

# Weed Wise

## Gardening in Alberta

A GARDENER'S GUIDE TO  
NON-INVASIVE PLANTS



www.invasiveplants.ab.ca

## Are you Weed Wise?

No gardener in Alberta knowingly plants invasive plants. Having deep respect for the natural environment, they are diligent to keep their gardens weed-free – going to great lengths, and expense, to “weed” any pesky plants out.



The best known invasive plant is likely the dandelion. Originally from Eurasia and cultivated for a variety of medicinal purposes, it arrived in North America with the earliest settlers. Today it is the bane of gardens, lawns, boulevards and open areas across the continent.



The ornamental plants featured in this brochure are grown in gardens around Alberta because of qualities valued by gardeners, e.g. beauty, hardiness, rapid growth, prolific flowering, or medicinal properties. They have escaped and invaded, or are threatening to invade, various areas of Alberta. Suitable alternatives are suggested.

**Avoid This:**  
 **Instead Try:**



Like the dandelion, other plants from other parts of the globe, originally introduced as garden flowers, for landscapes, or for their medicinal or food value, have “jumped” the garden fence to become invasive in the natural environment. For some, the seeds have arrived as “stowaways” on shipments, hitchhiked along traffic routes, or floated down waterways, managing to survive, thrive, and dominate, in the “wild.”

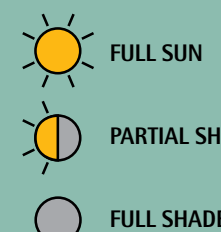
Accidental or intentional, these “invaders” cause not only environmental and ecological degradation, but social and economic loss as well.

Their growth and rapid spread is detrimental to native plants and damages natural areas, rangelands and watersheds. They threaten the biodiversity of our native habitat and can also, ultimately, endanger wildlife.

While relatively few “introduced” plants actually become invasive – only about 10% – effective action needs to be taken to avoid planting – or to “weed” out – the ones that do. Choosing suitable alternatives can help prevent future spread and serve to protect and preserve Alberta's natural environment.

**AIPC's goal is to ensure that the gardeners of today don't unintentionally plant the dandelions of tomorrow!**

### LEGEND



FULL SUN  
PARTIAL SHADE  
FULL SHADE

DROUGHT TOLERANT  
LOW WATER  
MODERATE WATER  
REGULAR WATER  
HIGH WATER

## Avoid This:

**Himalayan Balsam**  
(aka Himalayan Orchid, Policeman's  
Helmet, Poor Man's Orchid)  
*Impatiens glandulifera*

Fast growing, introduced annual. Can reach an impressive size, rapidly out-competing other plants, especially in riparian areas and along shorelines. Orchid shaped flower resembling a British policeman's helmet. Very brittle seed capsules, explode upon contact catapulting seeds 6 metres or more. Shallow root system makes it easily controlled by hand-pulling.

## Instead Try:

**Husker's Red  
Beard-Tongue**

*Penstemon barbatus 'Husker's Red'*

Attractive maroon-red foliage with dark green underlay. Forms upright clump. Pink tinged white flowers on strong stems. Blossoms early summer. 1996 Perennial of the Year.

**Gas Plant**

*Dictamnus albus var. purpureus*

Long-lived, unique perennial. Lemon scented, glossy green leaves. Bushy, upright clumps. Spikes of spidery-looking mauve-pink flowers. Flowers early summer. Worthwhile for cutting. Attracts butterflies.

**Pink Sensation  
Monkshood**

*Aconitum carmichaelii 'Pink Sensation'*

Unusual, soft powder-pink flower on spikes. Blooms July/August. Plants have deeply cut green leaves. Forms an upright clump. Outstanding cut flower. Prefers cool, moist location, away from thirsty tree roots. CAUTION: Use gloves to handle: Harmful to skin; toxic if eaten.

