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Problematic Garden Plants

On a hike through Floracliff, one can easily see the problem that certain invasive plants are causing, such as bush honeysuckle. However, there are other invasive plants that are showing up more often in our forest that are also popular garden plants. Two such plants are winged burning bush (*Euonymus alatus*) and Chinese privet (*Ligustrum sinense*). Both plants can often be seen used as hedge shrubs in Central Kentucky landscaping.

Burning bush, a conspicuous plant in the fall, turns bright red and has wings on the stem. It is native to eastern Asia. It grows well in a variety of soil types and pH levels, allowing it to become problematic in forests of Kentucky. It can create dense thickets, crowding out native species and is tolerant of full shade, allowing it to become established in mature forests. It has no serious pest problems.

Chinese privet, native to Asia, invades understories in wet areas of Kentucky forests. These semi-evergreen shrubs have smooth bark, opposite leaves, and dark purple berry-like fruits. Like the burning bush, Chinese privet is dispersed by animals, which makes them difficult to control. However, homeowners can help prevent the spread of these invasives by replacing them with native alternatives.

Some native alternatives that can replace both the burning bush and Chinese privet are: fragrant sumac (*Rhus aromatica*), spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*), bladdernut (*Staphylea trifolia*), blackhaw viburnum (*Viburnum prunifolium*), grey dogwood, (*Cornus racemosa*), and Carolina buckthorn (*Rhamnus caroliniana*).



Burning bush, above, and Chinese privet, below, are popular garden plants that have become invasive in Kentucky.



Photo credits: James H. Miller, USDA Forest Service, Bugwood.org

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Our Wish List

If you have any of the following items to donate, please contact Beverly James at 859-351-7770 or floracliff@aol.com. Thank you for your support!

- Laptop
- Tools
- Printer cartridges for Lexmark Z31
- Regional field guides
- Gift certificate to hardware or office supply store
- Birding binoculars
- Toilet tank lid



The nodding flower of the trout lily protects the pollen from rain.

**“Man belongs
to the earth,
rather than the
earth belonging
to man. And
man needs to fit
in.”**

**~Mary. E.
Wharton**



Male Eastern box turtles have red irises, like the one above. Females have brown irises.

Featured Species: White trout lily- *Erythronium albidum*

One of the first spring wildflowers to show up every year is the white trout lily, often arriving in late winter. The name “trout lily” was given to the plant because of its mottled leaves and its location near trout streams. However, it is also referred to as “adder’s tongue”, “fawn lily”, and “dog tooth violet”. They grow from corms 3-5 inches underground that spread by sending out offshoots. Because of this, trout lilies leaves can be seen in large patches in the forest, but not all plants will produce a flower. Flowering trout lilies have two leaves, where as non-flowering plants have one leaf.

The nodding flower of the trout lily stands about 5-10” above the ground. It measures about 1” across with six recurved tepals (3 petals and 3 sepals). The delicate stem of the flower makes it difficult for ants and other crawling insects to reach the nectar, leaving it for flying insects, such as flies and bees. Considered “living phosphorus sinks”, they also provide for other forest organisms. The roots take up phosphorus from heavy spring rains and transfer it to their leaves, which eventually feed the soil.

The trout lily has had various uses. Native Americans used the plant to induce vomiting and treated wounds with the leaves. A tea made from the plant was also used as a cure for hiccups and dropsy. Trout lilies have not been used just for medicinal purposes. The leaves are said to be edible when cooked, and have been eaten with butter.

Featured Species: Eastern Box Turtle- *Terrapene Carolina* By: Althea Wiggs

The Eastern box turtle is characterized by its high-domed carapace (top part of shell) of dark-brown or olive color and bright orange or yellow patterns. The males have red eyes with a concave plastron (bottom part of shell) and the females have yellowish-brown eyes with a flat plastron. They have a hinged plastron allowing for complete closure of their shells to ensure safety from predators. They are from seven (male) to eight (female) inches long. They live in open woodlands and meadows, often in the vicinity of water (they love baths) and live from forty to over one hundred years in the wild.

Eastern box turtle females can store sperm and lay eggs several years after mating. They dig nests on stormy evenings in summer and lay between two to twenty eggs in the fall. The eastern box turtle hibernates in winter in dead stumps and under old leaves. They are omnivorous and eat slugs, earthworms, wild berries, insects, mushrooms (even deadly ones!) and carrion (dead animals such as frogs and ducks). The scutes or scales of the turtle continue to grow throughout its life developing growth rings. They also repair and regenerate if damaged.

The biggest threats to the Eastern box turtle are human-induced problems, such as being hit by cars and removal from their natural habitats to be used as pets. Like many animals, they have a homing instinct that may cause them to live a life of un-settlement as they search for their original environment. Also, pesticides and other environmental pollutants, as well as encroaching development put the eastern box turtle population in danger.

Schedule of Events

All events require advance registration. Cost is \$4 per person or \$10.00 per family unless otherwise noted. Call 859-351-7770 to register or for more information.

Interpretive Hikes

Saturday, January 19th @ 1:00 p.m.: Winter Tree Identification

Warm up with a winter hike to Elk Lick Creek. Preserve Manager Beverly James will discuss how to identify trees by looking at their bark, buds, and leaf scars.

Saturday, February 16th @ 1:00 p.m.: Geo-scavenger hunt with Byron Brooks

If you are a fan of geocaching and own a GPS, this hike is for you. Byron Brooks from the Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission has designed this activity similar to a virtual geocache. It will be a great way to learn more about Floracliff and provide fun for the entire family. Prizes will be rewarded!

Saturday, March 15th @ 1:00 p.m.: Signs of Spring

Beverly James will lead this hike to hunt for early bloomers. Trout lilies and snow trilliums should be blooming to welcome those eager for Spring.

Saturday, March 22nd @ 1:00 p.m.: Wildflower Folklore

Celebrate the arrival of Spring and learn about how some of our most common wildflowers have been used for medicines, food, love charms, and more.

Saturday, March 29th @ 1:00 p.m.: Pollinators with Blake Newton

Join Blake Newton, UK Extension Specialist for 4H and Youth Entomology, for a program about pollinators and their relationships with the spring wildflowers.

Saturday, April 5th @ 1:00 p.m.: Wildflowers with Tara Littlefield

See the wildflowers at their peak on this hike led by botanist Tara Littlefield from the Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission.

Volunteer Days - free

January 5th @ 10:00 a.m.
February 2nd @ 10:00 a.m.

** Volunteer activities usually involve removing exotic plants from the preserve. This is part of an ongoing effort to protect our native species and we rely on the help of volunteers. Other activities may involve trail work or general maintenance. Please call ahead to register and receive more information. Tools and snacks will be provided.

Appointments

Private tours can be given to small groups interested in visiting Floracliff. Interested parties can call Beverly James at 859-351-7770 to schedule an appointment.

**THE MARY E.
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