

Why are these invasive alien species a problem?

Invasive aliens can have a wide range of impacts on our Salt Spring ecosystems. A walk in any Garry oak meadow where wildflowers have been crowded out by broom illustrates the ability of invasive species to threaten biodiversity. Invasive species can...

- Crowd out native plants, including rare and endangered species.
- Introduce parasites and diseases.
- Displace, browse or graze native species.
- Destroy habitat or reduce its quality by changing vegetation structure and ecosystem processes.
- Reduce crop yields or crop quality.
- Hybridize or cross with native species, affecting genetic diversity and integrity.
- Promote the further invasion of other alien species by changing soil nutrient conditions.
- Reduce soil stability and water quality.
- Create a fire hazard (dry gorse and broom).
- Pose a health hazard (poisonous weeds).

How you can help:

- Get to know the invasive species on SSI.
- Remove invasive species from your land and don't purchase seeds or plants of invasive species.
- Spread the word about how serious the impact of invasive species is. Tell your neighbours about their potential impacts on Salt Spring ecosystems.
- Remove invasive species in your neighbourhood – join or organize community parties to remove invasive species from the roadside or your local park.
- Learn about the BC Invasive Species Council's Invasive Species Strategy. The strategy is available online at www.fraserbasin.bc.ca or from the SSIC.

Did you know that...

- Non-native grasses form 30 % of the vegetation in Garry oak ecosystems?
- All broom plants on Vancouver Island are descendants of 3 plants that grew from seed planted by Captain Walter Grant of Sooke in 1850?
- The International Union of Concerned Scientists lists the domestic cat as one of the world's worst 100 invasive species?
- The BC Weed Control Act places a duty on all land occupiers to control the 47 plant species listed as noxious in the Regulations. For a complete list of BC's noxious weeds, see: www.agf.gov.bc.ca/cropprot/weedguid/weedguid.htm

For more information:

Visit the SSI Conservancy's reference library, or: Garry Oak Ecosystem Recovery Team www.goert.ca
BC Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries www.weedsbc.ca/links/invasive.html
The PCA Alien Plant Working Group www.nps.gov/plants/alien/index.htm
The IUCN's Global Invasive Species Database www.issg.org/database/welcome/

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Aliens Invade Salt Spring !



The Himalayan Blackberry, one of Salt Spring's Better Known Alien Invasives

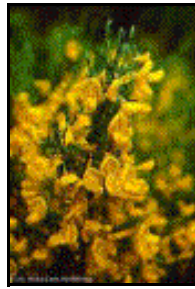
Aliens are species that occur outside their natural range. Alien species that threaten native plants and animals or other aspects of biodiversity are called alien invasive species. They occur in all groups of plants and animals, as competitors, predators, pathogens and parasites, and they have invaded almost every type of native ecosystem, contributing to hundreds of extinctions.

Why do we care?

Biological invasion by alien species is now recognised as one of the major threats to native species and ecosystems. The effects on biodiversity are enormous and often irreversible.

Scotch broom
Cytisus scoparius

Scotch broom is a widespread and invasive shrub introduced in the 1850's from Scotland. Its aggressive and pioneering nature has made broom so successful that it has threatened many of the open coastal ecosystems within our region's distinctive rain shadow flora and is a serious threat to the biodiversity of the Gulf Islands.



What can you do to help? You can remove broom! The best time to remove broom is when the soil is saturated during the wet months of the year. In the summer you may cut the Broom stalks at the base, after plants have bloomed and the seedpods are still green. Broom pullers are available to borrow. Phone the Conservancy office at 538-0318 for more information and for a copy of our "Scotch Broom Removal" brochure.



Gorse
Ulex europaeus

Gorse is listed as a provincially noxious species in BC. It was introduced from the Mediterranean region of Western Europe and is well suited to our mild maritime climate. The high oil content in its leaves and branches can make it a fire hazard where it is abundant on dry sites. Gorse out-competes native species, forming impenetrable thickets. It poses the same threat to the local biodiversity as broom.

What can you do to help? Saw large plants a foot from the base then pull with a broom puller when soils are saturated. Young seedlings can be pulled by hand.

Giant hogweed
Heracleum mantegazzianum

First introduced as a garden curiosity, this native of Asia can reach 6 metres in height, with leaves 1.5m across. In BC it is known from southern Vancouver Island, the Gulf Islands, and Vancouver and is frequently found adjacent to streams or roads in moist to wet areas. Pustules on the stems and stalks exude sap that sensitizes skin to UV rays and can cause severe burns. This pest is tenacious and can readily escape cultivation, crowd out native vegetation and cause stream bank erosion.



What can you do to help? Single, mature plants can be dug up if you remove at least 4 to 6 inches of root. Smaller plants can be pulled but root fragments are likely to re-sprout. Mowing can be somewhat effective in combination with the above measures. Replace with native species.

English ivy
Hedera helix

This evergreen climbing vine is native to Eurasia and is listed as a noxious weed in both Oregon and Washington. An aggressive invader, it threatens all vegetation levels, growing along the ground as well as into the forest canopy and preventing sunlight from reaching other plants. English ivy reproduces vegetatively and by seed, which is mostly dispersed to new areas by birds. New plants grow easily from cuttings or from stems in contact with the soil.



What can you do to help? Pull vines growing as groundcover up by the roots and hang over branches so they will dry out and won't resprout. Vines climbing trees canopy should be cut to kill upper portions, rooted portions will remain alive and must be pulled and repeatedly cut.

Black slug
Arion rufus

This slug originated in Europe and was first spotted in BC in 1941. In 1962 it was recognized as a serious pest. Aside from wreaking havoc in our gardens, black slugs can change the composition and genetic diversity of native plant communities through grazing and through the effect of their mucus, which can accelerate nutrient cycling. Black slugs prey on and displace native slug populations, and are now among the most common slugs in southern British Columbia.



What can you do to help? Hand collecting of slugs is most productive at dusk or dawn. If squishing them does not appeal, save them for your ducks for whom they are a tasty treat.



European Starling
Sturnus vulgaris

In both summer and winter, the largest numbers of starlings in BC can be found in the Georgia Depression. Farmland and cultivated fields attract large flocks who forage for insects, berries and seeds. Starlings harass cavity-nesting birds to dislodge them from their nesting sites. They are aggressive and pugnacious and compete with native species for food and nesting resources. There is concern that starlings may be contributing to the decline of some native species.

What can you do to help? Starlings like open areas and like to nest in buildings, so keep your forest intact and minimize perches or soffits where they can nest.