

House Bill H7071

Sponsor: Representative Jennifer Boylan

Relating to Agriculture and Forestry- Protection of Trees and Plants generally- RI Invasive Plant Management Act

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In Support of House Bill H7071

Good afternoon,

I am writing in support of the RI Invasive Plant Management Act. Rhode Island needs legislative protections against the sales of aggressive invasive plants. Plants that escape garden habitats and landscaping environments can create devastating imbalances the ecosystem.

Our Connecticut and Massachusetts neighbors spend a great deal of resources getting rid of invasive plants from natural areas. Massachusetts passed a similar bill back in 2005.^{a,b} Because plants and animals do not know our human boundaries, the seeds from these destructive plants are dropped into other states as birds migrate and seeds blow on the breeze. Customers from those states may cross the border to purchase invasive plants and be none the wiser. We owe it to our neighbors, ecosystems and landscapes to prohibit the future sale of these aggressive growers.

As a local conservationist and gardener, I know first-hand how detrimental invasive plants can be to the native ecosystem. For years, I have battled mugwort and phragmites in an effort to make a diverse pollinator habitat at my place of work. Our local flora and fauna did not evolve to provide checks and balances to these plants. Asian Bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*) and multiflora rose (*Rosa multiflora*) cover our historic stone walls. The overabundance of white-tailed deer aids the spread of invasives. Deer do not have an appetite for Barberry (*Berberis thunbergia*) and Privet (*Ligustrum*) and thus it is allowed to dominate our forest understories, choking out native spice bush and winterberries. The repercussions of this are exponential. With more space going to these aggressive plants, our ecotypic plants cannot provide appropriate nectar, pollen, seeds or nuts for songbirds or native pollinators and other wildlife. Spotted Lanternfly is a perfect example of the ripple effect invasive plants can have. The host plant for the Spotted Lanternfly is the Tree of Heaven, a common roadside tree that does well in urban environments, but did not evolve here. These trees were a veritable buffet waiting for the arrival of the spotted lanternfly. Now the spotted lanternfly is adversely affecting our local agriculture; defoliating the vineyards and orchards of small businesses.^{c, d}

Invasive plants are easy to propagate, the deer do not eat them, and they sell well. I understand the industry's desire to have access to these types of plants. However, I think it is our moral and social responsibility to ensure that the biodiversity of Rhode Island is protected against the noxious and aggressive plants so that future generations can enjoy all that Rhode Island has to offer!

Therefore, I urge the committee to support H-7071 to prohibit the sales of invasive plants.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Katie Schortmann

Citations:

- a. [Massachusetts 2005 Prohibited Plants](#)
- b. [CT Invasive Plant List](#)
- c. [RI DEM Spotted Lanternfly](#)
- d. [Spotted Lantern Fly Agricultural Effects](#)