

**Illinois Invasive Species Management
Terrestrial Plants Committee
March 10, 2026
11:00 - 12:30PM
ZOOM**

Working Committee:

Chris Evans	Kelly Neal	Kim Shearer	Mark Jirik	Cathy Ward
Kellie Schmidt	Paul Marcum	Chris Plane	Michelle Beloskur	Dave Kopsell
Evan Barker	Andrew Mathis	Andrea Kramer	Matt Lehman	Josh Nickelson

Observers:

Melissa Custic, IISC President
Jen Larson, USFS
~~Mackenzie Manicki, Wisconsin DNR~~
~~Greg Spyreas, Illinois Natural History Survey~~
Gabriela Nunez-Mir, UIC

Agenda

1. Welcome, Committee Updates - 15 minutes

• **Welcome New Committee Members**

- Andrew Mathis, Illinois Department of Agriculture
- Andrea Kramer, Chicago Botanic Garden
- Matt Lehman, Bailey Nurseries
- Josh Nickelson, IDNR (Replaces Philip Cox)

Updated Committee Roster - [Terrestrial Plants Committee Members.pdf](#)

2. Approval of September Meeting Minutes

 [Terrestrial_Plants_Committee_Meeting_Sept2025.pdf](#)

Chris asked for a motion to accept meeting minutes as presented

Motion: Dave Kopsell; 2nd - Chris Plane

All members present accepted the September 2025 meeting minutes.

3. Review of the Committee's Work in 2025 - 15 minutes

- Completed assessments - Japanese Chaff Flower, Field Bindweed, Japanese Barberry (did not submit to IDNR due to concerns about recommendations for exemptions related to low fecundity cultivars)
- Assessments in progress - Common Reed, Winter Creeper, Porcelain Berry, Burning Bush, Spotted Knapweed
- Worked with IDNR on amendments to the Exotic Weeds Act so that species could be added through the Admin Rules process rather than being listed in statute and requiring legislative action
 - Committee recommendations were incorporated by admin rules effective 10/1/26 - first time species had been added since 2015
- Members of the committee participated in the MIPN Low Fecundity Cultivar Committee to determine the appropriate regional approach to potential exemptions for certain regulated species
- Collected data from industry on the relevance of Euonymus fortunei cultivars in the horticulture trade
- Updated the collective review of tactics used to raise consumer awareness of invasive plants (prepared 8/2021; updated 7/2025)

4. Update on MIPN Low Fertility Cultivar Committee Work - 10 minutes

- Several members of this committee participate in a multi-state effort addressing the complex issue of low fecundity cultivars and their regulatory status.

- The committee focuses on defining measurable thresholds for fertility and fecundity to guide exemptions that made be recommended by the Invasive Species Council.
- This work is essential due to the scientific complexity and regulatory uncertainty surrounding cultivars with altered reproductive traits.
- Michelle Beloskur introduced a draft decision tree comprising seven key questions to evaluate cultivar fecundity and spread potential. The tool balances simplicity and rigor to be meaningful but not overly burdensome for breeders and regulators.
- States could adapt the tool to their needs, but uniformity would be ideal consistency.
- The tool evaluates reversion to wild type, vegetative spread, seed production, sterility, and pollen-related risks.
- A major challenge discussed was addressing male fertility and pollen effects, including risks of pollen swamping and hybridization with native species.
- The group considers adding a question on hybridization potential at the genus level to streamline the process.
- Kim Shearer explained that clonal cultivars are developed to maintain specific traits and that genetic recombination during sexual reproduction complicates stability.
- The goal is to prevent cultivar escapes by assessing fertility reductions robustly, not to address escaped or hybridized populations post-facto.
- Studies to demonstrate sterility should follow recommended designs including at least three to five years of randomized trials.
- The tool could support both new species assessments by the committee and exemption petitions submitted to IDNR by breeders.
- Cross-state data sharing is expected to reduce duplicated research efforts and improve regulatory consistency.
- The committee discussed the impact of pollen from cultivars hybridizing with native or related species, citing examples like oriental bittersweet and collar pear.
- It was proposed that reproductive system type (self-compatible vs. self-incompatible) be included in assessments to guide pollen risk considerations.
- Geographic variation in native relatives may require state-specific considerations in applying the tool.
- The committee aims to finalize the tool by end of 2026.

5. Recap of Landscape Illinois Meeting with IDNR - 15 minutes

- Landscape Illinois met with IDNR staff to discuss how committee recommendations would be considered, how low fecundity cultivar exemptions would be treated, and to clarify process and expectations.
- There have been staffing challenges within IDNR that have contributed to delays and communication blocks.
- IDNR is reviewing the rigor of the committee's assessment and requested a pause in moving forward to ensure confidence in recommendations. They will review the low fertility cultivar issue during second quarter of 2026. Ann Holtrip has joined the MIPN low fecundity cultivar committee to build expertise on this complex issue.
- Committee members expressed optimism about IDNR's cooperation despite uncertainties and personnel changes and an acknowledgement of IDNR's strong invasive plant management experience balanced with less propagation expertise.
- The committee emphasized the importance of continuing work on species not affected by cultivar exemption issues.

6. Potential Initiatives for 2026 - 30 minutes

The group discussed how to proceed with assessments and additional committee activities in light of the new information from the December meeting with IDNR.

- Consensus favored continuing assessments for species not related to horticultural cultivar issues while pausing others.

- The Japanese Barberry and Winter Creeper assessments are on hold until we receive more direction from IDNR and the MIPN low fecundity cultivar committee.
- Members noted public demand for more invasive plant regulation and early detection efforts remain critical.
- Revisiting and updating the committee's priority species list was proposed for the June meeting.
- Species like common reed and spotted knapweed, unrelated to cultivar exemption, are ready for assessment and action.
- Kellie Schmidt suggested the committee may want to develop a public awareness campaign to support invasive species education.
 - Collaboration with IDNR and Extension could amplify messaging using creative and concise formats like handout cards and social media.
 - Kellie has updated the collection of various tactics being used by others for idea generation [Terrestrial Invasive species communication.docx](#)
 - Michelle Beloskur offered to share recent Midwest Invasive Plant Network outreach materials to inform this effort.
- Chris Evans suggested that the committee consider compiling a list of research priorities to guide community science and academic projects.
 - This list would help direct funding and raise awareness about critical knowledge gaps, such as control methods or impact studies.

7. Future Meeting Schedule - 5 minutes

Kellie will send a doodle poll for meetings in June, September and December with calendar invites at a later date.

COMMITTEE RESOURCES:

Link to Google Drive Folder

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1ClodPtQJi5-7mIXtEssuX_qfiY4cGFY?usp=drive_link

Committee Reference List - [Committee Reference List](#)

Species Assessment Template (*updated June 2024*) - [2024 Terrestrial Plants Protocol](#)

Committee Roster - [Terrestrial Plants Committee Members.pdf](#)