



Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association

*Creating tomorrow's woodlands today*

## ***Kick Off Your Week by Learning Something New: National Invasive Species Awareness Week***

The last week of February each year is National Invasive Species Awareness Week. This year it runs from the 24th until the 28th. The Great Lakes region, unfortunately, is considered a major battleground for invasive plants. According to the [Invasive Plants Association of Wisconsin](#) (IPAW) we have nearly 150 different invasive plant species to combat, just in our state alone.

Controlling invasives requires a collaborative effort and an all-hands-on-deck approach. Not only do we have the IPAW, but we also have [Wisconsin DNR](#), the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture Trade and Consumer Protection ([DATCP](#)), and many [other agencies](#) and researchers that assist in preventing, monitoring, and controlling invasives. But as landowners, you are a crucial component as well!

There's an overwhelming amount of information regarding invasives, and we couldn't possibly cover all there is to know about them in a single Learn Something New, so this time we're going to narrow it down to three well-known invasives and some biological [control methods](#) that can be applied toward them.



[Purple loosestrife](#) was introduced from Eurasia for use as a perennial garden plant. Though it is an attractive-looking plant, it spreads fast, with each plant being able to produce two million seeds annually. In addition to this they develop a thick taproot with a fibrous rhizome system, making older plants nearly impossible to remove by hand. This invasive species primarily threatens wetland areas.

Funny enough, the biological control agents, two weevils, also come from Europe, however, they've been used successfully since 1994, and aren't known to cause damage to native plants. One weevil is root boring and the other feeds on the flowers, reducing seed production and increasing the chance of mortality over the winter.

For flower garden purposes, if you're interested in a similar-looking flower to plant, some non-invasive alternatives you could use are fireweed or blazing star.



**Garlic mustard** is another Eurasian import and was brought in for culinary use. However, it has become a biennial invasive which threatens our forests. They will take over the understory, shading out seedlings, and altering the mycorrhizal networks which support them, inhibiting the trees' ability to grow.

You'll start to notice a trend here with the biological controls, as the agents for this one are also a dynamic duo of European weevils. Again, one feeds on the developing seeds, and the other dines upon the rosettes.

The entire plant *is* edible, so if you care to share the feast with the weevils, that's another option. It's said that the roots are similar to horseradish in flavor.



**Spotted knapweed** was *unintentionally* brought into the United States, also from Eurasia, likely through contaminated alfalfa or clover seed. It invades dry sites such as roadsides, trails, prairies, and oak and pine barrens. It can alter soil structure and increase erosion.

For the successful biological control of spotted knapweed, both a seed head agent and a root mining agent should be used. And, as I'm sure you've caught onto by now, the most common are root mining weevils used concurrently with seed head weevils...also from Europe.

Are you interested in obtaining weevils and implementing them as a control method on your land? The Wisconsin DATCP is responsible for issuing the required permits for biological control agent releases.

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**Click the [green text](#) to learn more information**

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