**Also consider...**

**Blue Boy Garden Phlox** (*Phlox paniculata 'Baby Face'*)

## Avoid This:

**Oxeye Daisy**  
*Leucanthemum vulgare*

No white daisies with a yellow center are native in Alberta. Classic white daisy. Lower leaves toothed, upper leaves have wavy margins. Reproduces by seed, or by shallow rhizomes (creeping roots). Single plants quickly become large patches. Unpalatable for grazing by livestock or wildlife, giving it a competitive advantage. Has become a serious invasive problem in natural areas. Cultivars, plants derived from it, e.g. Shasta Daisy, produce seeds that can revert to Oxeye Daisy.

CAUTION: Oxeye Daisy seeds are often found in Wildflower mixes. Shasta Daisy should also be avoided in Wildflower mixes. (See: **Wildflower Mixes**)

## Instead Try:

**White Alpine Aster**

*Aster alpinus var albus*

Branching stems, single daisy-shaped, clear white, yellow-eyed flowers on low clumps of bright green leaves. Blooms in late spring/early summer. Grown in rock gardens or used for edging. Self-seeds to produce successive generations.

**White Opal Aster**

*Aster novi-belgii 'White Opal'*

Fall blooms. Favorite for autumn color. Plants form a bushy clump, bearing loads of small daisy flowers. A dwarf selection with yellow-eyed white blossoms, may have the slightest touch of soft pink during cooler weather. Excellent for cutting.

**White Pavement Rose**  
(aka Snow Owl)

Easy maintenance ground cover. Fragrant. Pure white, semi-double blossoms. Good spreader. Repeater. Strong grower. Tolerant of extremes in temperature. Highly salt tolerant.

**Also consider...**

- White Carpet Border Lilies** (Asiatic Type)
- Dwarf cranesbill** (*Geranium x cantabrigiense 'Biokovo'*)
- Beach Fleabane Daisy** (*Erigeron glaucus 'Albus'*)

## Avoid This:

**Common  
Baby's Breath**  
*Phlox paniculata*

Ornamental perennial used in floral arrangements. In winter, stems break off, blowing around in the wind, like tumbleweeds, spreading seed to pastures and natural areas. Widespread infestations across Canada and northern United States.

## Instead Try:

**The Pearl Yarrow**

*Achillea ptarmica 'The Pearl'*

Clusters of fluffy, double white flowers. Dark green foliage. Blooms June to September. Cut/Dried flower arrangements. Attractive to butterflies.

**Sea Lavender**

*Limonium latifolium*

Bears upright, branching heads of tiny, pale-blue flowers. Produces multiple flowering stems. Great perennial for use as cut flower or for drying. Attracts butterflies.

**Filigran Russian Sage**

*Perovskia atriplicifolia 'Filigran'*

1995 Perennial of the Year. Upright bush. Fragrant, grey-green foliage. Lavender blue blossoms. Flowers July to October. Good for cut flowers/dry arrangements. Attracts butterflies.

**Also consider...**

**Hewitt's Double Meadow Rue** (*Thalictrum delavayi 'Hewitt's Double'*)

## Avoid This:

**Common Tansy**  
*Tanacetum vulgare*

Perennial. Reproduces by seed and short rhizomes (creeping roots). Forms dense stands. Pungent, aromatic foliage used medicinally, as an insect repellent, and for embalming. Contains alkaloids toxic to humans and livestock, if consumed in large quantities. Unpalatable to grazing animals, gives it a competitive advantage in natural areas and rangelands.

## Instead Try:

**Fine-leaved Goldenrod**

*Solidago graminifolia aka Euthamia graminifolia*

Native Albertan wildflower. Excellent for borders or meadow gardens. Upright, spreading clump of feathery, grass-like green leaves. Many small clusters of bright yellow flowers. Blooms late summer to early fall. Terrific for cutting. Does not cause allergies. Attractive to butterflies.

**Moonshine Yarrow**

*Achillea 'Moonshine'*

One of best perennials for planting in hot, dry, sunny locations. Leaves form a non-spreading silvery-grey clump. Features outstanding large clusters of bright canary-yellow flowers. Blooms from June to Sept. Good for cutting/dried arrangements. Also excellent in pots or tubs.

