



**HB979 Agriculture - Invasive Plant Species - Regulation (Biodiversity and Agriculture Protection Act)**  
**Environment and Transportation Committee**  
**Hearing Date February 28, 2024**  
**FAVORABLE**

Dear Chair Korman, Vice Chair Boyce, and honorable members of the Committee,

The Green Towson Alliance writes in support of HB979, which updates and strengthens Maryland's invasive plant laws to better respond to the extensive environmental and economic damage invasive plants are causing to our state. Since Maryland's initial invasive plant law was passed in 2011, only 6 invasive plants have been prohibited from sale and propagation with another 13 on the "Tier 2" list which may still be sold and propagated but must have a warning "Plant with Caution" sign at the point of sale.

To better understand which invasive plants Maryland citizens are most concerned about, the Maryland Native Plant Coalition prepared a survey asking respondents to identify their top 25 most problematic invasive plants. In just a few weeks' time, we received over 1400 responses from a public that is incredibly frustrated with the destruction they are seeing from invasive plants. Survey respondents came from all regions of our state, from home gardeners to foresters, Weed Warriors to landscape professionals. They all had similar sentiments, namely, they are spending significant time and money to deal with out-of-control invasive plants where they live, work and recreate.

The frustration of our survey respondents was evident in the many comments they shared:

*I can't begin to estimate the time and energy that I spend trying to remove these plants from my property...If only they had been prohibited sooner so they hadn't become so widespread. - Home gardener, Central Maryland*

*Japanese barberry is taking over the mountains. -Trained Weed Warrior, Western Maryland*

*As a hiker that frequents Maryland trails, the quantity of invasives found far from the nearest house or garden, overrunning the native flora, is despair-inducing. Especially since many are still sold in garden stores. -Home gardener, Capital region*

*English Ivy - how is this still legally sold!!!!?? -Landscape professional, Central Maryland*

*Thank you for any help in getting these plants from being sold. They are killing our local ecosystems. -Invasive plant professional, Capital region*

The most problematic invasive plant according to our survey respondents is English ivy, which climbs trees both newly planted and mature and will eventually smother and kill a tree if not removed. In fact, 6 of the top 15 invasives in our survey were vines. These vines are causing

great destruction in our forests, overwhelming all the layers of the forest and even carpeting the forest floor so new seedlings can't germinate.

Recent studies are showing that the combined effects of forest fragmentation with the rising temperatures due to climate change are like a one-two punch to our forests with these conditions favoring the vines over the trees. As Maryland has the stated goal of increasing our forest canopy, we will fail if we cannot control invasive vines.

Japanese barberry, a Maryland Tier 2 invasive, was the second most mentioned plant in our survey. In addition to creating dense thickets which displace native plants, Japanese barberry can be hazardous to human health. This shrub's dense growth creates a humid, shady microhabitat that increases survival of the black-legged tick that carries the Lyme disease pathogen. The more Japanese barberry in an area, the higher the amount of Lyme disease carrying ticks.

Volunteer "Weed Warriors" from all over Maryland are working hard to remove invasives and restore forested areas. We must stop selling some of the very plants they are working so hard to remove. This legislation will move that effort forward by first moving current Tier 2 plants to the prohibited from sale list and going forward modifies the invasive plant assessment protocol to more efficiently assess the invasive plant species required for assessment in 2022's HB15/SB7.

Many of our survey respondents asked if we could please help stop the sale of the most problematic invasive plants, and with your help, the answer is YES.

We ask for a favorable report on HB979.

