

Dispose with Care

Invasive Plant Disposal in BC

Background

There are many different invasive plant species present in British Columbia. Many of these species cannot be fully destroyed through composting, so they need to be disposed of in other ways. This factsheet will provide you with the information you need to safely and effectively dispose of invasive plants and stop their spread.

What is an invasive species?

The term “invasive species” is any non-native organism that causes environmental, economic or social harm and can spread quickly to new areas. Invasive species, including plants, can out-compete native species, including vegetation, altering ecosystems and impacting biodiversity. The economic impacts of invasive plants are a combination of the loss in resource productivity and increased management costs to control further introduction and spread. Invasive plants can also increase fire risks, pose health hazards and impact the values of recreational areas.



What can you do?

Prevention is essential in controlling further introduction and spread of invasive plants throughout the province. Improper disposal is a major pathway of introduction, as invasive plants are often disposed of in ways that allow their seeds or plant parts to be dispersed. Dumping green waste, which includes plant waste from yards, parks and other recreational areas, in areas such as parks and forests, is one of the leading ways in which invasive plants spread. Invasive plants are highly adaptable and easily move into to new areas by seed or vegetative fragment dispersal. It is extremely important that responsible invasive plant disposal is common practice. **In order to practice safe and responsible disposal methods, residents should contact their local municipalities to find out what disposal options and programs are available to them.**



Disposal Options

There are three main disposal options available for invasive plants: land filling, incineration or high-heat composting. Disposal must be planned carefully based on what facilities, programs and options are available locally. Generally, the safest way to dispose of invasive plant material is by bagging plant material and disposing at a landfill or incineration station. Due to large invasive plant populations and resulting high quantity of green waste in some regions, bagging and burying at a landfill may not be the most environmentally-friendly option. Composting facilities may not reach high enough temperatures to inactivate certain invasive plant material, such as seeds. Knotweeds (*Persicaria wallichii* and *Reynoutria* spp.) and hawkweeds (*Hieracium*

spp.) are two groups of invasive plants that are able to survive high compost temperatures. For this reason, it is extremely important these species are disposed of properly through incineration or disposal in landfill. Disposal of invasive plant material in landfill sites is common as many local municipalities do not have access to incinerators or high heat composting stations.

Since disposal is dependent on the local waste facilities that are available within each region, **the public is encouraged to learn more about invasive plants in their area, and the different disposal options that may be available to them.** The answer lies with municipal programs and facilities. The following table explores the advantages and disadvantages of each disposal option to help you make an informed decision for disposal based on the local options that are available.

Table 1. Disposal options for green waste in BC.

Disposal Method	Pros	Cons
<p>Landfilling (clearly label “invasive plants” on bags that go to landfill)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Special precautions must be taken to ensure separate burial from other waste and that plastic bags are not torn at landfills that dispose invasive plants » Good option for disposing of small volumes of invasive plant material 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Disposal fees may apply » Takes up space in landfill » Contributes to greenhouse gas emissions » Increases plastic in landfills
<p>Burial (Private Land)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Minimizes movement of plant material » Limits potential spread of invasive materials during transport » Cost-effective » Easy » Quick 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Herbicide-treated plants or plastic barriers can leach chemicals into groundwater. Recommend consulting an environmental professional prior to burying invasive species » Only available to private land owners » Machinery required for proper burial is costly » Can impact/affect development potential of site » Specific burial requirements for different species » Increases plastic in the ground (if bags or barrier membranes used) » Alters soil chemistry and quality
<p>Industrial Incineration</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Relatively safe for most invasive plants (with the exception of knotweed or hawkweeds) » Does not take up space in a landfill » Contained, commercial incineration will effectively destroy these species; home burning likely will not 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Not always available » Uses resources (fuel, electricity) to burn » Source of greenhouse gas emissions
<p>Composting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Environmentally-friendly » For specific invasive plants, seeds are rendered non-viable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Not guaranteed for all invasive plant species that reproductive parts will be rendered non-viable

Overall Message

Find out where waste is taken in your municipality and/or regional district and make a responsible decision for invasive plant disposal based on your available options. Many municipalities have recycling programs specifically for green waste, so it’s always best to check with them first.

Contacts

Contact your regional district, municipality or regional invasive species organization to find out about your options:

<https://bcinvasives.ca/about/our-networks/>



Sea to Sky Invasive Species Council

The Top Tips for Invasive Plant Removal and Disposal

1. Find out how green waste is disposed of at your local facility
2. Always remove seed heads after flowering to avoid involuntary seed dispersal
3. Consider how the invasive plant grows (tubers, fragments, and seeds) and remove all reproductive parts
4. NEVER compost invasive plants in your backyard composter or home composting system
5. NEVER compost invasive plants unless the municipal composting facility is specifically equipped to dispose of invasive plants (holds material at 55°C for 15 days)
6. Bag and label plant material in heavy plastic bag before sending to landfill or incinerator
7. NEVER dump green waste illegally!
8. Make sure green waste is securely covered during transportation
9. Support local government disposal programs
Example: Some municipalities participate in programs where residents can pay a fee for pick-up of invasive plants through safe disposal programs
10. Be PlantWise and know what you grow – read plant labels before you buy and ensure you purchase non-invasive plants
11. Grow Me Instead – AVOID disposing invasive plants altogether by purchasing and planting non-invasive plant alternatives

References/Links

PlantWise is a provincial program that supports the ornamental horticulture industry’s transition to become invasive-free, and is helping gardeners and industry understand which plants are invasive and harmful to our communities, and to make ‘PlantWise’ choices. <https://bcinvasives.ca/play-your-part/plantwise/>

“Grow Me Instead” profiles BC’s most unwanted ornamental horticulture plants and provides safe, invasive-free alternatives. <https://bcinvasives.ca/resources/publications/grow-me-instead-booklet>

ISCBC Best Management Practices for Soil Movement and Disposal. https://bcinvasives.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/ISCBC-Soil-BMP-180926_Final_web.pdf

BC Weed Control Act. https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/10_66_85; https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/10_66_85#ScheduleA



Additional Contact Info