**Gold Coneflower**  
(aka Black-Eyed Susan)

*Rudbeckia spp.*

Native wildflowers in Alberta. Bushy, upright clump. Profuse display of brown-eyed, golden-orange daisies. Blooms July to October. Good winter interest. Outstanding for mass planting and for cutting. Bright gold-flowered *R. fulgida 'Goldsturm'* was 1999 Perennial of the Year.



# What Else Can You Do?

**Research:** Internet searching the Latin name of a plant provides information on whether or not it could become invasive.

**Avoid purchasing and planting ornamentals with known invasive tendencies.** Non-native plants valued as garden choices for being extremely hard, rapidly spreading or self-seeding, may also be highly invasive.

**Maintain a healthy landscape.** Keep your garden well fed, properly watered and disease- and pest-free. A healthy garden is more resistant to invaders.

**Seek out non-invasive alternatives** for attractive but problematic plants. Consider native species which tend to be well adapted to your local environment.

**Deadhead plants** that have bloomed to prevent seed spread and dispose of weedy invaders properly. Remove invasive plants before flowering and either burn them, or bag for landfill disposal. *Never dispose of garden materials in natural areas!* *Never compost invasive species!*

**Avoid collecting pretty "wildflowers"** from roadsides and natural areas for your garden. Many of the attractive plants found in ditches and along roads are highly aggressive invading species.

**Encourage others to become "Weed Wise" Gardeners.**

## For further information:

Visit the Alberta Invasive Plants Council website:  
[www.invasiveplants.ab.ca](http://www.invasiveplants.ab.ca)

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## Avoid This:

### Purple Loosestrife

(aka Lythrum 'Morden Pink', 'Morden Gleam')  
*Lythrum salicaria*, *L. virgatum*

Referred to as "the beautiful killer." Tall, strong purple spires. Takes over ponds, beaches, marshes, farm dugouts, irrigation canals. A mature plant can produce 2.5 million seeds. Ornamental cultivars, originally considered sterile, have proven very fertile when cross pollinated. Copious pollen sources for wild plants.

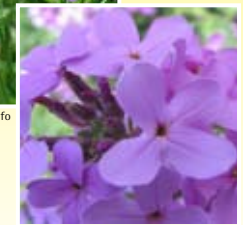


## Avoid This:

### Dame's Rocket

*Hesperis matronalis*

Often confused with garden phlox – Dame's rocket has 4 petals and alternate leaves, Phlox has 5 petals and opposite leaves. Flower color can be magenta through to pink or white. Considered a "traditional" garden flower. Prolific seed producer often found in 'wildflower' mixes. Especially problematic near woodlands.

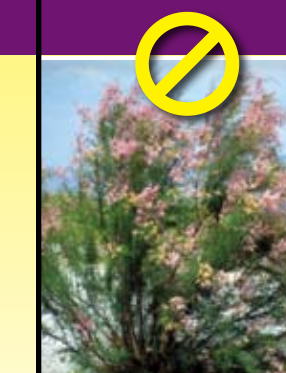


## Avoid This:

### Yellow Clematis

*Clematis tangutica*

Spreading vine plant. Yellow, pendant flowers. Seeds have silky, long tufts easily carried on wind and water. Aggressive plant once established. Urban and natural area infestations are becoming more common displacing native flora and increasing fire hazard. Also moving into mountain Parks.



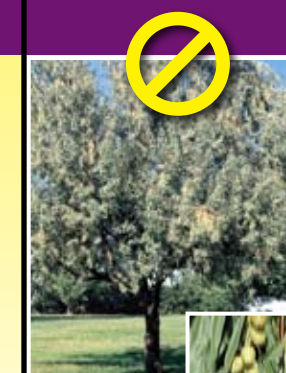
## Avoid This:

### Tamarisk (aka Salt Cedar)

*Tamarisk spp.*

Deciduous shrub/small tree. Grows best along creeks/rivers/ponds. Scale-like leaves concentrate salt from ground water in the soil. Salt released back into the soil with leaf litter. Increased salinity in the soil makes it unsuitable for many native plant/shrubs. Deep rooted. Consumes as much as 750 litres of water/day. Grows 3-4 metres in a single season. Mature plant can produce 600,000 seeds annually. Seeds easily dispersed by wind and water. Severed stems and shoots root readily in moist soil.