Respectfully,  
**Kirsten Hoffman for the Green Towson Alliance**  
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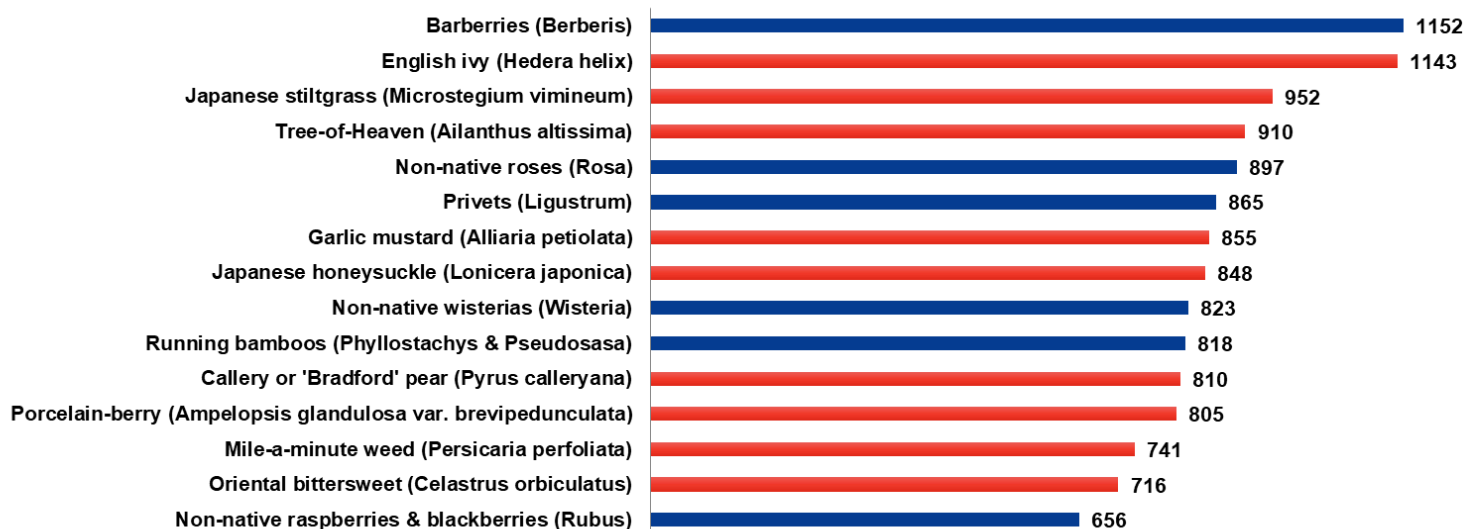
*The Green Towson Alliance unites Towson area environmentalists to create a greener, healthier and more beautiful community through collaboration and activism.*

Attachments:  
2023 Maryland Invasive Plant Survey, Statewide Results  
2023 Maryland Invasive Plant Survey, Plants in Top 15/Tier 2  
2023 Maryland Invasive Plant Survey, Respondents by Type

## Maryland Native Plant Coalition 2023 Invasive Plant Survey

The Maryland Native Plant Coalition conducted a survey asking respondents to list their top 25 most problematic invasive plants. The following charts summarize the results from over 1400 responses from all regions of our state.

### Maryland Top Invasives



Note: Blue lines indicate more than one invasive species in a genus. For example, “Barberries” is a combination of Japanese barberry and Common barberry. Red lines indicate a single species.

### Tier 2 Species appearing in Top 15 Most Problematic Invasive Plants

Maryland currently has 13 invasive plants listed as Tier 2. Tier 2 status recognizes that the plant is highly invasive, but it may still be sold with a warning sign, “Plant with Caution”, at the point of sale. Ten of the thirteen invasive species on the Tier 2 list were in the Top 15 most problematic plants in our survey.

- Japanese barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*)
- Burning bush (*Euonymus alatus*)
- Border privet (*Ligustrum obtusifolium*)
- Nandina (*Nandina domestica*)
- Golden bamboo (*Phyllostachys aurea*)
- Yellow groove bamboo (*Phyllostachys aureosulcata*)
- Callery pear (*Pyrus calleryana*)
- Japanese wisteria (*Wisteria floribunda*)
- Chinese wisteria (*Wisteria sinensis*)
- floribunda x sinensis hybrid (*Wisteria x Formosa*)

# Maryland Native Plant Coalition 2023 Invasive Plant Survey

## Respondents by Type

|                              |     |
|------------------------------|-----|
| Home gardeners               | 44% |
| Master Gardeners/Naturalists | 18% |
| Trained Weed Warriors        | 12% |
| Educators                    | 7%  |
| Landscape professionals      | 8%  |
| Invasive plant professionals | 3%  |
| Farmers/agricultural workers | 2%  |
| Foresters                    | 2%  |
| Other respondents            | 3%  |

