

GREEN Growing: Most (un)Wanted Invasives: Get them while they are young!

It is hard to believe that this



Can quickly become this



Much of Westchester is overrun by some unwanted exotic green thugs that have escaped from gardens. Because they are out of place without their normal ecological checks and balances, they are aggressively taking over the landscape. Though there are many of them, we are just going to focus on four that are common seedlings in your lawns, gardens, and woods at this time of year. Once established they are extremely hard to remove and control. So, get them while they are young and avoid a big problem in the future!

Porcelain Berry

Why is it a problem?

This vine quickly smothers trees, bushes, and plants, killing them by crowding out the light. It is happy to grow anywhere, and that is part of the problem. Once established it is hard to eradicate.



Photo credit: vnps.org

The seeds are sprouting all over the landscape now. Simply locate the baby vine and pull it up – vines are quite easy to control when they are young. For vines that are older but still manageable, dig up the tap root. Established vines can be cut close to the ground to save trees and bushes from certain death. You'll have to keep after the vines as they will quickly re-sprout and grow. Like Poison Ivy, Porcelain Berry leaves can vary, making it difficult at times to distinguish it from our native wild grape vine. However, its flowers and distinctive porcelain colored fruit, as well as its aggressive growth, give it away.

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Sadly, this ‘smotherer’ is still sold irresponsibly in the nursery trade – even though Porcelain Berry is a prohibited species in New York State and elsewhere.

For more information on Porcelain Berry perform an internet search on *Porcelain Berry Information* and/or *Porcelain Berry Identification* and/or *Porcelain Berry Eradication*.

Interested in a beautiful flowering native vine? We have many East Coast natives to choose from.

- **Native Trumpet Honeysuckle** (*Lonicera sempervirens*), a well-behaved alternative and a Hummingbird magnet. Likes full to partial sun.
- **Dutchman’s Pipe** (*Aristolochia tomentosa*), a vine that likes full sun to partial shade and is a host plant for the Pipevine Swallowtail Butterfly.
- **Cross Vine** (*Bignonia capreolata*), gorgeous orange/red trumpet shaped flowers; it is semi-evergreen. Protect in winter. Full sun to part shade.
- **Trumpet Creeper** (*Campis radicans*). Another Hummingbird magnet, it can be aggressive and may need to be controlled. Full sun to part shade.
- **Native Clematis: Woodbine** (*Clematis virginiana*) and **Purple Clematis** (*Clematis occidentalis*), fast growing and perfect for naturalizing.
- **Wild Passionflower** (*Passiflora incarnata*), beautiful and unusual. May need winter protection during cold winters. Full sun to part shade.
- **American Wisteria** (*Wisteri frutescens*). A host plant for many butterflies and supports native bees. Not aggressive like its Asian cousin.
- **Native Climbing Hydrangea** (*Decumaria barbara*). Can be used as a groundcover or a vine, though only blooms while climbing.

Oriental Bittersweet

Why is it a problem?

This aggressive, fast growing vine acts like a boa constrictor on our trees. It literally strangles trees and the weight of the thick woody vine is so great that the tree will topple. It is relentless.

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Death by strangulation



This unwanted guest grows quickly from seed and you have probably already seen it trying to establish itself on your property.

When young, it is quite easy to pull by hand. It has a deep root so you may need a trowel to free the root. If you have a large vine strangling a tree, cut the vine at the base and continue to do so as the vine tries to regrow.



This is also a prohibited species in New York State. Though there is an American Bittersweet it is hard to come by and some nurseries mislabel Oriental Bittersweet as American Bittersweet.

For more information on Oriental Bittersweet perform an internet search on *Oriental Bittersweet Information* and/or *Oriental Bittersweet Identification* and/or *Oriental Bittersweet Eradication*.

Garlic Mustard

Why is it a problem?

This is a very adaptable plant that produces an enormous amount of long-lasting seeds. Once established the population explodes and takes over the landscape. It eradicates other plants, crowds out

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natives and reduces needed biodiversity. It has little food value to wildlife. It also changes the soil chemistry by producing a toxin that prevents other species from growing. You can't miss it at this time of year – it is everywhere!



This one is so easy to pull! Make sure to pull it before it produces seed. The seeds will last for years in the landscape, so you will need to keep after this one to eradicate it from your property.

Do you want a nice blooming spring native that can replace and/or compete with Garlic Mustard? Here are some suggestions:

Sunny settings:

- Wild Strawberry (*Fragaria virginiana*)
- Canada anemone (*Anemone canadensis*)
- Starry Solomon's Seal (*Maianthemum stellatum*)
- Phlox – of all sizes and colors
- Goldenstar *Chrysogonum virginianum*

Filtered light settings:

- Canada anemone (*Anemone canadensis*)
- Pennsylvania sedge (*Carex pensylvanica*)
- Celandine Poppy (*Tylophorum diphyllosum*)
- Allegheny pachysandra (*Pachysandra procumbens*)

Shady Settings

- Wild Ginger (*Asarum canadense*)- this native groundcover can be used successfully to crowd out Garlic Mustard. It has reddish flowers that are hidden under the leaves.
- Native Ferns, particularly Ostrich Fern (*Matteuccia struthiopteris*) which easily naturalizes

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For more information on Garlic Mustard perform an internet search on *Garlic Mustard Information* and/or *Garlic Mustard Identification* and/or *Garlic Mustard Eradication*.

Norway Maple

Why is it a problem?

Norway Maple is highly invasive – in fact, most of the maples we see in the landscape are now Norway Maples. It has crowded out our native maples by its fast growth habit, abundant seed production, excessive use of water, dense canopy, shallow root system, prolific seeds, and ability to leaf out earlier than our native trees. Additionally, it releases allelopathic chemicals into the soil to prevent other plants from growing around it. It is bad news! It is a regulated plant in New York State.

It can be hard to tell the difference between a Norway Maple and our Sugar Maple. Luckily, there is a telltale sign – if you break the leaf stem of a Norway Maple you will see the sap is white. A Sugar Maple has clear sap.



You'll find hundreds of little maple seedlings all over your yard at this time of year. It is a safe bet that they are Norway Maple seedlings and need to be pulled.



Do you want a native alternative to Norway Maple? There are many choices!

- **Red Maple** (*Acer rubrum*), fast growing, gorgeous fall color. Full to part sun and can tolerate moist soil, though it is also fairly drought tolerant.
- **Sugar Maple** (*Acer saccharum*). Need we say more? THE maple, source of Maple Syrup and breathtaking fall foliage. Full to partial sun and well-drained soil.
- **Silver Maple** (*Acer saccharinum*), fast growing, likes moist, well-drained soil and it can tolerate sun to shade. It needs to be in the right spot so do some research on its pros and cons before choosing it.
- Or try an oak. Oaks support over 200 species of wildlife, are long lived, majestic and are larval hosts to some of our native butterflies.
 - **White oak** (*Quercus alba*)
 - **Black/Red oak** (*Quercus velutina*)

For more information on Norway Maple perform an internet search on *Norway Maple Information* and/or *Norway Maple Identification* and/or *Norway Maple Eradication*.

Happy spring pulling! You'll save your yard and the environment at the same time!