Among Nature Conservancy's Dirty Dozen and the World Conservation Union's 100 World's Worst Invaders.



## Avoid This:

### Russian Olive

*Elaeagnus angustifolia*

Fast growing, shelterbelt tree. Grey-green foliage. Large thorns on stems. Fragrant flower clusters. Out competes native vegetation, taxes water reserves. Thrives in poor soils because roots fix own nitrogen. Can dominate riparian (stream-side) vegetation. Provides plentiful source of edible fruits for birds, however ecologists find bird species richness is higher in riparian areas dominated by native vegetation.



## Avoid This:

### Wildflower Mixes

Many "Wildflower" mixes contain seeds of non-native, aggressive plant species legislated as invasive. Contents of these mixes are rarely listed accurately by their scientific names. The wide variety of common names used for some plants adds to the confusion.

Never purchase a seed mix without the packet being clearly labeled with scientific names. Some seed packets with contents labeled may still contain surprise invaders not listed.

## Instead Try:

### Pagan Purple or Sunny Skies Delphinium (aka Larkspur)

*Delphinium X elatum* vars. 'Pagan Purple' or 'Sunny Skies'

Tall, elegant spires with bluish-purple or sky-blue blossoms. Excellent form. Flowers mostly double. Improved heat and humidity tolerance. No staking required.



Ht. 120-180 cm  
W. 45-60 cm

## Instead Try:

### Purple Smoke Baptisia (aka False Indigo)

*Baptisia australis* 'Purple Smoke'

Hybrid. Tall, bushy mound of grey-green foliage. Long spikes of smoky violet-blue and purple flowers on black stems. Good substitute for Lupines. Excellent cut-flower. Attracts butterflies.



Ht. 90-120 cm  
W. 60-90 cm

## Instead Try:

### Honeybelle Honeysuckle

*Lonicera X brownii*

Deep golden colored flowers. Compact twining vine. Clean, round medium-green foliage. Blossoms throughout season. Attracts hummingbirds and butterflies.



Ht. 3-6 m  
W. 3-6 m

## Instead Try:

### Joe Pye Weed "Purple Bush"

*Eupatorium maculatum* 'Purple Bush'

Outstanding dusty-pink flower display. Blooms August – October. Durable, large herbaceous perennial. Attracts butterflies. (NOTE: Spotted Joe Pye Weed (*E. maculatum*) Native to Alberta. Pink flowers. Medicinal properties.)



Ht. 210 cm  
W. 150 cm

## Instead Try:

### Wichita Blue Juniper

*Juniperus scopulorum* 'Wichita Blue'

Brilliant blue foliage. Large, pyramidal upright shrub. No shearing needed. Tolerates alkalinity. Deer resistant.



Ht. 3 - 4.5m  
W. 1.8 - 3m

## Instead Try:

### Individual packets

Planting packets of individual wildflower species is preferable to taking the chance and planting wildflower mixes contaminated with invasive species. It is far LESS work to spend time at the start being careful what is planted. Otherwise, a gardener could spend follow up years battling unwanted invasive plants.



### Floristan Violet Blazing Star (aka Gayfeather)

*Liatris spicata* 'Floristan Violet'

Selected from a native prairie wildflower. Tall spikes, bright magenta-purple flowers. Blossoms in midsummer. Useful in sunny border, meadow gardens, or containers. Commercial cut flower. Attractive to butterflies.

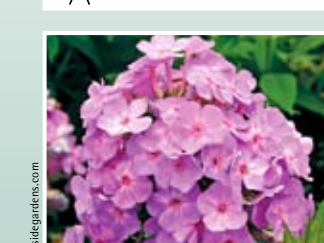


Ht. 75-95 cm  
W. 35-45 cm

### David's Lavender Garden Phlox

*Phlox paniculata* 'David's Lavender'

Stunning lavender-pink blossoms on tall stocks. Fragrant. Blooms mid to late summer. Highly mildew resistant. Deer resistant. Attracts hummingbirds, butterflies.

