



For Immediate Release

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WSSA Says Online Databases and Smartphone Apps Make It Easier than Ever to Track Invasive Weeds

LAWRENCE, Kansas – May 21, 2012 – Online databases and new smartphone applications are making it easier than ever to track and map infestations of invasive weeds, the Weed Science Society of America (WSSA) said today.

“These new resources are moving pockets of information out of universities and laboratories and into the public domain where they are readily accessible,” says Lee Van Wychen, Ph.D., WSSA science policy director. “Now scientists, policy makers and even the general public can use the data to track the location and movement of weeds and monitor the effectiveness of management strategies.”

Online weed databases are currently maintained by a variety of public agencies, organizations and educational institutions. Examples include:

- **Global Invasive Species Information Network** (www.gisinfo.org), administered by the National Institute for Invasive Species Science of the U.S. Geological Survey Fort Collins Science Center.
- **iMapInvasives** (www.imapinvasives.org), managed by The Nature Conservancy.
- **Invasive Plant Atlas of the MidSouth** (www.gri.msstate.edu/ipams), managed by the Mississippi State University Geosystems Research Institute.
- **National Institute for Invasive Species Science Database** (www.niiss.org), hosted by the U.S. Geological Survey Fort Collins Science Center.
- **Plants of the United States** (plants.usda.gov), managed by the USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service.

New Apps Used to Report Weed Sightings

New technologies are also making it easier than ever to capture and report information on the location of weeds so that online databases are more complete. One example: iPhone and Android applications have been developed by the Center for Invasive Species and Ecosystem Health at the University of Georgia in support of [EDDMapS](#) – an online Early Detection and Distribution Mapping System for invasive species.

Previously, weed sightings were submitted to EDDMapS using detailed online forms. But the new applications are game changers. Now home gardeners, backpackers and other laypeople likely to encounter invasive weeds can participate as well.

“The apps are really fun and easy to use,” says Karan Rawlins, invasive species coordinator at the Center. “You simply use your phone to take a picture of the weed, and the application grabs the GPS coordinates automatically. Estimate the size of the infestation, press send and your sighting goes out for validation by state and local experts. It’s so easy that I’ve actually rolled down my window while stuck in traffic to snap a photo and report weeds spotted along the side of the road.”

EDDMapS apps for iPhone, iPad and Android devices can be downloaded for free at apps.bugwood.org. Specially tailored versions were created for Florida, the Southeastern U.S., the Mid-Atlantic region and the Missouri River watershed.

The data reported to EDDMapS is available at no cost to researchers, educators, land managers and others interested in tracking and managing invasive species. It can be searched, queried and downloaded in a variety of formats to evaluate weed distribution for a given locale.

“If you want to collect information on weeds growing in a local park or schoolyard, you simply create an account and download data for that location,” Rawlins said. “You can view the results on an interactive map, download them into an Excel file, sort by species and track infestations over time.”

The EDDMapS project is supported by the U.S. Forest Service, the National Park Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

About the Weed Science Society of America

The Weed Science Society of America, a nonprofit scientific society, was founded in 1956 to encourage and promote the development of knowledge concerning weeds and their impact on the environment. The Weed Science Society of America promotes research, education and extension outreach activities related to weeds, provides science-based information to the public and policy makers, fosters awareness of weeds and their impact on managed and natural ecosystems, and promotes cooperation among weed science organizations across the nation and around the world. For more information, visit www.wssa.net.