazing animals.**



Ornamental Jewelweed, Himalayan Balsam

Balsam Family

Ornamental Jewelweed, Himalayan Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) — Balsam Family

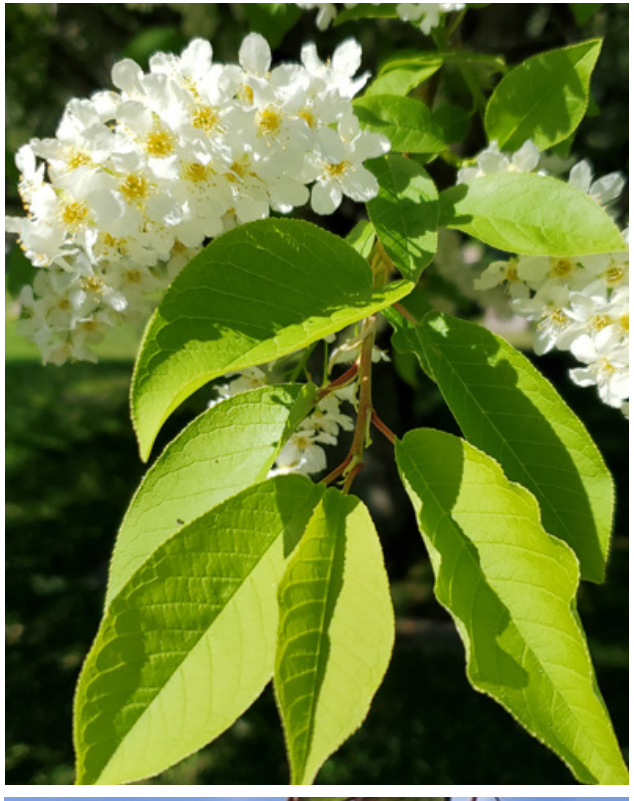
Invasiveness Rank: 82

- Annual herb with thick, many-branched, hexagonally angled stems which can grow to 10 feet. Stems smooth, multi-branched, reddish in color, but can also be green with large swollen nodes and glands at the nodes. Lower leaves opposite, upper leaves whorled with three leaves to a node. Leaves lance-shaped to lance-ovate, 6 inches long, from a stout petiole. Leaf margins finely, sharply serrated. Irregular flowers one inch in length, pink-purple to white, with five petals.

- Thrives in lowlands, riparian zones, and along beaches.

- There is a native species, *Impatiens noli-tangere*, which has bright yellow flowers with small brown spots.

- **Rapidly clogs streams and wetlands. Prolific seed production and aggressive spread make control difficult. Seeds are in capsules that burst open explosively at maturity when touched. Unwary gardeners have contributed to its spread into Alaska.**



European Bird Cherry (*Prunus padus*) Rose Family

Photo credits. Left: Van Den Berk, UK Limited; Upper right: Josh Hightower; Lower right: USDA Forest Service.

European Bird Cherry (*Prunus padus*) Rose Family

Invasiveness Rank: 74

- A low-branched tree which spreads by seed and can reach up to 35 feet in height. Produces showy white flowers, borne on 5-inch long spikes, and a large number of small black bitter fruits in late summer. A favorite of some birds, who spread the seed along streams. Purplish gray to greenish bark. Leaves elliptic to obovate, with sharply serrate margins.

- A favorite ornamental in Alaska. Generally, moose do not browse this tree. It is now spreading freely into riparian zones in Anchorage and Fairbanks.

- **Along urban rivers and streams, it is the dominant understory seedling and sapling, replacing native trees and shrubs.**

European Mountain Ash (*Sorbus aucuparia*) Rose Family

Photos by Richard Webb, Bugwood.org, and Boris Hrasovec, Faculty of Forestry, Bugwood.org.

European Mountain Ash (*Sorbus aucuparia*) Rose Family

Invasiveness Rank: 59

- An upright tree with gray bark that grows 15-40 feet tall, with large clusters of bright-orange berries that develop in the fall. Leaves are alternate, pinnately compound with 11-15 leaflets. There are several species of Sorbus that are native to Alaska: Sitka mountain ash, Cascade mountain ash, and Siberian mountain ash. All of the native mountain ash species are shrubs while the European mountain ash is a tree.

