
SUNNYSIDE THYMES

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“Helping Others Grow”

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Space Invaders

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Space Invaders! Not the video game, or aliens from outer space, but rather plant aliens (non-native) from other countries that are invading our lawns, flower beds, gardens, and woodlands. Invasives will be our featured topic in our 2019 Sunnyside Thymes articles to educate, inform, and call you to action to tackle the worst of the worst terrestrial plants that are plaguing Southern Indiana.

What is an invasive plant species? According to the experts in botany and ecology, an invasive is a plant that was introduced to a habitat and which did not adapt or develop connectivity to other flora/fauna species over time. It often does little to benefit native insects, birds, or mammals, and usually does not have a local predator. If planted in a location that provides nutrients, light, and water that are suitable, it can go unchecked, and prevent native plants the space, light, and nutrients they need to survive. Eventually, invasives create a monoculture that dominates the landscape. Envision kudzu, to understand what it looks like in a woodland, field, or meadow. AND, incidentally, there are stands of kudzu in Floyd County.

The presence of invasive species in Indiana has an economic cost to Hoosiers. In 2012, a survey conducted by the Invasive Plant Advi-

sory Committee found that land owners and managers in Indiana spent \$5.85 million to manage invasive plants on their land. This was seven years ago, and we know that these invasive plants have grown to be more of a problem. Our state legislature recognizes this issue and is considering Terrestrial Plant Rule legislation that will ban the sale, trade, planting, or exchange of these ecologically harmful non-native plant invasives. The hearing on this rule is being conducted during the writing of this article, and you'll be updated as the legislation is processed.

It is our hope that you will take advantage of the information provided, do your due diligence in evaluating your yard/woods/property and identify the invasives that are present. We hope that as a Master Gardener you are leading the way in our neighborhoods, communities, and counties to share what we know and help others grow native plants that nurture, are heartier, and offer our biosphere the connectivity for all the flora and fauna to flourish.