

Stop the Spread

Practice Nature-friendly Gardening and Landscaping:

Choose your plants with care. Some attractive garden plants are invasive. Others may carry unwanted insects that can damage our natural ecosystems, forever. Reconsider importing plants from down south: consider local wild plants instead. Dispose of yard waste away from adjacent natural areas to prevent the spread of alien plants.

Stop Seeding Invaders: Request and use weed-free soil, hay, straw, mulch, and certified seeds. Research the source and species list of your seed mix. Consider local or northern seed sources for your reclamation work. Consider not seeding at all.

Clean Yourself At The Door: Clean your vehicles, boats, and outdoor equipment, including outdoor footwear, before entering the NWT or before using this equipment.

Report 'out-of-place' plants and insects: Look for new or out-of-place species and report them. Report large infestations of insects. Learn to identify invasive species and spread the word. Help stop the spread of invasive plants and insects in the NWT.

Contact us at:

NWTSOER@gov.nt.ca

Or

NWTBUGS@gov.nt.ca

Invaders in the Northwest Territories



The Northwest Territories has been lucky so far. In southern Canada, and elsewhere in the world, invasive plants and animals have become the second greatest threat to biodiversity after habitat loss. We should not be complacent. With changing climate and the potential for future industrial development disturbing habitats, invasive species of plants and animals have a higher than ever chance of becoming established in Northwest Territories. We can all help by learning more about these species and following simple steps to reduce their introduction and spread in our territory.

Invasive Alien Plants

Did you know?

There are 106 known **alien** plant species already established in the NWT, including 12 species that are considered **invasive** because they can invade and change natural habitats.

Invasive plants can cause a number of problems. They can attract wildlife along roads, resulting in more wildlife collisions. They can cause habitat damage and loss of native species including berries and medicinal plants. In other jurisdictions, including Europe and Russia, invasive plants and insects are causing economic losses and are very expensive to control once established over large areas.

Everyone can help:

Report 'out-of-place' plant species at

NWTSOER@gov.nt.ca

White and

Yellow Sweetclovers

(Melilotus alba and Melilotus officinalis)

These plant species are considered the most problematic in the NWT. They rapidly invade roadsides, streets, waste areas and any open well-drained soils, including some natural habitats such as the edges of rivers. These species were imported to North America as cattle feed. Each plant lasts only one or two years but a single plant can produce thousands of seeds and these can survive for

Yellow Sweetclover © GNWT/M.Oldham; see White Sweetclover on front cover



decades in the soil. Their sweet taste will attract some wildlife species. They can be found in almost all NWT communities and along all roadsides displacing our colourful Fireweed and making our roads less attractive. They are also found on winter road portages and have been reported on the shores of the Mackenzie River. They are already a serious problem in Yukon and Alaska.

Creeping Thistle

(*Cirsium arvense*)

Although sometimes called “Canada Thistle”, this species is not from Canada. It is from Europe, Asia or Africa. It is one of the most invasive plants in many jurisdictions in North America. So far this species has been reported near Fort Simpson, Hay River, Fort Providence and Yellowknife, and along highways in the southern NWT. This thistle is very prickly and people avoid areas where it is common, restricting recreational land use. It produces chemicals that suppress surrounding vegetation. It is difficult to eradicate once established but it can be done. Pull the plants, put them in a large plastic bag, and leave the bags under the hot sun to kill all seeds. Repeat this for many summers until the thistles no longer occur.



Creeping Thistle © T Lapina - image from Alaska

Awnless Brome

(*Bromus inermis*)

This grass was introduced from Eurasia to North America as a forage crop. This alien grass is present in the NWT on sandy river banks and islands of the Mackenzie River. This invasive species is cultivated, and found near roads and on waste places. It can persist for many years and spread to natural habitats. Elsewhere in North America, including neighbouring Alberta, this species of grass has invaded forest habitats, causing tree mortality. It forms extensive creeping rhizomes that can outcompete native plants for soil moisture and nutrients.



Awnless Bromes © GNWT/M Oldham

Invasive Alien Insects

Did you know?

There are 11 known alien insect species already established in the NWT. Most of these species have been noted in the NWT for more than 50 years but the exact extent of their distribution is unknown. Two of these alien species, the Larch Sawfly and the Amber-marked Birch Leafminer, are considered invasive and are monitored.

Larch Sawfly

(*Pristiphora erichsonii*)

The sawfly is from Europe and was first observed in Canada in 1882. It quickly spread to larch and tamarack forests across the US and Canada. It reached the North in the 1960s, and is now present in various densities across all forested ecozones in the NWT. This species is monitored in forested areas.



© University of Georgia (webpage)

Amber-marked Birch Leafminer

(*Profenusa thomsoni*)

This species, part of the sawfly family, was first noted in the NWT in 1994. By 2000 it became quite abundant in Hay River and Yellowknife and is now extending into surrounding wild birch stands, mostly along roads. It is also present in other areas in the South Slave region. It was accidentally introduced to Canada in 1948 from Europe. It turns trees brown in mid-summer and is of public concern for aesthetic reasons. In the future it may also affect large tracts of birches outside built-up areas, as is already happening in Alaska. This species, as well as another alien leafminer species present in the NWT (*Scolioneura betuleti*), is considered invasive and a pest to trembling aspens, alders and birch.



Arrows show the leafminers © T Arcand, Natural Resources Canada

Stop the Spread

Practice Nature-friendly Gardening and Landscaping

Look for and report “out-of-place” insects that may spread and do damage to our natural ecosystems.

For help to ID insects, contact NWTBUGS@gov.nt.ca