

# Environment Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** HB-5225

AN ACT CONCERNING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE INVASIVE

**Title:** PLANTS COUNCIL.

**Vote Date:** 3/8/2024

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute

**PH Date:** 2/28/2024

**File No.:**

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## **SPONSORS OF BILL:**

Environment Committee

Rep. Joseph P. Gresko, 121st Dist.

Rep. Aundre Bumgardner, 41st Dist.

## **REASONS FOR BILL:**

The introduction of non-native plants can disrupt the delicate balance Connecticut's ecosystems are in, causing these invasive plants to overwhelm and fundamentally shift the biodiversity. Often these invasive plants are introduced because of human action, regardless of intent. This bill seeks to expand the list of controlled plant life to include certain new species, thereby protect Connecticut's native ecosystems.

## **SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:**

The bill was adapted to include a report on cultivars of Japanese barberry and Burning bush that are sterile and may reasonably be sold in the state, which will be published by the Invasive Plants Council no later than March 1, 2025.

## **RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:**

None expressed.

## **NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

### **Francis Pickering, Executive Director, Western Connecticut Council of Governments**

The Western CT COG supports the bill, but feels it falls short by not including Japanese barberry, one of the state's most harmful invasive species. This species has more tick concentration, thus exposing more people to tick-borne diseases such as Lyme disease. Included in the testimony are pictures of the Japanese barberry as it chokes a forest.

### **Ann Gadwah, Sierra Club Connecticut**

The testifier states that invasive plants displace native plants and are a danger to our ecosystems. They ask that the bill include the Winged Euonymus, also known as Burning Bush, bringing the bill in line with other states' bills.

### **Kimberly Stoner, Director of Advocacy, Northeast Organic Farming Association**

The Invasive Plant Councils suggests updating the list of invasive plants should include the mugwort (*Artemisia Vulgars*). Mugwort takes over areas that have been cleared and seeded due to mulch, gravel, topsoil, or equipment that has been contaminated with this plant. They suggest that better guidelines are needed for the management of these items.

### **Samuel Gold, Executive Director, Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments**

The testimony submitted explains how invasive plants are taking a toll on the state's economy, municipal budgets, and recreational assets; preventing the sale, cultivation, and distribution is critical to the prevention of these species continuing to spread. They request that additional invasive species be added as we become aware of them.

### **Jonah Liper**

As a volunteer with the local land trust and a hiker, the testifier supports this bill. They testify that many preserves are overrun by invasive plants that are on the list as banned for sale, and that at land trusts they have to work to control invasive plants.

### **Kris Kuhn**

As a member of the Groton Conservation Advocates, the testifier supports statewide prohibition on the sale and cultivation of the updated list of invasive or potentially invasive plants.

### **Alicea Charamut, Executive Director, Rivers Alliance of Connecticut**

The Alliance expresses support for the bill to combat invasive plants and their impact on the biodiversity of Connecticut's environment.

### **Lydia Pan, Wild Ones Connecticut Chapter**

The testifier supports efforts to remove invasive plants and restore native plants to communities. Their team has invested hundreds of hours clearing mugwort, porcelainberry, and other invasive plants. They believe that this bill can be an important tool to restricting the spread of these plants that cause substantial and costly harm to our state's natural environment.

**Mary Pelletier, Director, Watershed**

As co-coordinator of the Hartford Urban Bird Treaty, Park Watershed works with local and regional partners to protect birds and their habitat. Native plants attract specific insects and various bird species; it is their belief that state properties including state schools should be required to only plant native species.

**Amy Blaymore Patterson, Executive Director**

The testifier draws attention to the threat invasive species pose to Connecticut's biodiversity, ecological integrity, and human health. Non-native species compete with displaced native flora disrupting the ecosystem. These negative impacts are exacerbated by climate change. Prohibiting the sale and cultivation of these invasive plants will safeguard the health and resilience of our native ecosystem.

**Dystyn Nelson, Connecticut Nursery & Landscape Association**

As the immediate past President of the Connecticut Nursery and Landscape Association, and representative of a nonprofit association concerned with growers and retailers of plants and flowers as required by statute, the testifier supports the IPC contained within this bill. Several plants have been deemed invasive and it is their opinion that they must be banned by statute. The testifier specifically expresses the belief that the Callary Pear must be phased out due to its quick growing nature and adaptability making it a highly successful invasive species.

**Christine Feely**

The testifier deplors non-native species wrecking Connecticut's neighborhoods, wooded areas, and waterways; they note that Connecticut wildlife are being pushed out by vining plants that choke out trees and native bushes. They applaud volunteers who work with gardeners in town parks and wooded areas to try to control these invasive species and believe the sale, planting, and cultivation of these plants works against efforts to restore native species.

**Dianne Saunders, Wallingford volunteer coordinator**

Having struggled with many invasive plants on the Connecticut Invasive Plant list, it is the testifiers belief that certain plants are more aggressive and damaging to our local open spaces. They support the current bill, but believe various agencies need to consider regulations for training and establishing guidelines on performing normal maintenance on government properties. It is their belief that the practice of roadside vegetation management, and collection of natural debris for disposal, are commonly overlooked factors responsible for the spread of invasive plants.

**Denise Savageau, President, Connecticut Association of Conservation Districts**

Conservation Districts have been promoting the use of native plants and the control management for invasive species. One of the greatest threats to biodiversity are invasive species by their negative impact on pollinators and soil health. Their impact on natural has been compounded by a changing climate.

**Jeanne Dubino**

The testifier expresses the belief that invasive plants wreak havoc on the biodiversity of native species and negatively impacts the environment.

**Lynne Marshall, PhD, Member of Board of Directors, Alliance for the Mystic River Watershed**

The testifier expressed support for the updated invasive species list, as they work to prevent waterway congestion caused by invasive plants, which harms the aquatic ecosystem.

**Anne Mazzone**

The testifier expresses the belief that burning bush should be added to the list.

**Susan Eastwood, Chapter Chair, Sierra Club Connecticut**

The chair expressed support for the strengthened invasive list, although expressed concern that winged euonymus, colloquially known as "burning bush", was not included in the original language of the bill.

**The following solely expressed support for the bill:**

**Maizie Ogren, Mary La Sala, Anonymous 1, Tricia George, Kirsta MacLellan**

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

None expressed.

**Reported by: Pamela Bianca**

**Date: March 13th, 2024**