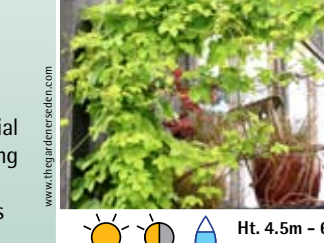


Ht. 106 cm  
W. 38-45 cm

### Golden Hops Vine

*Humulus lupulus* 'Aureus'

Attractive golden foliage. Fragrant. Unusual cone-like greenish yellow fruit called "hops." Large herbaceous, perennial vine, dies to the ground at end of growing season. Re-grows to height of 6 m. in single season. Rust or mildew sometimes a problem.



Ht. 4.5m - 6m  
W. 4.7m - 6m

### Queen of the Prairies

*Filipendula rubra* 'Venusta'

Bold accent plant. Coarsely divided green leaves. Forms mounds with large panicles of bright pink flowers. Sturdy upright stems.



Ht. 120-180 cm  
W. 60-90 cm

### Silver Buffaloberry

*Shepherdia argentea*

Native shrub. Attractive bright silver foliage on thorny stems. Yellowish-white flower. Orange-red fruit, good for jelly. Excellent barrier plant. Colony forming. Salt tolerant.



Ht. 3 m  
W. 3 m

### Saskatoon/Serviceberry

*A. alnifolia*

Native to Prairies. Delicious purple-red fruit. Favorite of wildlife. Large shrub. Green leaves with grey undersurface. White flowers. Blooms early spring. Many cultivars commercially available.



Ht. 1.5m - 5m  
W. 2m - 4m

### Karl Foerster Feather Reed Grass

*Calamagrostis acutifolia* 'Karl Foerster'

2001 Perennial of the Year. Strong upright feature. Tall spikes, soft greenish flowers, turning rose, then straw-colored. Welcome winter accent.

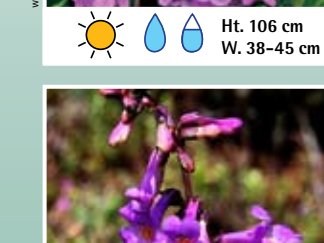


Foliage Ht. 90-120 cm  
Flower Ht. 150-200 cm  
W. 60-90 cm

### Sidebells Penstemon

*Penstemon secundiflorus*

Beautiful, delicate, pink to lavender tubular flowers. Tall stalks. Older plants can have dozens of luminescent, flowering stalks. Attracts hummingbirds.



Ht. 45-60 cm  
W. 38-45 cm

### Western White Clematis (aka Old Man's Beard)

*Clematis ligusticifolia* var *ligusticifolia*

Native to Alberta. Lovely white flowers with yellow centers. Blooms June/July. Decorative "Old Man's Beard" seed head. Twining climber.



Spread up to 20 m

### Also consider...

- ✓ **Dart's Gold Ninebark** (*Physocarpus opulifolius* 'Dart's Gold')
- ✓ **Bud's Yellowtwig Dogwood** (*Cornus sericea* 'Bud's Yellow')
- ✓ **Rock Clematis** (*Clematis columbiana*)

### Also consider...

- ✓ **Wichita Blue Juniper** (*Juniperus scopulorum* 'Wichita Blue')
- ✓ **Tolleson's Blue Weeping Juniper** (*Juniperus scopulorum* 'Tolleson's Blue Weeping')
- ✓ **Hardhack** (aka Steeplebush) (*Juniperus douglasii*)

### Also consider...

- ✓ **Wolf Willow** (*Elaeagnus commutata*) Native to Prairies.
- ✓ **Canada Buffaloberry** (*Shepherdia canadensis*) Native to Prairies.

### See also:

1. **Wildflower Woes.**  
[http://www.acfnewsources.org/science/wildflower\\_woes.html](http://www.acfnewsources.org/science/wildflower_woes.html)
2. **Alberta Native Plant Council's ANPC Guidelines for Purchase and Use of Wildflower Seed Mixes.**