- **European mountain ash has been reported to invade forests communities in Wisconsin. It is also able to integrate into and dominate largely undisturbed, coastal rainforest communities in southeast Alaska.**

Splitlip hempnettle (*Galeopsis bifida*) Mint Family

Splitlip hempnettle (*Galeopsis bifida*) Mint Family

Invasiveness Rank: 50

- Annual which can grow to 4 ft tall. Flowers purple, pink, white or pale yellow with dark variegated markings, growing in clusters at base of leaf stalks. Stems branched, bristly-haired, square in cross section, and swollen beneath the leaf stalks. Leaves opposite on stalks, egg-shaped to lance-shaped with large rounded teeth and pointed tips. Leaves prominently veined and covered with bristly hairs.

- **Forms dense stands on disturbed sites, forest edges, riparian areas, meadows, and beaches. Numerous seeds are small and easily spread on shoes, tires, and recreational equipment. Gardeners quickly come to despise this plant.**

Reed canarygrass (*Phalaris arundinacea*) Grass Family

Photos by Michael Shephard, USDA Forest Service, and Jamie Nielsen, University of Alaska Fairbanks, Cooperative Extension Service, Bugwood.org.

Reed canarygrass (*Phalaris arundinacea*) Grass Family

Invasiveness Rank: 83

- Tall reed-like perennial rising from stout rhizomes. Stems are hollow, 2 to 6 feet tall, with bluish-green waxy coating. Leaf blades flat, up to 3/4 inch wide, with clasping ligules. Leaves rough, sheaths open. Panicle inflorescence is 6 to 18 cm long with spikelets occurring in clusters on short scabrous branches. Seed heads reddish to purplish at base, becoming straw colored; compact at first then opening at maturity.

- Highly variable species preferring moist sites. Begins growing early in the season.

- **Forms dense, persistent, monospecific stands. Dead winter foliage forms dense mats that retard the growth of other plants. Difficult to impossible to eradicate once established. Spreads within sites by creeping rhizomes, effectively excluding all other vegetation. Found along roadsides, ditches, wetlands, riparian areas, beaches, and growing into lakes.**

Cheatgrass, Downy Brome (*Bromus tectorum*) Grass Family

Photos by Michael Shephard, USDA Forest Service, and Jamie Nielsen, University of Alaska Fairbanks, Cooperative Extension Service, Bugwood.org.

Cheatgrass, Downy Brome (*Bromus tectorum*) Grass Family

Invasiveness Rank: 78

- Annual or winter annual grass rises 2 to 28 inches from a fibrous root system. Grows in solitary clumps or tufts, with light-green leaves and membranous ligules. Leaf sheathes are densely and softly hairy. Lemmas have long, soft hairs and long awns, giving the grass its downy appearance. Seedhead is dense and drooping, and seeds range from straw-colored to purplish. Seeds germinate in late fall or early spring, and rapid spring growth produces mature seed roughly 2 months after.

- Occurs on rangelands, roadsides, waste places, and disturbed sites. Will invade grasslands and open forests, especially on sandy or gravelly soils. A highly variable, prolific seed producer, adapted to a broad range of site conditions.

- **Early maturation and accumulation of dead above-ground material greatly increases fire hazard. Awns injure eyes and mouths of grazing livestock and wildlife.**

Purple Loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*) Loosestrife Family

Purple Loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*) Loosestrife Family

Invasiveness Rank: 84

- A perennial plant which grows 2 to 8 feet tall. Produces tall spikes of purple-magenta flowers, each with 5 to 7-ruffled-petals and a small yellow center. Lance-shaped leaves have smooth edges, and are usually arranged opposite one another, in groups of 2 or 3 along the stem. As many as 40 stems arise from the base of a well-established mature plant. Stems are 4 or 5-sided in cross-section.

