

Q&A on invasive species



Definitions

Adapted from the Wisconsin DNR's new *Field Guide*.

Prohibited species

Not established in the state or present in limited numbers. Do not transport, possess, transfer, sell or introduce these plants. Goal is to eradicate.

Restricted species

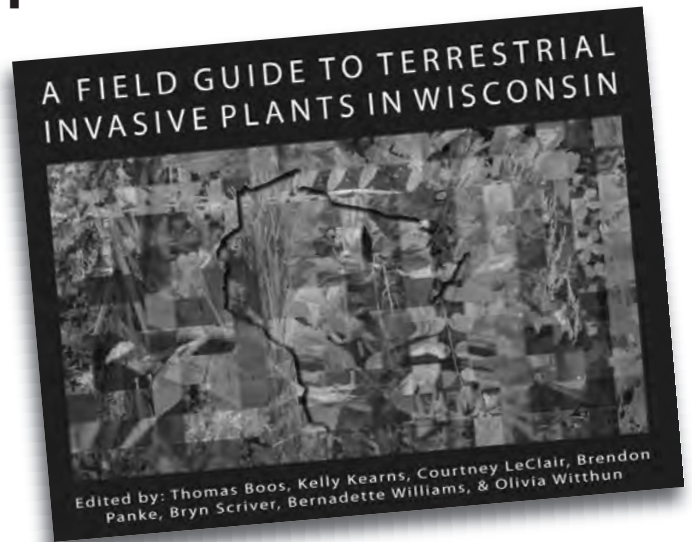
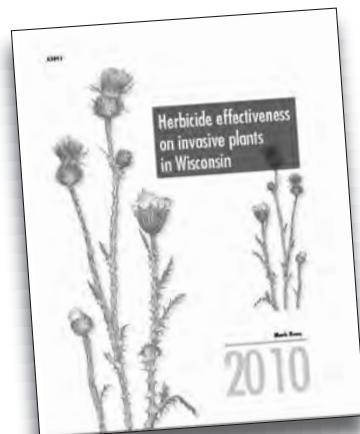
Widespread presence in the state. Do not transport, transfer, sell or introduce these plants. Removal preferred but not required.

METHODS for stopping the spread of invasive plant species in rights of way (ROW) was one of the topics covered in the Transportation Information Center's March *Road Maintenance* workshops. Representatives from the state Department of Natural Resources (DNR) reviewed new state regulations that address how local road officials are to incorporate management of prohibited and restricted plants into their maintenance programs.

They also introduced *A Field Guide to Terrestrial Invasive Plants in Wisconsin*, a publication to help ROW managers identify and control invasive plants. The field guide (pictured right) is available online through the DNR. The Wisconsin Towns Association is distributing one free copy to every town and about half of Wisconsin counties have ordered copies for all staff members. The DNR says that each local government placing a first-time order receives one free. Local officials can purchase additional copies this summer for \$5 a piece.

Answering workshop questions

Workshop participants raised a range of questions about working effectively with the regulations. This cross-section of questions and answers from those sessions highlights concerns shared by local road officials across the state.



Q *If I see something that is on the list of prohibited plants, what do I report to the DNR?*

A If the species is prohibited under NR 40 in any part of the state, the DNR needs to know the location, the name of the landowner (if possible) and the size of the population in order to help control it. A photo or plant specimen sent to the DNR's invasive plant team is helpful. Find "reporting instructions" at <http://dnr.wi.gov/invasives/classification/Report.htm>. There is no need to report restricted species.

Q *If I have a prohibited plant in my back 40, where can I learn what to do about it?*

A The Wisconsin DNR has Fact Sheets with control information on its website at <http://dnr.wi.gov/invasives/plants.asp> that describe recommended control methods based on the species. The UW-Extension also offers a new publication (*Herbicide Effectiveness on Invasive Plants in Wisconsin*, pictured left) that identifies which herbicides work on which individual species based on the labels. See link under *Resources*, page 3.

