



LANDOWNER CONNECTION

CAROLINA MOUNTAIN LAND CONSERVANCY



Fall Feature:

Native, Non-native and Invasive Plants in Western North Carolina

North Carolina boasts over 4,000 native plant species. These plants have adapted to and evolved within their unique local environments and support the natural communities that make our region special. However, many of these plants are at risk. High on the list of threats is invasive species. Fortunately, there are a variety of methods available to prevent the spread of these undesirable plants.

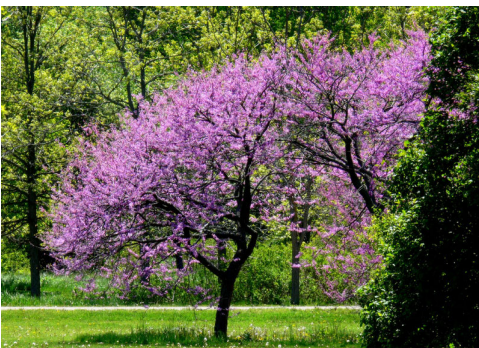
Native plant species are those species that currently or historically occur in an ecosystem independent of human introduction. The term is most commonly used to refer to plants found in an area before European settlement. However, native plants should be defined geographically and environmentally as well as temporally. For example, a plant can be native to a particular state but not to a particular soil type within that state.

Native plants provide a variety of benefits. They fill important niches within their ecosystems by providing habitat and food for native animal species and they can in-

spire a sense of pride in local communities. At the same time, it is important not to downplay the economic, environmental and health benefits of some non-native species. Consider, for example, the introduced crops that we depend on for food. However, when the damage done by a non-native species outweighs the benefits it provides, it is considered invasive.

The imbalance between benefits and harm associated with a non-native plant may seem clear, but differing human perceptions can lead to ambiguity. For example, smooth brome was introduced to the United States from Russia. In many areas of the west, it escaped cultivation to out-compete native grasses. On the other hand, the controlled cultivation of smooth brome provides an important food source for livestock. So, is smooth brome an invasive species? It depends on where you are and who you ask.

The important thing to remember is that when introducing a non-native plant to a new environment, it is difficult to predict how that plant will react. Non-native species



Yellow lady slipper, eastern hemlock, and hearts-a-bustin (top of page, left to right) are prime examples of native plants in western North Carolina. Redbud (left) offers a native alternative to the invasive mimosa (right).

VOLUME 6
ISSUE 2
FALL 2009

Stewardship Committee

Bill McAninch, Chair

Bat Cave

Jim Kessariss

Flat Rock

Jack Drost

Hendersonville

Bob Wald

Chimney Rock

Steve Melton

Asheville

Clay Young

Edneyville

David Dethero

Flat Rock

Rick Waggoner

Flat Rock

Conservancy Staff

Kieran Roe

Executive Director

Tom Fanslow

Land Protection Director

Bonnie Millar

Stewardship Director

Kristin Harkey

Development Director

Kimberly Brewster

Operations Director

Laura Smith Williams

Finance Director

Aimee McGinley

Membership Coordinator

Amy Stout

AmeriCorps Program Director

Mary Ann Hailey

Administrative/IT Coordinator

Christine Craft

Administrative Assistant

AmeriCorps Members

Rebekah Robinson

Land Program Associate

Julia Brockman

Land Program Associate

Alyssa Lawless

Outreach Associate

Julianne Johnson

Volunteer Associate

Tara Bott

Special Media Associate



Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy helps local landowners protect the land and water resources vital to our rural character. As a non-profit dedicated to saving the places you love, CMLC is creating a regional network of more than 18,500 acres of mountain land.

**North Carolina
LAND TRUSTS**
Saving the Places You Love



Carolina Mountain Land
Conservancy
PO Box 2822
Hendersonville NC 28793
phone: 828.697.5777
fax: 828.697.2602

may be better equipped to quickly take advantage of a new environment (we have all experienced the remarkable and speedy adaptability of kudzu), but natives have historically adapted within a unique ecosystem. Over time, the native species' co-evolution within an ecosystem leads to a stable environment of intricate checks and balances. Non-native species, on the other hand, may or may not support local ecological balance. Without a history of co-evolution, many non-native species thrive unchecked and become invasive, hindering the growth of competing species, native or otherwise.

There are several things that you can do as a landowner to stop the spread of invasive plant species. The first and most important step is recognizing common invasive plants and planting native alter-



The invasive species kudzu can completely overtake an area.

natives. This allows you to work towards managing invasive species infestations and promoting native species.

In the mountains of western North Carolina, there are several invasive species of concern. While some of these species get a lot of attention, like kudzu and multiflora rose, others are overlooked for a variety of reasons. Some plants, including privet and Queen Anne's lace have been around for so long that many people don't realize they are non-native, let alone invasive. Other invasive species are commonly used in gardening. Chinese wisteria is destroying hundreds of trees in the Piedmont on a level that some people compare to that of kudzu. Although there are native species of wisteria, gardeners continue to plant the Chinese and Japanese varieties. Even if a landowner has a plant population under control on individual property, the plant may contribute to the spread of non-natives through seed dispersal, ultimately affecting a much broader region.



The native trumpet honeysuckle (left) offers an alternative for the invasive Japanese honeysuckle (right).

Both the promotion of natives and the management of invasive infestations can help control the spread of invasive species. Different native and invasive species require different management techniques, both mechanical and chemical. Several federal and state agencies, including the US Department of Agriculture, the US Forest Service, and the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) offer an abundance of information on invasive plants and native alternatives. An especially helpful resource is *Invasive Exotic Plants of North Carolina*, available on the NCDOT website. Tips on removing invasive species and planting natives can also be found online at Invasive.org, The North Carolina Native Plant Society website and North Carolina State University's Going Native website. On a more local level, you can contact your area's North Carolina Cooperative Extension office or a number of regional conservation groups. These groups, including some local land trusts, are often experienced in controlling invasive species. If you would like more information on invasive plants or help in contacting some of these groups, Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy's staff is happy to help.

NEW PARTNERS, GREAT BENEFITS

Become a member at Conservator Level or recruit a new member for Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy and receive a \$20 gift certificate at Diamond Brand Outdoors! Contact us for details!

THE HOLLER

The HOLLER is a twice monthly e-mail sent to our members, filled with beautiful photos and news of upcoming events. If you aren't receiving it and would like to, let us know!

REMINDER

As always, PLEASE let us know if your easement property is on the market or has changed ownership, even to other family members. THANK YOU!