

# GUIDELINES FOR DISPOSING OF INVASIVE PLANT MATERIAL



Department of  
Environmental  
Conservation

Properly disposing of invasive plants can help limit their spread

## What are invasive species?

Invasive species are non-native plants, animals, and pathogens that can harm the environment, the economy, and human health. Invasive species come from all around the world. As international trade increases, so does the rate of invasive species introductions. They are among the greatest threats to New York's biodiversity.

## What are the impacts?

Invasive species can ruin the places we love and require costly solutions. They can cause many issues such as habitat degradation; loss of native fish, wildlife, and tree species; loss of recreational opportunities and income; crop damage; diseases in humans and livestock; and risks to public safety.



Hand-pulled purple loosestrife bagged for disposal.  
Credit: Adirondack Park Invasive Plant Program

## How do I properly dispose of invasive plant material?

When removing invasive plants, it is crucial that you take proper precautions and understand their life cycle. Improper disposal can allow invasive plants to regrow or be transported to previously uncontaminated areas. By following the guidelines below, you can help limit the spread of invasive plants.

### Disposal of terrestrial invasive plants

#### Air dry

- After removing the plants, air dry them until dead. If possible, cover the material with plastic to speed up decomposition and limit dispersal by birds and other animals. Avoid placing material in areas where there is a risk of being swept away by rain or into a waterbody.
- The ideal time to dispose of invasive plants is before they flower and produce seeds. This helps minimize seed dispersal. (Don't use this method for plants that could regrow from stems or have resilient roots.)

#### Form brush piles

- If possible, leave plant material on site and create a brush pile to decompose. Do not form brush piles during or after flowering. (Don't use this method for plants that can easily regrow.)

#### Bag and dispose at landfill

- If you need to move material off site, put plants in thick, durable plastic bags and dispose of them at your local landfill. Please note that not all landfills will accept plant material, so call ahead and inquire. Ensure that the material is securely contained (like under a truck cap) to avoid spread during transport.
- Put plant material in thick, durable, black or clear plastic bags and place them in a sunny location for several weeks to kill and decompose the plants. Make sure plant parts do not poke through the bags.
- Warmer weather will speed this process, but allow the bags to sit for at least three weeks before emptying or discarding them at a landfill.

## Composting

- Composting invasive material is **not recommended**. Some plants, such as Japanese knotweed and spotted knapweed, have resilient rhizomes, extensive root structures, and hardy seeds that can survive and regrow.

## Burning

- Dried plant material can be burned. If you plan to burn, you must abide by the New York State open burning regulation ([www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/58519.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/58519.html)) as well as any applicable town, village, city, or county ordinance.
- If transporting invasive woody material for use as firewood, you must abide by the New York State firewood regulation ([www.dec.ny.gov/animals/28722.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/28722.html)) and note that untreated firewood may not be transported more than 50 miles from its source or origin unless it has been heat-treated. **WARNING:** Do not burn plant material when risk of wildfires is high, and never leave a fire unattended.

## Other notes

- Don't use topsoil or mulch contaminated by invasive species. By relocating topsoil or mulch, you may be transporting invasive plants or seeds to previously uninfested areas.

## Disposal of aquatic invasive plants

### Clean, drain, dry

- Clean, drain, and dry your watercraft, trailer, and equipment before and after each use, particularly of any aquatic plant material. Please note that the Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Spread Prevention regulation, 6 NYCRR Part 576, requires that "reasonable precautions" are taken prior to placing watercraft or floating docks into public waterbodies to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species.

### Air dry

- Dispose of all plant debris in trash cans or above the waterline on dry land. Utilize invasive species disposal stations when possible. Dried plant material can be burned.

### Bag and dispose at landfill

- If you need to remove the plant material off site, bag and dispose of it at your local landfill. Please note that not all landfills will accept plant material, so call ahead and inquire.

## Composting

- Avoid composting aquatic plant material due to the risk of spreading seeds or plant fragments to other uncontaminated areas, particularly if the disposal location is near a waterbody.

## Aquarium plants

- Never dispose of unwanted aquarium plants or animals in or near waterbodies, ditches, or canals.

## Do the Part 575 Regulations require invasive plant material to be disposed of in a particular manner?

The Part 575 Regulation prohibits or regulates the possession, transport, importation, sale, purchase, propagation, and introduction of select invasive species. There is an exemption from Part 575 Regulations when reasonable precautions, like the disposal activities listed above, are taken.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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An aquatic invasive species disposal station