Q *What should we do in cases where these plants come in with purchased gravel or soil?*

A Look for alternative sources of gravel or soil if possible or request clean materials from current suppliers. If your agency is responsible for a gravel pit, make an effort to control any invasive plants growing in and above the pit.

Q *How can we adjust our mowing schedule when WisDOT limits our mowing on state roads to once a year?*

A It is not necessary to revise your mowing schedule on all roadsides. Mow early only on those stretches with restricted or prohibited species. Figure out mowing times based on when the weeds will flower and try to mow just prior to or in the early flowering stage. The Wisconsin Council on Forestry has developed mowing guidance charts as part of the *Transportation and Utility Rights-of-Way Best Management Practices*. These are available at <http://council.wisconsinforestry.org/invasives/>.

Q *Do we need to mow fence-to-fence earlier in the year?*

A If you have invasive species on some of your roadsides, mowing fence-to-fence earlier in the year might be a good practice but only where it will prevent seed from spreading.

Q *Where is the money going to come from to do this work?*

A There is no additional funding currently available. However, ROW managers can do a lot to prevent the spread of invasive plants by changing the time mowing occurs. For prohibited species, it is possible that DNR and local volunteers can aid with some control work.

Q *How should we dispose of brush or woodchips of invasive shrubs? Is it OK to take the material to the local yard waste facility?*

A If the brush has seeds, it is best to dispose of it on the site or burn it. On-site disposal includes chipping brush, and piling, burying or mulch mowing materials (clean mower after mulching).

Q *How do these management methods affect nesting birds?*

A Research has shown that in Wisconsin, few species of native grassland birds use roadsides for nesting habitat. If there are large amounts of invasive plants in the ROW, most nesting birds will not find these habitats suitable. Managing the spread of the invasive plants outweighs consideration of a few possible nests. The US Fish and Wildlife Service knows about this change in policy.

Q *Can we spray these weeds?*

A Targeted use of the correct herbicide is a good method for controlling most of these invasive species. Mowing prevents their spread, but herbicide is necessary to kill them. At this time, counties do not have WisDOT approval to spray on state highways, but counties, towns and other local units of government can determine what controls work best on their roads.

Q *Do I need to be certified to spray pesticides on town roadsides?*

A Government and municipal employees need commercial pesticide applicator certification and an individual license if they are treating an invasive species with a restricted-use pesticide product with the goal of maintaining a safe, effective right-of-way. The UW-Extension publication on herbicide effectiveness contains information on which are restricted use. Applications done strictly to control invasive plants require individual certification under either the *Field and Vegetable* category for rural areas or the *Turf and Landscape* category for work in urban areas. Maintaining a right of way or managing the spread of invasive plants with non-restricted use



Wild parsnips bloom mid-summer and are prevalent along roadsides.

pesticides does not require certification or licensing. Employees of public agencies that need certification (good for five years) can sign up for the University of Wisconsin Pesticide Applicator Training Program. See link under *Resources*. Although exempt from paying the license fee, public employees must obtain and hold a valid license.

Call DNR to learn more

The more ROW managers know about identifying and managing invasive species in their areas, the easier it is to include the techniques in routine maintenance practices. DNR Plant Conservation Program Manager for Endangered Resources Kelly Kearns encourages local road officials who want to learn more to contact her. ■



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Contact

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Resources

<http://dnr.wi.gov/invasives>

Link to site for downloading or ordering *A Field Guide to Terrestrial Invasive Plants in Wisconsin*.

<http://ipcm.wisc.edu/pat>

Website of University of Wisconsin training and testing program for Wisconsin Pesticide Applicator Certification. Information about training manuals and other resources. Or contact Rose Scott at 608/262-7588 or PAT-program@facstaff.wisc.edu.

<http://learningstore.uwex.edu/invasive-species-C296.aspx>

Link to publications on the UW-Extension Learning Store site about identifying and managing invasive species, including *Herbicide Effectiveness on Invasive Plants in Wisconsin*.