

To: The Environment Committee
From: Kathleen Nelson, New Milford, CT
Re: HB 5122
Date: 2/20/12

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing in reference to HB 5122, a bill regulating the cultivation and sale of golden bamboo.

A colony of the hardy giant running bamboo, *Phyllostachys aureosulcata*, - like other running plant colonies - expands exponentially. We should not be fooled by our usual linear thinking. As it expands, perhaps by 20 feet in each direction each year, the new area covered in each succeeding year is greater than the new area covered the previous year. A colony can quickly take over large areas, overrunning ecosystems as well as damaging man-made structures such as driveways, septic systems, and swimming pools.

Not only do colonies of running bamboo expand at a terrifying rate, they are almost impossible to remove. In an open area a backhoe might work, but often the colony has expanded into woodland, along river and stream banks, and/or into wetlands. What can be done for the long section of eroding river bank along the Housatonic in New Milford that is completely colonized by *Phyllostachys aureosulcata*? Or, in Newtown, the large area of yard, small stream and the associated woodland overtaken by this bamboo?

Even scarier, driving from that Newtown colony toward Bethel, one sees new patches planted in several yards - "pass-along plants" given to unsuspecting homeowners.

As a member of the New Milford Inland Wetlands Commission, I've walked a wide variety of properties and become aware of how many of the plants we see are invasive. I became a member of the Connecticut Invasive Plant Working Group and have since 2007 managed an invasive plant control project for Mile-a-Minute Vine in New Milford, Bridgewater, and Roxbury. As a gardener and former nursery owner, I am personally aware of the overwhelming temptation to plant beautiful interesting plants. Even with that knowledge, I once planted both a short running bamboo and taller "clumping" bamboo. I quickly realized that this was a serious mistake and was able to remove both, with difficulty. A backhoe was needed for the four-foot-diameter "clumper". What chance does a less knowledgeable gardener have when faced with the temptation to plant giant bamboo? Hopefully at some point the sale and cultivation of giant bamboo will be banned, but in the meantime, requiring notification to unsuspecting gardeners could help.

Although many nurseries and landscapers know not to sell or install *Phyllostachys*, it is still found for sale in Connecticut. I cannot imagine that requiring notification to buyers would affect nursery income. Rather, the economic impact of running bamboo is negative, impacting home sales, repairs to driveways, septic systems, and other structures, and requiring enormous expense to either control or remove.

In addition to problems affecting residential properties, there are places where giant bamboo is moving into forests and wetlands. A bamboo plant I saw in a floodplain below the Bulls Bridge dam in Kent must have been carried in by a flood. Luckily, it did not survive long. It was probably carried away by another flood a couple of years later. A well-established colony in Southbury adjacent to where RT 67 crosses the Pomperaug River probably began with a plant carried downstream from one of the large colonies in the wetlands a few miles north. One way or another, the floods in the spring of 2011 scoured the area and carried healthy rhizomes downstream to possibly establish elsewhere.

Please do whatever you can to ban the sale and cultivation of *Phyllostachys aureosulcata*. Until that can be done, please pass HB 5122 - (correcting the name to *Phyllostachys aureosulcata*) as a first step to protect neighbors and warn unsuspecting gardeners.

Thank you for your help.

Kathleen Nelson

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