



## Who is that alien in your yard?

Invasive species such as the emerald ash borer and Asian carp get all the press, but just about everyone lives with far more common invasive species: trees.

A surprising number of the species of trees found in our streets and yards are considered to have invasive tendencies. Some are considered merely “weedy,” meaning that they send out sprouts nearby to a degree that requires control. Some are thought of as “aggressive,” meaning they reproduce more vigorously, crowding out other plants nearby. And truly “invasive” trees are the most serious threat.

An invasive species is a plant or animal species that, when it travels far from its native place, does harm to the local plants, animals, or communities elsewhere by infesting or outcompeting the plants and animals that belong there. Such a species can be non-native or native, though there still is some debate over labeling native species as invasive.

In Illinois, several tree species that can be found on just about every city or suburban block are considered highly aggressive, bordering on invasive. For example, black locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia*) is a common native tree that is considered invasive by many experts in Illinois and surrounding states.

Norway maple (*Acer platanoides*) is another species, once among the most commonly planted in the nation, that has become unpopular because it sends up so many seedlings. It is widely considered invasive.

More recently, Callery pear (*Pyrus Calleryana*) and its cultivars, such as ‘Bradford’ pear, have been under scrutiny as a possible invasive species. Increasingly, stands of these trees have been reported in open pastures and forest edges in natural areas, where such non-native trees can disrupt the natural ecosystems.

Much loved for its showy white spring flowers (despite an unlovely aroma) and valued for its compact habit, the Callery pear has been planted in countless yards, along streets, and in plazas and parks.

Unwittingly, our love and appreciation of these charming trees can endanger forest preserves and other natural areas.

When they were imported from Asia and planted in our landscapes, no one imagined that Callery pear and Norway maple would cause harm. But now we know they cause disruption and damage far from our home landscapes.

So what can you do? First, identify the trees and other plants that are growing on your property. The Morton Arboretum’s Plant Clinic can help you; see [mortonarb.org/plantadvice](http://mortonarb.org/plantadvice). Learn which are invasive,

using such resources as [invasive.org's](#), [Illinois invasive species list](#). If possible, remove any invasive shrubs and perennials and replant with plants that do not pose a threat.

Trees are harder to cope with immediately, but as they need to be planted or if mature trees must be removed, plant trees that will not be aggressive. Consider planting native species that are adapted to the local soils and climate and support birds and other wildlife.

As days begin to grow longer and the snow melts inviting us outside, get out there and make a difference in your yard. Spread the message to your community and neighbors about invasive species and learn more at one of the many invasive species events being held this May during [Illinois Invasive Species Awareness Month](#).

Remember, [invasive species affect everyone!](#)