

Mapping Invasive Plants

Maps play an important role in everyday life as they allow us to take a step back and view information about the world around us. While for most of us, the use of maps is to get from point A to point B, they can also be important tools in conservation and land stewardship. As a recent graduate from Virginia Tech with a degree in Geography, I am interested in the applications of maps and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) in the field of conservation. Invasive species pose one of the biggest threats to land management as they can have devastating impacts on the ecosystem and require a considerable amount of time and resources to manage. Identifying and mapping the location of invasives allows for us to see the extent of established invasives on a property as well as helping to detect new infestations early. One of the major characteristics of many invasive species is that they have the ability to spread rapidly and quickly overtake native plants. This presents a major challenge for land management and maps can be a valuable tool in monitoring the spread of invasives over time. Ultimately, invasive species present a threat to all aspects of an ecosystem and the more we know about them the better suited we are to protect native flora and fauna.