- Purple-pink flower spikes may be confused with Alaska's native fireweed (*Chamerion* spp.) but in Alaska purple loosestrife blooms in the fall, well after fireweed blooms have faded.

- **An aggressive wetland invader, purple loosestrife chokes waterways, degrading fish and wildlife habitat. Single plants can produce millions of tiny seeds, which are easily spread by wind, water, and wildlife. Wild loosestrife is known to hybridize with horticultural varieties.**

Giant Hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*) Parsley Family

Photos by Gino Graziano, University of Alaska Fairbanks Cooperative Extension Service.

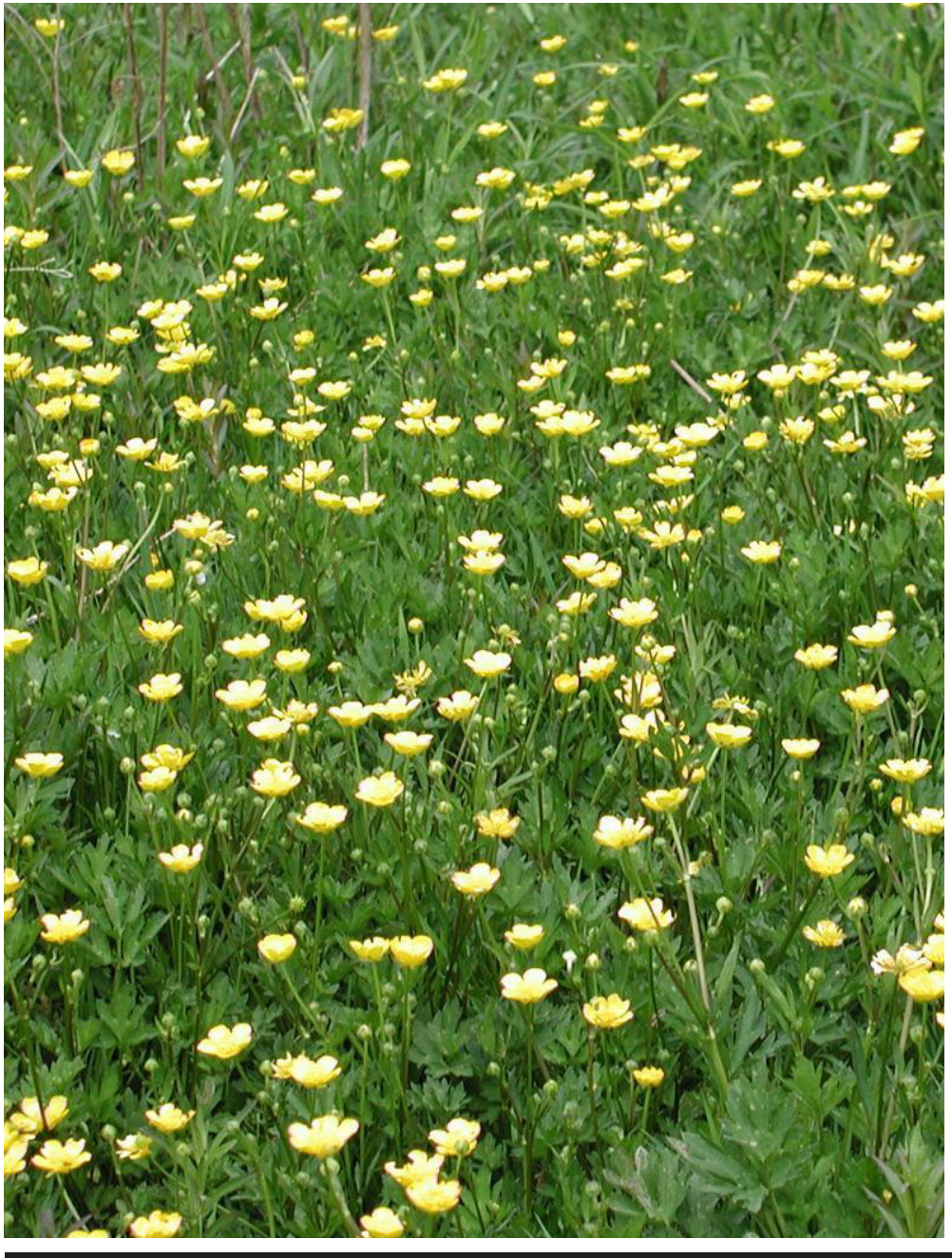
Giant Hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*) Parsley Family

