

Law updated on invasive plants

After years of campaigning from Plantlife, the law surrounding invasive non-native plants in England and Wales has been updated this year. Anyone who plants or 'otherwise causes to grow' in the wild the 50 or so plants now listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act will be committing an offence.

Previously just Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*), giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*) and a number of seaweeds were listed. Now, many popular garden and pond plants are listed including rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum* and *R. ponticum* x *R. maximum*), Japanese rose, several species of cotoneaster and the ubiquitous 'oxygenating' waterweeds (all species of the *Elodea* genus and *Lagarosiphon major*). A full list of plants affected by the legislation is on the Plantlife website.

To date, the law does not prohibit growing these plants in your garden but no gardener will be able to prevent the wind and birds from carrying seeds from gardens into the wild, and it is not clear how natural seed dispersal will be interpreted by law. Our guide, *Gardening without harmful invasive plants*, enclosed with the last issue of *Plantlife* magazine, demonstrates that for every invasive plant we might grow, there are safer alternatives. If you would like a copy for a friend please call 01722 342755.

The updating of Schedule 9 is the first step towards reducing the threat from invasive non-native plants to our indigenous plants and habitats. Now we await a ban on the sale of a small set of highly invasive plants - a crucial piece of legislation that we believe will benefit plant conservation. Plantlife continues to call for a ban on the sale of the worst offenders.

