

**Recommended Voluntary Guidelines
Aquatic Horticulture Industry**

RIDNIS Phase II

**Reducing the Introduction and Distribution
of Non-Native Invasive Species**

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Recommended Voluntary Guidelines for the Aquatic Horticulture Industry

General Guidelines for Horticulture Industry and Public Horticulture Institutions

- Project an image of responsibility and concern about invasive species—customer trust and loyalty are important
- Keep the messages about invasive plants positive
- Focus on the places where the largest number of customers can be reached such as the point of purchase
- Make available the “Don’t Plant a Pest” brochure currently being developed by CAL-IPC (California Invasive Plant Council)
- Provide plant care sheets on plants that can be a problem and recommend suggestions for alternatives (e.g. CAL-IPC list)
- Add information about potential invasiveness and the proper disposal message on each care sheet.
- Provide invasive species collection and disposal sites
- Provide a bin for people to dispose of pond waste where plants can’t escape
- Attend meetings to keep current on invasive species and put in your thoughts and suggestions
- Explain impacts of invasive species and economic costs to customers
- Become involved with local schools to create collection programs for unwanted aquatic plants
- Botanical gardens, master gardeners, landscape architects and others need to write articles for publications like Home and Garden, Sunset, HGTV, etc, Water Garden News, Water Garden Magazine to educate the public
- Industry and public gardens need to partner with CAL-IPC (California Invasive Plant Council), PPIPIH (Partnership for Preventing Invasive Plant Introductions through Horticulture), CNPS (California Native Plant Society) and other organizations to focus on California Heritage.
- Educational role of botanical gardens needs to be increased
- Change the industry perspective of the term “non-native” plants by referring to problem plants as “invasive”
- Communicate that some native plants can be invasive too, like cattails and *Elodea Canadensis*.
- Industry should focus providing plant alternatives that are “non-invasive” or “California friendly”
- Have reference books like the Weed ID handbook by Berkeley Press available on site for customers and staff
- Partner with Habitattitude program partners USFWS (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), PIJAC (Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council) and National Sea Grant College Program which is helping to market their “Don’t Release” message

Guidelines for Staff and Customer Communication

- Provide customers with information about how to dispose of unwanted plants
- Help customers make more informed choices
- Train staff to improve customer relations
- Encourage staff to help communicate information on plant tags, which customers don't often read
- Discuss with nursery staff methods to verbally educate customers
- Encourage participation with "Certification" training for retail staff or others who work with customers
- Make available on-line versions of certification tests
- Improve certification tests that are currently available
- Increase level of detail on current on-line courses
- Improve plant identification aspects of certification courses
- California Certified Nursery Professionals need to take continuing education units regarding new invasive species issues

Guidelines for Installation of Pond Kits and Backyard Ponds

- Develop better plant choices in backyard water garden "kits", which may be the basis for majority of first time water gardens
- Provide information with backyard kits, since many are impulse buys and may not involve much interaction with nursery staff
- Provide information about which plants are likely to outgrow containers or pots and thus warrant disposal
- Provide cautionary information regarding improper disposal of unwanted or presumed dead potentially invasive plants
- Provide information about how to create a contained site for backyard ponds and water gardens
- Make sure customers have ponds protected from storms and flooding events
- Make sure customers protect ponds from raccoons (big problem in Bay Area) and other animals that can act as consumers and possible seed vectors

Guidelines Regarding Obstacles to Cooperation

- Aquatic plants aren't a big enough part of business to merit investment in employee training
- Nurseries already have a lot of problems such as sudden oak death, glassy-winged sharp shooter, etc.
- Overall awareness of problems associated with invasive aquatic plants is low
- Large suppliers are going to be the easiest to encourage participation with education programs, Monrovia, etc.,
- Small businesses are much less likely to participate because of perceived obstacles

- Low awareness of opportunities provided by developing a market California friendly plants
- Need other options for disposal of very hardy plants– putting in a “green” bin often isn’t good enough
- Some nurseries don’t have the capacity to hold additional alternatives to submerged plants (requires circulating water)
- Many native species (e.g. wetland) bloom late in the season (late summer and fall), which may not be desirable for gardens
- Lack of sufficient availability of many California friendly aquatic plants limits their use in the nursery trade
- Suppliers are constrained by what’s available and many plants that may be alternatives to invasive species are expensive
- There is consumer confusion and frustration about this issue and many customers will buy whatever is available
- There are not many new cultivars coming into the trade
- Currently there are very few displays utilizing California natives
- Displays are important in order to allure customers to buy California natives