



Removing Invasive Plants at Coastal Cleanup Day

Coastal Cleanup Day provides a wonderful opportunity for the public to visit and beautify the natural areas near their homes. While most trash may be obvious to the Cleanup Day volunteer, invasive plant life is a growing source of trash threatening wildlife habitat in California. Removing invasive plants at Coastal Cleanup Day allows you to provide additional work for your volunteers, educate them to an important environmental issue, and begin the process of restoring wildlife habitat.

Invasive plants have been introduced from other parts of the world. Indeed, many introduced (or “non-native”) plants are not threats to our environment in California. However, some species that we consider “invasive” grow aggressively in their new home without any method of natural control as they might have in the original home. These invasive plants may have been brought to California on purpose as ornamental plants and sources of food or they may have arrived accidentally such as in the ballast of ships or as seeds hiding in hay bales. Whatever the cause of their arrival, their presence in our local environments means reduced (and sometimes decimated) wildlife habitat. While many native wildlife species have evolved over thousands of years to inhabit specific habitats, the introduction of one invasive plant could disrupt that relationship in a matter of a few years. While you remove trash at your cleanup left behind by humans, you might consider removing this other source of biological pollution: invasive plants. For more information about invasive plants and to discover problem species in your area, please visit the California Invasive Plant Council at www.cal-ipc.org.

The checklist below was originally presented at the 2009 California Coastal Commission’s Coastal Cleanup Day Coordinator’s Conference in Pacific Grove, California. This information is for education only and does not provide the reader license to remove any plants without permission. Please obtain permission from the landowner or land manager prior to any fieldwork. For more information, please contact Matt Yurko at 949-640-0286 or myurko@coastal.ca.gov.

“Must Have” Checklist for Removing Invasive Plants on Coastal Cleanup Day

- **Have on hand a local plant expert who can positively identify native and non-native plants**
 - **This person must be present for the entire event.**
 - **Have more than one plant expert if the removal site is too large for one person to cover**
- Permission to be on site and remove plants
 - Have physical documentation from land owner/manager
 - The land owning agency may have signs posted on the edge of their property to help you determine who to contact for permission. If it is unclear, ask a neighbor of the area who they believe owns the space. Whether it is an agency or an individual landowner, you may need to educate them of the problem of invasive plants. Visit www.cal-ipc.org for more information on invasive plants.

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- Have a removal plan based on the plant species to be removed:
 - plan will include what tools are necessary, safety protocols, and a decision on what to do with plant material once removed. One resource for planning and removal methods is “Digging In: A Guide to Community-Based Habitat Restoration”, which can be viewed and downloaded for free here: www.coastal.ca.gov/publiced/UNBweb/diggingin.html
- What do I do with the removed plant material?
 - Dumpsters, trash bags, tarps can all be used to take material off site; or leave material in piles to decompose (preferably if the plants are not flowering or seeding)
 - Make a plan to use personal vehicles if necessary to take material to predetermined green waste dump or other dumpster (with permission to dump); be aware that you will need directions to the dump for drivers and may need cash to dispose of plant material in a green waste facility.
 - If you are not sure what to do, consult the land owner/manager to determine what they do with excess plant material.
- Have available heavy-duty gloves; invasive plants can be prickly!
- Have a future plan for planting native plants or other ecological restoration plan (it may be “passive” restoration: leaving the site so that habitat returns on its own)
 - Again, consult with land owner/manager **before removal** to determine next steps after invasive plant removal
- Obtain necessary tools for removal (have enough for all volunteers)
- Address safety in planning and with volunteers (very important!)

Tips!

- Identify a work site that is easily accessible and homogeneous with invasive plants (to reduce opportunity of a native plant being trampled or removed accidentally by volunteers)
- Be identifiable to volunteers and to public as the leader of the event
- Spend time educating volunteers about invasive plants and why they are a problem
- Provide clear, overwhelmingly detailed instructions for removal and disposal (volunteers will copy exactly what you show them to do)
- Provide clear safety instructions in all cases, but especially when using tools
- Be available when the volunteers begin working to encourage good removal techniques, correct improper techniques, identify plants and answer other questions

Resources:

- California Invasive Plant Council: www.cal-ipc.org
- California Society for Ecological Restoration: www.secal.org
- Digging In: A Guide to Community-Based Habitat Restoration*: www.coastal.ca.gov/publiced/UNBweb/diggingin.html