

# SUNNYSIDE THYMES

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## Space Invaders

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This article will focus on invasive plants that are partial shade, 3 to six hours of sunlight, to full shade, three hours or less of sunlight. The three species discussed will be the Japanese Chaff Flower (*Achyranthes japonica*), Japanese Stiltgrass (*Microstegium vimineum*), and Hairy Jointgrass (*Arthaxon hispidus*).

The Japanese Chaff Flower was first reported in Indiana in 2002. It now occurs in every Indiana county that borders the Ohio River and its flood plain. This perennial herb can grow as tall as six feet, thus shading out competing native undergrowth.



Japanese Chaff Flower

Photos: Purdue Extension



Ovate-elliptic leaves are opposite and simple. Margins are entire and slightly wavy. The base of the leaf is tapering, and the apex is acute to acuminate. The small flowers have no petals and are clustered tightly on the inflorescence which occur at the ends of the stems and upper branches. They flower in summer.

*Achyranthes japonica* is labeled a high priority species in Indiana and any sightings need to be reported immediately at [www.SICWMA.org](http://www.SICWMA.org) or call 1-866 NO EXOTIC.

Japanese Stiltgrass is an invasive grass that threatens native plants and natural habitats in the Eastern United States. This annual grass germinates in the Spring and will grow to a height of 2 to 3.5 feet. Identifiable by its pale green leaves that have a silvery stripe of reflective hairs along the mid-



Japanese Stiltgrass

Photos: Rutgers

rib of the upper leaf surface. *M. vimineum* resembles bamboo, but its stems are thin and wiry and can be green, purple or brown.

Each plant can produce up to 1,000 seeds from both self-fertilizing and cross-fertilizing flowers. Once in the soil, seeds can remain viable for up to 5 years.

Hairy Jointgrass is also called small carpet grass and joint-head grass. This annual grass inhabits wet areas such as stream banks, flood plains and shorelines.

The plant stands to 1.5 ft. tall with oval to lance-shaped leaves. Leaves are 1-3 in. long, 0.2 in. wide and have heart shaped bases. The margins of the leaves have conspicuous hairs. Flowers bloom in early fall and are contained in 1 to several, 1-3 in. long spikes. *Arthaxon hispidus* can form dense stands, particularly along shorelines, that may threaten native vegetation. Hairy Jointgrass often occurs with another highly invasive annual grass species, Japanese stilt grass (*Microstegium vimineum*).



Hairy Jointgrass

Photo: University of Connecticut

Sources:

- [http://www.na.fs.fed.us/fhp/invasive\\_plants](http://www.na.fs.fed.us/fhp/invasive_plants)
- [www.extension.purdue.edu/extmedia/FNR/FNR-477-W.pdf](http://www.extension.purdue.edu/extmedia/FNR/FNR-477-W.pdf)
- [www.njaes.rutgers.edu/fs1237/](http://www.njaes.rutgers.edu/fs1237/)