Invasiveness Rank: 81

- Giant hogweed is a toxic perennial that can grow to 15 feet tall. It closely resembles the native cow parsnip but is much larger. Its hollow, ridged stems grow 2-4 inches in diameter and have dark reddish-purple blotches. The large compound leaves can grow up to 5 feet wide. Its white flower heads can grow up to 2 ½ feet in diameter.

- Giant hogweed grows along rivers and streams, damp places, waste areas and roadsides.

- **Giant hogweed can cause painful burns and permanent scarring. Brushing against or breaking the plant releases sap that, combined with sunlight and moisture, can cause a severe burn within 24-48 hours. Immediately wash the affected area thoroughly with soap and water and keep the area away from sunlight for 48 hours.**



Creeping Buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*) Buttercup Family

Photos by Leslie J. Mehrhoff, University of Connecticut, Bugwood.org.

Creeping Buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*) Buttercup Family

Invasiveness Rank: 72

- A low-growing perennial with creeping stolons. Stems reach one foot tall. Leaves are dark green, divided into three toothed leaflets, and often have light-colored spots. Flower stalks are long and erect. Flowers are a bright, glossy yellow with typically 5 but up to 10 petals. Plants spread by seeds and by long branching stolons that root at the nodes.

- Grows in disturbed areas, gardens, croplands, grasslands, woodlands, and semi-aquatic communities such as swamps, pond margins, rivers, and ditches.

- Its aggressive growth crowds out other plants, especially in wet soils. One plant can spread over a 40 square foot area in a year. It is toxic to grazing animals.

- **A similar non-native species is tall buttercup (*Ranunculus acris),* which has has an invasiveness rank of 60. The two species of buttercup share similar biological and ecological attributes. Tall buttercup can be distinguished from other buttercup species by its upright growth habit.**

Waterweed (*Elodea* spp.) Hydrocharitaceae Family

Photos by Robert Vidéki, Doronicum Kft., Bugwood.org.

Waterweed (*Elodea* spp.) Hydrocharitaceae Family

Invasiveness Rank: 79

- An underwater, perennial plant that sometimes forms tangled masses in lakes and ponds, with long trailing stems. Leaves are arranged in whorls of three around the stem. Individual plants can vary greatly in appearance depending on growing conditions. Some are bushy and robust, others have few leaves and weak stems. In some environments plants are bright green; in others dark green to nearly black. No part of the plant extends above the surface of the water.

- Most likely to be found in lakes near the road system or that receive significant floatplane use.

- **Reproduces vegetatively. A single plant fragment, carried unintentionally by boat or aircraft to a different body of water, can start a whole new infestation.**

Rampion Bellflower (*Campanula rapunculoides*) Bluebell Family

Photos by Robert Vidéki, Doronicum Kft., Bugwood.org.

Rampion Bellflower (*Campanula rapunculoides*) Bluebell Family

Invasiveness Rank: 64

- A perennial plant with erect stems which grow 1 to 3 feet tall. Numerous purple bell-shaped flowers with 5 teeth have a nodding appearance. Leaves are heart-shaped near the base of the plant, growing thinner and more lance-shaped further up the stem. Leaves are coarse textured with fine, irregular teeth on leaf margins. Plants develop white, tuberose roots and a network of spreading rootstock. Stems produce a milky sap when broken.

- **Rampion bellflower spreads by seed and rootstock, forming dense patches. Thrives in the open and under birch/spruce forest canopy in southcentral Alaska. Difficult to control in cultivated and natural areas. Rapidly-expanding patches spread into lawns and gardens and out-compete native vegetation in forests and riparian areas.**

Drowning in bird vetch. Photo by Darcy Etcheverry.