

Sustainability

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What is an Invasive Species?



October 31, 2019 | Kaija Schlangen

No, we're not talking about aliens. Although they aren't from around here...

We have unfriendly intruders in Minnesota. They spread quickly, attack our environment and refuse to leave. The [Minnesota Department of Natural Resources](https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/invasives/index.html) (<https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/invasives/index.html>) defines invasive species as “species that are not native to Minnesota and cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health.” Invasive species spread and grow quickly and take over the habitats of local biodiversity.

“If we don't have strategies in place, the impact of invasive species will be

There are two kinds of invasive species, aquatic and terrestrial. Two common species that infest our bodies of water in Minnesota are zebra mussels and Eurasian watermilfoil. There are three easy steps you can take to prevent the spread of these invasive species when boating or fishing.

incredibly adverse for the natural systems.” -
Tim Bates

1. Check your boat and equipment for invasive species and wash them off before leaving the body of water. That prevents them from hitchhiking to the next lake or river your equipment visits.
2. Alongside cleaning your water equipment, make sure to drain anything that holds water from the lake or river you're visiting.
3. If fishing, throw your unused bait away. Throwing them into the body of water you're in is ILLEGAL.

Terrestrial invasive species spread over land and kill native trees habitats. Common buckthorn and emerald ash borer are two common terrestrial invasive species in Minnesota. To fight back against these intruders:

1. Buy firewood from a local source. This helps prevent the spread of invasive species that might be hiding in the wood.
2. Before and after hiking, check yourself and your gear for any seeds and mud.
3. For more tips specific to recreational activities, visit the [Department of Natural Resources' website](https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/invasives/terrestrial/prevent_the_spread.html) (https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/invasives/terrestrial/prevent_the_spread.html).

Invasive Art

UMD students from class ART 3305 Sustainability Studio: Theory & Practice revealed their artistic interpretation of invasive species at the Sustainability Fair in October. Their project, *Silent Invasion*, used common buckthorn as "eco-art" to educate about the danger invasive species pose to humankind and our habitats.



Student artist Gabby Helland says that before this project, "I had never even heard of buckthorn. That's why I think this piece is so important. It's something that needs to be talked about more. This piece really shows what a group can accomplish together."



Through this project, Mads Reineke adds: "We also hoped to prove just how much humans tend to separate themselves from the natural world, and how, by forcing an incredibly organic and threatening figure into a man-made space, we can hopefully force our audience to realize their intrinsic relation to, and responsibility to protect nature."

Invasive Species in your Backyard

Duluth and UMD's campus have been invaded by invasive species for decades. Alongside common buckthorn, here are a few others:

Tansy:



Japanese Knotweed:



Tim Bates, Associate Director of the Recreational Sports Outdoor Program (RSOP), helps organize against invasive species around campus, especially in Bagley Nature Center. Bates states that “invasives on campus are a big problem,” and that species like common buckthorn are overtaking Bagley’s forest and surrounding areas. Common buckthorn is thought to have originated from firewood that was transported north. Getting rid of these invasive species has been twenty years of hard work. While most of the buckthorn has been removed from Bagley, it’s not gone.

RSOP just hosted their annual buckthorn removal pull on October 8. Alongside this program’s efforts, some biology classes at UMD also work to eradicate invasive species around campus.

For Bates, it’s important that students are aware of the invasive species in their backyards. Invasive species programs on campus help students “understand impact and provide an educational experience and service learning, so that wherever they land in their lives, they’re more aware of their impact.”

Look out for more invasive species pulling on the [RSOP Outdoor Activities & Trips page](https://www.d.umn.edu/recreational-sports-outdoor-program/programs/outdoor-activities-and-trips) (<https://www.d.umn.edu/recreational-sports-outdoor-program/programs/outdoor-activities-and-trips>). Help fight back against these invaders. Before it’s too late...

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(<https://www.d.umn.edu/sustainability/news/invasive-species>)

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