

Chicago Region, Illinois, USA

Selected Plants that Threaten Chicagoland Natural Areas

Henrietta T. Saunders¹ & Robert G. Sullivan²

¹Illinois Master Naturalist & ²Argonne National Laboratory

Photos: Leslie J. Mehrhoff via Bugwood.org. Produced by Robert G. Sullivan and Henrietta T. Saunders. Acknowledgment: P. Armstrong, C. Benda, J. Brennan, M. Buckley, R. Collings, R. Frigo, K. Hayden, K. Havens, I. Hogstrom, L. Masters, S. Michehl, L. Shad, M. Suangka, and R. Sulski



© Robert G. Sullivan, Henrietta T. Saunders (2023) CC BY-NC 4.0. Licensed works are free to use/share/remix with attribution, but commercial use of the original work is not permitted.

[fieldguides.fieldmuseum.org]

[1547]

version 1 3/2023

Common Buckthorn

Rhamnus cathartica

- Woody shrub up to 25 ft. tall.
- Dark green leaves with finely toothed edges 1.5-3 in. long, in pairs along stems.
- Branches may end in short thorns.
- Small green-yellow flowers.
- Clusters of berry-like black fruit.



Reed Canary Grass

Phalaris arundinacea

- Coarse grass 2-6 ft. tall.
- Stems hairless, hollow, rounded.
- Prominent, stiff translucent ligule (membrane) where leaf meets stem.
- Leaves ¼-1/3 in. wide, gradually tapering, up to 10 in. long.
- Seed heads 3-16 in. long.



Lesser Celandine

Ficaria verna or *Ranunculus ficaria*

- Non-woody plant up to 12 in. tall.
- Leaves dark green, shiny, kidney- to heart-shaped varying in size.
- Bright yellow flowers in early spring on stalks above leaves.
- Numerous underground tubers.
- Grows vigorously into dense mats.



Callery (Bradford) Pear

Pyrus calleryana

- Tree up to 60 ft., usually less.
- Leaves 2-3 in. long, on stalks, with wavy, slightly toothed edges.
- Showy white flowers 1 in. wide in spring, before leaves appear.
- Green to brown round fruits ½ in. in diameter.



Oriental Bittersweet

Celastrus orbiculatus

- Climbing, woody vine up to 60 ft. long and 4 in. in diameter.
- Mature bark gray or brown. Smooth twigs green, or gray.
- Rounded leaves 2-5 in. long.
- Showy flowers and scarlet fruits along stems.



Japanese Barberry

Berberis thunbergii

- Small woody shrub 2-8 ft. tall.
- Branches have short straight spines.
- Leaves up to 1 in. long, paddle-shaped. Leaves wine-red, green, or both on same plant.
- Drooping clusters of pale-yellow flowers.



Selected Plants that Threaten Chicagoland Natural Areas

Henrietta T. Saunders¹ & Robert G. Sullivan²

¹Illinois Master Naturalist & ²Argonne National Laboratory

Photos: Leslie J. Mehrhoff via Bugwood.org. Produced by Robert G. Sullivan and Henrietta T. Saunders. Acknowledgment: P. Armstrong, C. Benda, J. Brennan, M. Buckley, R. Collings, R. Frigo, K. Hayden, K. Havens, I. Hogstrom, L. Masters, S. Michehl, L. Shad, M. Suangka, and R. Sulski



© Robert G. Sullivan, Henrietta T. Saunders (2023) CC BY-NC 4.0. Licensed works are free to use/share/remix with attribution, but commercial use of the original work is not permitted.

[fieldguides.fieldmuseum.org]

[1547]

version 1 3/2023

Common Reed

Phragmites australis

- Coarse grass up to 15 ft. tall.
- Broad, pointed leaves on thick, vertical stalks.
- Smooth flat leaves 6-24 in. long, ½-2½ in. wide.
- Flower heads dense, fluffy, gray or purple, 6-16 in. long.



Garlic Mustard

Alliaria petiolata

- Non-woody plant 1-4 ft. tall, flowers in second year.
- Heart shaped, 1-6 in. long leaves at base, smaller on flower stalk.
- Strong garlic odor when crushed.
- Early spring flowers have four small, white petals.



Amur Honeysuckle

Lonicera maackii

- Multi-stemmed arching woody shrub up to 16.5 ft. tall.
- Oval leaves 1.3-3.3 in. long in pairs along stems.
- White flowers ½-¾ in. long in pairs above stems.
- Red spherical fruit ¼ in. in diameter.



Purple Loosestrife

Lythrum salicaria

- Multi-stemmed (30-50 per plant) non-woody plant up to 10 ft. tall.
- Lance-shaped leaves without stems 1.5-4 in. long, but round or heart-shaped at the base.
- Pink to purplish flowers in 4-16 in. long spikes at the tops of the stems.



Dame's Rocket

Hesperis matronalis

- Non-woody plant up to 4 ft. tall, blooming in second year.
- Leaves 2-6 in. long and hairy, usually without stalks.
- White to purple or pink showy, fragrant 4-petaled flowers in clusters.
- Often grown as an ornamental.



Burning Bush

Euonymus alatus

- Woody shrub up to 8 ft. tall.
- 2-4 corky wings on branches.
- Dark green leaves 1-3 in. long and 1/2-1 in. wide, turn bright red in fall.
- Small, greenish-yellow flowers.
- Red fruit about ½ in. long in fall.
- Commonly sold as an ornamental.

