

## A Trail Guide to Invasive Plants in Lincoln Park

by the Invasive Species Task Force of the  
Lexington Conservation Stewardship Program

The Lincoln Park walking path contains examples of seven species of **invasive plants** that are common in Lexington. Beginning at the Middleby Road intersection, match the following descriptions with the tagged examples along the trail. If you learn to recognize the tagged plants you will be able to find other examples throughout Lincoln Park and in Lexington's many conservation areas. You may find these plants growing on your own property! Eliminating them from your yard will help limit their spread to our public lands.

1. **Japanese Knotweed** (*Polygonum cuspidatum*)  
**Origin:** East Asia  
**Characteristics:** **plant** with dense clusters of shoots up to 10' in height with smooth stems like bamboo and broad, smooth, heart-shaped leaves. Plumes of tiny, creamy white flowers in late summer. Tough root system is difficult to eradicate. Root parts must be carefully disposed of—they readily re-generate.
2. **Norway Maple** (*Acer platanoides*)  
**Origin:** Europe and Eurasia  
**Characteristics:** a common street **tree** that invades woodlands. Green or bronze leaves appear in early spring and remain late into the fall, creating dense shade that

inhibits understory plants. Smooth bark and classic maple leaf shape. Young twigs show a milky sap when broken. Produces large numbers of winged seeds. Seedlings and saplings may be uprooted, larger trees can be cut down.

3. **Multiflora Rose** (*Rosa multiflora*)  
**Origin:** East Asia  
**Characteristics:** **shrub** with arching, rambling, prickly stems up to 10'-15' high. Covered with small, fragrant white blossoms in late spring, small red rosehips in late summer and fall. Seeds consumed by birds are spread widely. Forms dense stands, sometimes growing high into trees. Can be controlled by cutting back, but must be uprooted to be eradicated.
4. **Asian Bittersweet** (*Celastrus orbiculatus*)  
**Origin:** Asia  
**Characteristics:** climbing woody **vine** with small, roundish or oval leaves and orange roots. Clusters of flowers in summer lead to striking orange berries in fall. Berries are readily eaten by many birds that distribute the seeds widely. The vines can smother and strangle mature trees, with the weight of the vines snapping branches and trunks of host trees. (Bittersweet vines have brought down several trees along this path.) Vines can be cut, but eradication requires uprooting or herbicide treatment of cut stems. Roots left in soil will frequently re-sprout.

5. **Japanese Barberry** (*Berberis thunbergii*)  
**Origin:** Japan  
**Characteristics:** small or medium-sized **shrub** with many small leaves covering thorny branches. Tiny yellow flowers hang beneath the branches in spring; many small red berries in summer and fall. Forms dense stands, spreading from the roots as well as by bird-dispersed seeds. Must be uprooted to be eradicated.
6. **Winged Euonymus, or Burning Bush** (*Euonymus alatus*)  
**Origin:** Northeastern Asia to Central China  
**Characteristics:** a common ornamental **shrub**, 5-10' high with corky brown "wings" along the branches. Leaves turn brilliant red in fall. Many bright red berries in fall are dispersed by birds. Forms dense thickets. Young plants may be cut or mowed, older shrubs must be uprooted.
7. **Common Buckthorn** (*Rhamnus cathartica*)  
**Origin:** Europe and Asia  
**Characteristics:** large **shrub** or small **tree**. Produces abundant small berries turning black in fall. Tips of twigs often end in a small thorn. Forms dense thickets that exclude other plants. A similar species, Glossy Buckthorn (*Frangula alnus*), is often found in Lexington as well. Both species are invasive.

## About Invasive Plants

**What are “invasive” plants?** Invasive plants are plants *not native* to the New England ecosystem. They have been brought to North America mostly from other continents, either accidentally or purposely for agricultural or ornamental use, and have become widespread in our natural environment. Invasive plants have the ability to grow rapidly, mature, and spread here in the absence of the insects and diseases that would control their growth in their native environment. These plants have come to dominate many areas in Lexington because they shade or crowd out our native plants. Native plants are the foundation of our ecosystem, supporting insects, birds, and other wildlife.

**Are all alien plants “invasive”?** No. There are thousands of non-native garden plants and agricultural plants that are not capable of invading our natural areas and can grow here only in managed environments like gardens or farms. While these plants may not have any particular benefit for our ecosystem, they are not considered dangerous, because they do not spread rampantly.

## How can we control invasive plants?

Management of invasive plants is very important, but can be challenging. There are specific methods for eradicating or controlling each species. Techniques usually involve cutting, pulling, or uprooting, and may include careful disposal of plant parts. For detailed information on eradication consult such websites as <http://www.newenglandwild.org/consERVE/controlling-invasives>, or e-mail the Lexington Conservation Stewards at [landstewards@lexingtonma.gov](mailto:landstewards@lexingtonma.gov).

**NOTE:** *Some invasive plants may require the use of a chemical herbicide to get their populations under control. In Lexington, chemical herbicides are used on conservation land only as a last resort after hand pulling and mechanical management have shown to be ineffective. All herbicides must be applied by licensed applicators as directed by the Lexington Conservation Commission. Herbicides are strictly controlled near wetlands, streams, and other resource areas. Check with the Lexington Conservation Division before applying any herbicides if your property falls within a protected resource area.*

## Learn More About Invasive Plants

The [Massachusetts Invasive Plant Advisory Group \(MIPAG\)](http://www.massnrc.org/mipag/invasive.htm), which advises the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, has identified 35 “invasive” and 31 “likely invasive” plants in our state. Many of these plants can be found in Lexington. See the complete list at <http://www.massnrc.org/mipag/invasive.htm>

The [Invasive Plant Atlas of New England](https://www.eddmaps.org/ipane/Species/), found at <https://www.eddmaps.org/ipane/Species/>, gives a great deal of information about every invasive.

[Citizens for Lexington Conservation](http://www.clclex.org) is a non-profit organization of Lexington residents concerned about protecting our public lands. The CLC regularly holds informative walks and offers volunteer opportunities to help manage invasive species in Lexington. Check the CLC’s website for more details: <http://www.clclex.org>.

[Lexington Conservation Stewards](http://www.lexingtonma.gov/conservation/pages/lexington-conservation-stewards) are a group of volunteers who work closely with the Conservation Division of Town government to manage the conservation land in Lexington. The stewards’ activities can be viewed on the Town website, at <http://www.lexingtonma.gov/conservation/pages/lexington-conservation-stewards>.

## Want to Volunteer?

Citizens For Lexington Conservation:  
<http://www.clclex.org>

Lexington Conservation Stewards:  
<http://www.lexingtonma.gov/conservation/webforms/conservation-steward-membership-form>

Lexington Conservation Division:  
E-Mail: [landstewards@lexingtonma.gov](mailto:landstewards@lexingtonma.gov)

