

Invasive Plants

P-Patch TIPS are reference documents that address topics related to the development and ongoing management of P-Patch Community Gardens.

Tip

PP413

9/5/23

What is an invasive plant? In community gardens there are many plants that people love to grow for food, spice, beauty, or herbal uses that can become problematic and spread easily by seeds, roots, or plant parts. Since we garden so closely with each other, we should be thinking about how the plants we grow multiply and impact others.

This list of plants is not meant to be all-inclusive or match any one garden but as a tool for conversation and further research. Consider developing one that is specific to your garden since each garden may or may not have issues with an invasive plant.

Common plant traits to watch out for include:

- **Fast growth**
- **Rapid reproduction**
- **High dispersal ability**

Quick guide to this tip sheet

The sheet is broken up into 3 categories, loosely based on the [King County Noxious Weed list](#).

Category 1: Removal Required. Plants you must not grow and if growing remove (Page 2).

Category 2: Control Required. These are abundant in some gardens and rare in others (Page 3).

Category 3: Containment Required. These plants of concern are common in all gardens (Page 4).

We define “containment” as under control from spreading within the boundaries of the plot you are stewarding and should not be growing throughout the whole plot and along edges where it can easily spread to other plots. With some plants the best practice would be to grow them within a pot so they do not get out of control.

TIPS should not be used as a substitute for codes, regulations, or rule requirements. Individuals are responsible for compliance with all code, regulatory, and rule requirements, whether or not described in this TIP..

Category 1: Removal Required. Plants you should not grow and must be immediately removed when growing in plots and common areas.

P-Patch Gardeners need to be aware of the [King County Noxious Weed List](#). This list has links to great photos and lots of other information. It is important that you be aware of the overall list and know how to refer to it as resource to help identify plants you want to learn about and plants that are showing up in your garden. **Please pay particular attention to Class A through C categories.**

Example: Poison Hemlock (*conium maculatum*). We see this Class A plant in P-Patch Gardens. When removing be very careful as this plant is poisonous if ingested and can irritate some people's skin.

The following plants require removal in King County, and have been found in Seattle gardens and surrounding areas: *images below are taken from King County Noxious Weed List.*

Poison Hemlock (*conium maculatum*) upper left

Milk Thistle (*Silybum marianum*) upper right

Garlic Mustard (*al/iaria petiolata*) lower right

Shiny Geranium (*Geranium lucidum*) lower left



Poison Hemlock



Milk Thistle



Shiny Geranium



Garlic Mustard

Category 2: Control Required. These are abundant in some gardens and rare in others. Control is required in all gardens.

Some plants to consider in this category are:

- Quack Grass (*Elymus repens*)
- Bindweeds (*Convolvulus arvensis*)
- Japanese and Giant Knotweed (*Polygonum*)
- Buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*)
- Oxalis (*Oxalidaceae*)
- Horsetail (*Equisetum arvense*)



Quack Grass



Bindweed/Morning Glory

Photo provided by Julie Bryan

Note the easily broken roots and leaf. Photo provided by Julie Bryan



Oxalis

Note deep root system, seed capsules present along with flowering bodies. Photo provided by Julie Bryan

Best Practices:

- Be consistent and persistent, removed on a regular basis
- Dig deeply and frequently (lateral roots create new plants)
- Remove roots and runners (**do not till or compost**)

Category 3: Containment Required. These are common in all gardens.

Some plants in this category are:

- Raspberries/Blackberries (rubus)
- Horseradish (*Armoracia rusticana*)
- Fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*)
- Comfrey (***Symphytum officinale***)
- Sunchoke (*Helianthus tuberosus*)
- Mints (Mentha)
- Fish Mint (Houttuynia cordata - must be grown in a container)
- Mugwort (***Artemisia vulgaris***)
- Purslane (***Portulaca oleracea***)



Fennel



Fish Mint



Blackberries

Best Practices

- Barrier to control roots
- Cut flowers prior to forming seed
- Cut back frequently
- Grow in a container
- These plants should not extend throughout the plot or near edges
- These plants should not grow so high as to block your neighbor.

Harmless, but prolific. You should remove the seed pods or harvest from these plants when they begin to seed so as not to spread the seed to neighboring plots.

- Calendula (*Colendula officinalis*)
- Borage (*Borago officinalis*)
- Chickweed (*Stellaria media*)



Resources:

- Noxious Weeds in King County: <https://kingcounty.gov/services/environment/animals-and-plants/noxious-weeds.aspx>
- Tilth Alliance Garden Hotline: **Available Monday - Friday, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.** at (206) 633-0224, or online at: <https://tilthalliance.org/our-work/gardeners/the-garden-hotline/>

