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H7071

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It is of utmost importance that Bill H 7071 be passed and then enforced in the state of Rhode Island. Having worked in horticulture for 20 years, I have firsthand experience of many kinds of plants and their growth habits. Invasive plants should not be sold in our state as they wreak havoc on our ecosystems in two important ways.

- (1) Invasive plants outcompete our native flora and choke out our native trees, flowers, and shrubs.
- (2) Invasive plants hurt our native fauna, who rely on our native plants and are often host-plant specific.

On a specific scale, the invasive plant Japanese barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*) is a host plant for rodents in the wintertime. It protects them and offers them habitat where they can evade predation. The particular habitat created within the Japanese barberry shrub allows white-footed mice to persist and carry ticks (source, <https://www.trincoll.edu/news/lyme-disease-toting-ticks-abundant-on-common-invasive-plant-new-study-finds/>). Lyme disease can be curbed by eliminating Japanese barberry in our backyards and in our wild areas. Stopping the sale of this harmful invasive plant is pivotal in preventing increasing cases of Lyme disease.

It is tempting for an average homeowner to think planting a shrub such as Japanese barberry is harmless. They do not see the seedlings that spread in the wild areas near their homes. I have walked many areas that are “wild buffer zones” only to see that they are made up solely of invasive plants. The next generations will have no idea what our native flora look like as there will be no examples left in the wild if invasive plants continue to be sold in our state.

I have walked the East Bay bike path many times over the years only to realize, as I gained my horticultural education, that it is lined with invasive plants. This is a direct result of allowing invasive plants to be sold to businesses and homeowners.

In my own backyard, one of the first changes we made was removing invasive plants and planting native plants instead. The resulting boon to native wildlife has been noticeable in just four years’ time. Not everyone can gain an education in horticulture and understand the repercussions of their plant choices. Instead, it is critical that Rhode Island nurseries no longer sell invasive plants to unassuming homeowners. We can do this. It is time that we help our ecosystem recover from years of damage from invasive plants.

Thank you.