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What is an Invasive Species?

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Over the last few years there has been a lot of talk about invasive species. Our nation is changing because of them. They are not only a threat to our agriculture and our forests; they are also causing major impacts in large cities. Outbreaks of Mediterranean Fruit Fly in California and Florida have been widespread and costly. In New York City and Chicago, thousands of city trees have been cut down at a cost of millions in an attempt to prevent the escape of the Asian Long-horned beetle. In Michigan we have faced a similar scenario due to the Emerald Ash Borer.

So just what is an invasive species? A simple definition would be something that:

- 1) has been introduced by human action to a location where it did not previously occur naturally
- 2) becomes capable of establishing a breeding population in the new location without further intervention by humans, and
- 3) spreads widely throughout the new location.

In simple terms an invader has to arrive, survive, and thrive.

Invasive species can come from any country in the world. A species not native to one part of the United States may be moved to another part by human activities or natural causes. If this species is able to become established at the new location, there may not be other species present that are able to control its population, so it becomes a pest species.

Now that we have learned what an Invasive Species is, over the next few weeks we will talk about how they get into an area, possible ways to prevent their spread, and how to control them after they are established.

For additional information on invasive species check out these websites:

Wildflower Association of Michigan – <http://www.wildflowersmich.org/index.php?menu=10>

Michigan Invasive Plants Council - <http://invasiveplantsmi.org/>

Global Invasive Species Team - <http://tncinvasives.ucdavis.edu/>

Wild Ones/Invasives - <http://www.for-wild.org/download/invasive.html>