Invasive Plants

Properly dispose of invasive plant material.

Proper disposal of invasive plant parts is important to prevent inadvertently spreading the plants during disposal. Some species can re-root from small cut sections. Some may ripen even after a plant has been pulled. Simply composting in a backyard compost pile will not typically provide enough heat to kill seeds and roots. Proper disposal strategies depend on the species and how it reproduces. Click here for details regarding Invasive plants in Massachusetts.

Some strategies are:

Bag it: Remove flowers, seeds, roots, and fruits and place them in heavy black garbage bags to dry out before disposing of them. Typically, these black plastic bags need to sit in a sunny spot for up to 1 month to fully kill the plants and seeds inside. After the plant material has fully died, it can be composted in your regular compost pile.

Burn it: Most invasive species can be burned in a brush pile, following local safety regulations and restrictions. Burning should only be done with a burn permit from the fire department during the burning season. Residents can obtain an open burn permit through the Fire Department.

Compost it: Plant parts that can't re-sprout or that don't have fruits and seeds on them, such as woody stems and trunks, herbaceous stems (except from those species list below), and leaves, can be left in brush or compost piles to decompose.

Herbaceous stems that can re-sprout must be burned or bagged. Tossing these into a regular brush or compost pile will result in the spread of these plants.

They include:

Oriental bittersweet

Multiflora rose

Bush honeysuckles

Common reed

Japanese knotweed

Note that plants identified as invasive by the Massachusetts Invasive Plant Advisory Group may not be left at Hudson's Yard Waste Collection and Compost Facility.

Controlling Invasive Species at Home

1.Identify the invasive plant species growing on your property:
Look for the Sour 16 species first, and use the Massachusetts Prohibited Plant List and Early Detection and Rapid Response list to identify others.
Some invasive species resemble native plants, so take care when identifying. Apps such as GoBotany, INaturalist and PictureThis can help.
Note your invasive species on a map of your property (hand-drawn is fine) so that you can keep track of what you identified and, later, what infestations you have removed.

2.Remove invasive plants responsibly and effectively:
Methods for controlling invasive species vary by species and site and fall into two categories:
Manual and mechanical control, which involves only hand-work or tools, such as shovels, weed-wrenches, and mowers; and
Chemical control, which uses systemic herbicides to kill plants at their root system.
The Town (and other organizations that manage large land areas) may occasionally use herbicides as a last resort when managing extensive colonies, but homeowners (and their landscapers) can generally control invasive species at the scale of their own properties without herbicides.

3.Properly dispose of invasive plant material:
Proper disposal of invasive plant parts is important to prevent inadvertently spreading the plants during disposal. Some species can re-root from small cut sections. Some may ripen even after a plant has been pulled. Simply composting in a backyard compost pile will not typically provide enough heat to kill seeds and roots. Proper disposal strategies depend on the species and how it reproduces. Some strategies are:
Bag it: Remove flowers, seeds, roots, and fruits and place them in heavy black garbage bags to dry out before disposing of them. Typically, these black plastic bags need to sit in a sunny spot for up to 1 month to fully kill the plants and seeds inside. After the plant material has fully died, it can be composted in your regular compost pile.
Burn it: Most invasive species can be burned in a brush pile, following local safety regulations and restrictions. Burning should only be done with a burn permit from the fire department during the burning season. Residents can obtain an open burn permit through the Fire Department.

Compost it: Plant parts that can't re-sprout or that don't have fruits and seeds on them, such as woody stems and trunks, herbaceous stems (except from those species list below), and leaves, can be left in brush or compost piles to decompose. Herbaceous stems that can re-sprout must be burned or bagged. Tossing these into a regular brush or compost pile will result in the spread of these plants.
They include:
Oriental bittersweet
Multiflora rose
Bush honeysuckles
Common reed
Japanese knotweed
Note that plants identified as invasive by the Massachusetts Invasive Plant Advisory Group may not be left at Hudson's Yard Waste Collection and Compost Facility.

4.Restore the site where invasive plants were removed:
Restoring any site where invasive species were removed is a key – but sometimes forgotten – step in a successful control effort. Many of our invasive plant species are adapted to thrive in disturbed soils. For this reason, all control efforts and general site work that result in exposed mineral soil should incorporate some degree of restoration.
Small patches of exposed soil, e.g. from root-wrenching a shrub, should be tamped down by foot and covered with leaf litter from on-site.
Larger patches of exposed soil should be planted with fast-growing native species.
Non-forested sites, such as meadows, should be seeded with a grass mix including annual rye (Lolium perenne), which can provide a quick cover on open soils and allow non-invasive species time to self-germinate.

5.Monitor invasive plant re-emergence and remove as necessary over time:
All invasive species control efforts will involve at least several years of removal efforts. Even when 100% of plants are removed, seeds persist in the seed bank, vegetation re-sprouts from remaining rootstock and rhizomes, and any bare soil patches can invite new invasive species to establish.
To be successful, you will need to plan to monitor the area for some years and promptly remove any invasive plants that re-appear.
Fortunately, the work that comes after the first year gets progressively easier, as fewer and fewer invasive plants emerge and more native plants establish.
Within a few years, you and the wildlife around you will enjoy the fruits of your invasive species control efforts.