

**Please support Bill 5413: AN ACT CONCERNING INVASIVE PLANTS.**

I thank you for your previous support, aiding with important economic, environmental and health problems related to invasive plant species in Connecticut.

I strongly urge you to endorse Bill 5413: AN ACT CONCERNING INVASIVE PLANTS.

I am a recent graduate of the Connecticut Master Gardener program, and have spent many days working to control numerous invasive plant species which have, literally, invaded our area. The term “invaded” is key, since it pertains to species that are alien to our continent, and for which there are no naturally developed competitors to check their rampant growth—either predators or diseases.

These plants are more than just pests; they threaten to displace and wipe out whole other species that are native to our area. This affects much more than just gardens; it affects entire populations of birds and insects as well. The opposite of biological diversity is monoculture, and that is what invasive species do—they reproduce rapidly and expand their territory, all leading toward monoculture.

These seemingly small-scale beginnings gradually build to upset entire ecosystems that have been naturally balanced for millennia.

In my own home in Fairfield County, I have observed Oriental Bittersweet *Celastrus orbiculus*, Tree of Heaven *Ailanthus altissima*, Japanese Barberry *berberis thunbergii*, Japanese Knotweed, and Garlic mustard—all on my one-acre property. If these specific invaders are on my little acre, you know they are also distributed throughout our entire area—and they are, indisputably. Since taking the Master Gardener program, I have trained myself and others on the identification and effective removal of these invasive species. I have also worked with invasive species on the Fairfield Forestry Committee and in Ryan Park in South Norwalk.

This is but a puny human effort to hold back the tide.

Without the help of the Invasive Plants Council, our individual efforts will not ever be successful.

The Invasive Plants Council has served as a vital forum for citizens and interest groups to discuss, argue, and reach consensus on invasive plant issues, and put forth workable solutions, but the issues and discussions often involve voluminous scientific information and proceedings which must be compiled, reviewed, and tracked by a staff person. The Invasive Plants Coordinator leverages thousands of hours of work and expertise from hundreds of people concerned about the destructive impacts invasive plants are having on our lakes, forests, and rivers. Without this group and staff Connecticut's land and citizen's health would be severely negatively impacted.

I strongly urge you to endorse Bill 5413: AN ACT CONCERNING INVASIVE PLANTS to continue to fund the Invasive Plants Council so it may continue to work with these citizens and groups to help control invasive plants in our state.

Thank you,

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