

Five Common Invasive Plants in Our Region

Below are five of the most commonly found—and problematic—invasive species in southern Connecticut:

1. Norway Maple tree (*Acer platanoides*)

- **Why It's a Problem:** Outcompetes native trees like sugar maple by leafing out early and casting dense shade. Its shallow roots make it hard for understory plants to become established.
- **Management:** Avoid planting it. If present, consider removal and replacement with native trees (e.g., red maple or American hornbeam). Saplings should be pulled by hand before they mature.



2. Japanese Barberry shrub (*Berberis thunbergii*)

- **Why It's a Problem:** Forms dense thickets that crowd out native plants and alter soil pH. It also creates humid microclimates ideal for ticks.
- **Management:** Remove by digging out roots or cutting and treating stumps with targeted herbicide. Dispose of in trash (not compost). Replace with native shrubs like winterberry or highbush blueberry.



3. Burning Bush shrub (*Euonymus alatus*)

- **Why It's a Problem:** Popular for its bright red fall foliage, it escapes cultivation and spreads in forests, where it displaces native understory species.



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- **Management:** Dig out small plants or cut and treat the base of larger ones. Consider alternatives like native viburnums or chokeberry.

4. Privet shrub (*Ligustrum spp.*)

- **Why It's a Problem:** Widely used for hedges, but spreads aggressively by seed and root suckers. Creates dense, nearly impenetrable thickets.
- **Management:** Repeated cutting or pulling is needed; herbicide treatment may be necessary for established plants. Replace with native hedge plants such as inkberry or serviceberry.



5. Garlic Mustard plant (*Alliaria petiolata*)

- **Why It's a Problem:** Spreads quickly in woodlands, displacing native spring wildflowers and disrupting native mycorrhizal fungi critical to tree root health.
- **Management:** Pull by hand before it sets seed (typically late spring). Remove roots and dispose of in trash (not compost). Persistent follow-up is key.



What Can Homeowners Do?

Prevention

- Learn to recognize invasive plants in your yard.
- Avoid purchasing invasive species from nurseries or garden centers—ask for native alternatives.

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- Clean tools and shoes after hiking or working in infested areas to avoid spreading seeds.

Eradication

- Hand-pulling and digging are effective for young or small populations.
- Use targeted herbicide applications (following label instructions carefully) for larger infestations.
- Schedule removals before seed dispersal times—especially critical for garlic mustard and barberry.

Containment

- If complete removal isn't possible, prune to prevent flowering and seed spread.
- Create barriers between invasive and native planting areas.
- Monitor your yard annually and stay ahead of regrowth.

Native Plants Are the Solution

By removing invasive species and replacing them with native plants, homeowners can help restore ecological balance and support local wildlife. Organizations such as the [Connecticut Invasive Plant Working Group \(CIPWG\)](#) and [Greenwich Green and Clean](#) offer guidance and volunteer opportunities to remove invasive plants.