



Invasive Species  
Council of BC

**FACTSHEET**  
FEBRUARY 2023

# Dispose with Care Invasive Plant Disposal in BC



## Background

The intentional dumping of green waste in areas such as parks and forests is a leading cause of invasive plant spread. Although at-home or municipal composting may seem like an effective and eco-friendly alternative method of disposing unwanted plant material, there are many invasive plant species in British Columbia that cannot be destroyed through composting and can be unintentionally spread this way. This factsheet includes all the information you need to safely and effectively dispose of invasive plants to prevent their spread.

## What are invasive species?

An invasive plant is any non-native plant that causes environmental, economic, or social harm and spreads quickly to new areas. Invasive plants can out-compete native species, altering ecosystems and impacting biodiversity. Invasive

plants have economic impacts as well, including the loss of resource productivity and increased management costs to control further introduction and spread. Invasive plants can also increase risk of fire, pose health hazards to humans and non-human animals, and negatively impact the quality and enjoyment of recreational and natural spaces.

## 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 – including illegal dumping or composting. Before attempting to dispose of green waste containing invasive plants, **residents should contact their local municipalities to find out what disposal options and programs are available to them.**





## Disposal Options

The three main effective disposal options for invasive plants are landfilling, incinerating, or high-heat composting. Access to these options varies by location. Generally, the ‘safest’ ways to dispose of invasive plant material is by securely bagging and disposing of at a landfill or incineration station, as composting facilities may not reach high enough temperatures to inactivate certain invasive plant material. Knotweeds (*Persicaria wallichii* and *Reynoutria* spp.) and hawkweeds (*Hieracium* spp.) are two groups of invasive plants that can survive high compost temperatures. For this reason, it is extremely important these species are disposed of through either complete incineration or landfilling.

Since disposal is dependent on the local waste facilities that are available within each region, **you should learn about invasive plants in their area and the different disposal options available to you through your local municipality or regional district.**

The following table explores the advantages and disadvantages of each disposal option to help you make an informed decision for disposal if you have access to multiple options where you are located.



**Table 1. Disposal options for green waste in BC.**

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

## Summary

**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](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); [https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/10\\_66\\_85#ScheduleA](https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/10_66_85#ScheduleA)



Additional Contact Info