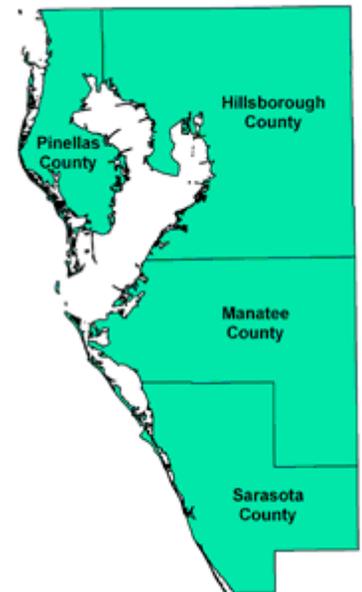


Investigating Invasive Species

This factsheet provides basic information necessary to help identify and manage invasive plant species posing a threat to the **Suncoast Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (CISMA)** which includes: Pinellas, Hillsborough, Manatee and Sarasota counties.



What is an invasive species?

Invasive species are species that are not native to the ecosystem under consideration and whose presence causes or is likely to cause harm to the environment, ecosystem, or human health.¹

What is being done about invasive species locally?

The first line of defense against invasive species is to prevent their introduction. Much of this is directed by state and federal laws as well as best management practices for industrial, commercial and recreational practices. There are also public awareness campaigns to help educate people about invasive species and their associated reporting and management strategies. The **Florida Invasive Species Partnership (FISP)** supports CISMAs throughout the state and the mission of the Suncoast CISMA is “to address the threat to native diversity...by coordinating and increasing efforts to eliminate or reduce invasive, non-native plants and animals across public and private boundaries.” The Suncoast CISMA hosts Work Days for invasive species removal/treatment and educational programs focused on invasive species of particular threat to the area. The second line of defense against invasive species is called Early Detection and Rapid Response (EDRR). EDRR increases the likelihood of invasive species being located, contained, and removed before they become “established” or are able to reproduce successfully outside of their natural range. Some common established invasive plants in Florida include: Brazilian pepper-tree, Melaleuca tree, and Australian pine tree. Many land managers spend a significant amount of time and money on the control of these established species. EDRR’s goal is to prevent any new invasive species from becoming established. Below is a list of EDRR plant species identified for the Suncoast CISMA. Pay particular attention to the scientific name before taking action to eradicate a species; common names apply to many species:

¹ United States Department of Agriculture National Agricultural Library – National Invasive Species Information Center (<http://www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov/whatis.shtml>)

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Common Name	Scientific Name
Earleaf Acacia	<i>Acacia auriculiformis</i>
Sisal Hemp	<i>Agave sisalana</i>
Giant Taro	<i>Alocasia macrorrhizos</i>
Coral Vine	<i>Antigonon leptopus</i>
Giant Reed	<i>Arundo donax</i>
Scarlet Milkweed	<i>Asclepias curassavica</i>
Wax Begonia	<i>Begonia Cucullata</i>
Javanese Bishopwood	<i>Bischofia javanica</i>
Dayflowering Jessamine	<i>Cestrum diurnum</i>
Stickbush	<i>Clerodendrum chinense</i>
Ivy Gourd	<i>Coccinia grandis</i>
Rubber Vine	<i>Cryptostegia madagascariensis</i>
Foxtail Flatsedge	<i>Cyperus alopecuroides</i>
Indian Rosewood	<i>Dalbergia sissoo</i>
Cerulean Flaxlily	<i>Dianella ensifolia</i>
Pothos	<i>Epipremnum pinnatum</i>
Jasmine	<i>Jasminum fluminense</i>
Cathedral Bells	<i>Kalanchoe pinnata</i>
Flamegold	<i>Koelreuteria elegans ssp. formosana</i>
Spanish Arborvine	<i>Merremia tuberosa</i>
Burma Reed	<i>Neyraudia reynaudiana</i>
Green Fountaingrass	<i>Pennisetum setaceum</i>
Dogstongue	<i>Pseudelephantopus spicatus</i>
Mexican Petunia, Mexican Bluebell	<i>Ruellia simplex</i>
Candlestick Plant	<i>Senna alata</i>
Valamuerto	<i>Senna pendula</i>
Susumber, Turkey Berry	<i>Solanum torvum</i>
Java Plum, Jambolan	<i>Syzygium cumini</i>
Australian Almond	<i>Terminalia muelleri</i>
Seaside Mahoe	<i>Thespesia populnea</i>
Burrnut	<i>Tribulus cistoides</i>



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The Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI) has put together specific factsheets for each of the species listed above, plus many more: <http://www.fnai.org/InvasivesInfoPages.cfm>. The FNAI factsheets (PDF handout) discuss the following:

- **FLEPPC Category** – The Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council’s (FLEPPC) mission is to “support the management of invasive exotic plants in Florida’s natural areas by providing a forum for the exchange of scientific, educational and technical information.” Part of this mission includes the output of a list of invasive species found in the state. Professional botanists and others study plants to determine which plants should be placed on the list. The list is divided into the following categories:
 - **Category I** invasive exotics are when the plants alter native plant communities by displacing native species, changing community structures or ecological functions, or hybridizing with natives; these are the “established” invasive exotics.
 - **Category II** invasive exotics have increased in abundance or frequency but have not yet altered Florida plant communities to the extent shown by **Category I** invasives.
- **FDACS Listed Noxious weed** – The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) supports and promotes Florida agriculture, protects the environment, safeguards consumers, and ensures the safety and wholesomeness of food. A **noxious weed** is a plant or its associated parts which may pose a serious threat to Florida agriculture, disrupt naturally occurring plant communities, or negatively impacts plants protected under the “Preservation of native flora of Florida” state statute (581.185, F.S.)
- **IFAS Assessment** – developed for UF/IFAS Extension faculty to provide consistent recommendations concerning the use of non-native plants. Species researched as part of the IFAS Assessment are evaluated on their ecological impacts, potential for expanded distribution, management difficulty, and economic value. Based on this evaluation, conclusions are made on the status of the species:

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- **“OK”** - not considered a problem species at this time and may be recommended by IFAS faculty (reassess 10 years from initial classification)
 - **“CAUTION”** – may be recommended by IFAS faculty but should be managed to prevent escape (reassess 2 years from initial classification)
 - **“INVASIVE”** - not recommended by IFAS faculty
 - **“PROHIBITED”** – a species which is already prohibited by state or federal laws and thus cannot be recommended for use
- **Note:** Species that have not yet been assessed are not considered a problem species at this time and may be recommended by IFAS faculty.



- **USDA Hardiness Zone** – The **United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)** hardiness zone tells farmers and gardeners what plants are likely to successfully grow in specific geographical areas.

The FNAI factsheets also include information on: growth habit, origin, plant description, habitat, date of introduction to Florida, control methods and additional resources.

What can I do to help?

1. Join your local CISMA
2. Become a citizen scientist by learning how you can report invasive species online or through a smartphone app using the [Early Detection & Distribution Mapping System \(EDDMapsS\)](#)
3. Share what you have learned with a neighbor or friend!

Whether a gardener, naturalist, or concerned citizen, this factsheet hopes to raise awareness of local efforts to manage and report invasive species as well as aid in the identification of invasive species posing a threat to Pinellas, Hillsborough, Manatee and Sarasota counties. Should you have any questions, please contact your local UF/IFAS Extension office.

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