

Invasive plant species listed

in comprehensive database

“WeedUS,” a database of alien, invasive plant species affecting national parks and other natural area ecosystems of the United States, may be the most comprehensive information source of its kind. As of December 2006, this online resource had listed more than 1,000 aquatic and terrestrial species—with more being added as their native origin, natural range, taxonomic status, and other information are confirmed. It is available in Web format and as a spreadsheet that can be downloaded.

The database is part of the Weeds Gone Wild Web site (<http://www.nps.gov/plants/alien/>, click on “invasive plants list,” then see “WeedUS Plant List”) and a product of the Plant Conservation Alliance’s Alien Plant Working Group. The National Park Service and nine other federal agencies collaborate formally in the group with the support of more than 200 nonfederal cooperators, including state and local resource management agencies, exotic pest plant councils, The Nature Conservancy, and universities.

In order to be listed in the database, a plant species must be documented in a “natural area,” which generally excludes intensively managed lands such as croplands and forestry plantations. Additionally, the species must be confirmed as exotic, established, self-reproducing, spreading, and exhibiting such invasive behavior as causing harm to native species, habitats, natural features, or ecological processes.

Each record in the database lists the genus; species; author; synonyms (selected); common name; family; plant habit(s); native origin; U.S. nativity; states, national parks,

and regions where invasive; federal noxious weed status; and source references for a species, as known. For consistency, taxonomy follows John Kartesz's *Synthesis of North American Flora* (1999).

Information for WeedUS is derived from a wide variety of sources: publications, reports, surveys, and observations and expert opinions of botanists, ecologists, invasive species specialists, and other natural resource management professionals. Information about species living on national park lands was obtained through an e-mail survey of about 60 national parks. The database was started in 1997 and has been available online as an abbreviated plant list since 1999. The entire database went online in June 2006. It is continuously peer reviewed and updated. In 2007, we plan to partner with the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center to add several new features to the database and Web site.

Applications of the information are far-reaching and include (1) corroboration of species as invasive, (2) mapping of state and regional invasive plant occurrences, (3) identification of areas with high invasive potential, (4) identification of possible gaps in distributional information, (5) prediction of potential spread, and (6) identification of plant families with high numbers of invasives.

In addition to the database, the Web site also features fact sheets on 60 of the invasive plant species, related articles and publications, a wall calendar (for downloading and printing), and more.

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