



DON'T BUY THESE PLANTS!

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From *The Curious Gardener*, Spring 2021

https://pcmg.ucanr.org/newsletters/Curious_Gardener_Newsletters88738.pdf

Nearly 5000 native plants species call California home, more than any other state in the United States. In addition, approximately 1500 non-native plants have established and naturalized in California's environment. Naturalized plants are generally non-native plants distinguished by their ability to disperse, establish, and spread without human assistance or disturbance. It is when some of these naturalized plants are able to spread regularly, even aggressively and survive into new areas that they are called invasive and sometimes destructive depending on plant species and location.

For example, in the foothills and Central Valley most residents are aware of one of the worst non-native invasive plants, yellow starthistle, (*Centaurea solstitialis*) which has caused severe damage to the surrounding environment as it advances almost unimpeded, choking the natural woodland habitat. This plant produces 30,000 seeds per 10.76 square feet (approximately) with 95% of the seed being viable up to one to sometimes three year(s).

Since 2010, there has been a concerted effort by Plant California Alliance (PCA), formerly known as PlantRight, and UC Master Gardeners to conduct a survey of California nurseries to identify and raise awareness about invasive plants issues and benefits of planting right choices. During these years, they have been recruiting retail nurseries throughout California to commit to selling exclusively noninvasive plants.

Placer County has three retail nursery partners listed, Home Depot, Lowe's and Green Acres, who have pledged not to sell any plant from PlantRight's invasive plant list and to complete an employee education program regarding such. In addition, there has been an ongoing outreach to the public to make them aware of invasive plants, what it means to the environment, and alternatives to planting specific invasive vegetation. In this age of ordering plants online, California home owners should be knowledgeable and diligent about not purchasing plants that are aggressive and invasive in their climate zone.

In the Central Valley including foothills, zones of 7-9, the following plants are still available from retail nurseries or online and should be avoided: **Invasive Ground Covers:** Periwinkle (*Vinca major*), **Invasive Grasses:** Mexican feathergrass (*Stipa/Nassella tenuissima*), Pampas grass (*Cortaderia selloana*) and cultivars. **Invasive Water Plants:** water hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*), yellow water iris (*Iris pseudacorus*).

The following invasive plants have been deemed phased out by the California nursery industry but are still available via the internet and should not be planted in California gardens:

- Capeweed (*Arctotheca calendula*)
- Arundo, giant reed (*Arundo donax*)
- Jubata grass (*Cortaderia jubata*)
- Scotch broom (*Cytisus scoparius*)
- Portuguese broom (*Cytisus striatus*)
- Russian olive (*Elaeagnus angustifolia*)
- Blue gum eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus globulus*)
- French broom (*Genista monspessulana*)
- Crystalline iceplant (*Mesembryanthemum crystallinum*)
- Myoporum (*Myoporum laetum*)
- Bridal veil broom (*Retama monosperma*)
- Scarlet wisteria (*Sesbania punicea*)
- Spanish broom (*Spartium junceum*)
- Saltcedar (*Tamarix ramosissima*)
- Chinese tallow tree (*Triadica sebifera*).

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Of the invasive plants still listed as being sold in California nurseries, there are alternate suggestions that will look, perform and please the home gardener without introducing unwelcome guest plants to the neighborhood. For instance, in lieu of big periwinkle (*Vinca major*) some suggestions include planting ground morning glory (*Convolvulus mauritanicus*, aka *C. sabatius*), hardy geranium (*Geranium* 'Rozanne') or star jasmine (*Trachelospermum jasminoides*). These alternatives and others can be found at the websites listed below. Buying native plants is always an excellent choice with many choices now available in your local nurseries or online!



Photo by Elaine Kelly Applebaum
Invasive Nassella tenuissima.

References

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- *Suggested Alternatives for Invasive Garden Plants*. PlantRight.org. n.d. https://plantright.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/2019-PlantRight_Plant-List.pdf
- *Invasive Plant Checklist for California Landscaping*. Cal-IPC.org. May 8, 2018. <https://www.cal-ipc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/InvasivePlantChecklistforCaliforniaLandscaping.pdf>

UC Master Gardeners of Placer County are University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) ambassadors to the Placer County home gardening community. Master Gardeners promote environmental awareness and sustainable landscape practices, and extend research-based gardening and composting information to the public through educational outreach. UCCE is part of the Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) of the University of California.