

Invasive & GMO Plant Species – Plants We Do Not Want to Establish

When we think of the term invasive plant species, we often think of Kudzu or Cogon grass, but actually many of the common plants we see everyday are invasive species that we do not want to allow to be established anywhere else. Invasive plant species are defined as ***an alien species whose introduction does or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health***. Johnson grass, Bermuda grass, black locust, mimosa, and popcorn tree are all invasive plant species that we do not want on **Heartwood** land, even though they are commonly found.

Since most of these species were not native to North America, they have few natural predators, diseases, or parasites, thus giving them advantage over our native species. Secondly, most are fast growing species with high seed production and often depend on specialized survival tactics to overtake other species. An example is the rhizome root system of Johnson grass from which new plants can regenerate without going through a seed to plant process.

One of the categories monitored by our third party audit system is the control of invasive plant species. The best way to prevent the establishment of invasive plant species is to **NOT PLANT OR BRING THEM IN**. Also, by washing or blowing off equipment before bringing it on club lands, introduction can be limited. If we find these species actually planted by our clubs, we will be required to have the club take the necessary and appropriate action to remove them. It is much easier to NOT PLANT them.

As clubs are establishing wildlife food plots, be sure to check labels for plant species to be sure they do not contain invasive plants. Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO) cannot be planted! Clean-outs may not be seeded on **Heartwood** lands. Clean-outs are seeds and residue that are removed from harvested crops before they are bagged for seed. These clean-outs are full of noxious weed seeds that must not be brought on **Heartwood** lands.

As a suggestion, a simple cool season food plot mix that does not contain invasive species was developed by the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks to cover the basic needs of wildlife during the fall, winter, and spring. The acronym is **WACO** - **W**heat, **A**rowleaf clover, **C**rimson clover, and **O**ats. Several companies sell this mix or you can buy and mix the ingredients yourself without paying for expensive marketing, branding, and packaging. Per acre seeding rates for this combination of species are: Wheat – 25-30 pounds, Arrowleaf clover – 4-5 pounds, Crimson clover – 10-12 pounds, and Oats – 25-30 pounds. Lime and fertilizer is not regulated and may be applied based on a soil test.

The following pages include lists of approved seed mixtures, organized by state. A detailed plant species list and species accounts that are considered invasive plant species can be found at the website: **invasive.org**. Another useful book, *A Field Guide for the Identification of Invasive Plants in Southern Forests*, can be downloaded from the US Forest Service website: <http://www.srs.fs.usda.gov/pubs/35292>.