



Henderson County Master Gardeners Weekly News Article December 10, 2018



How Do Invasive Species Affect You?

By Lydia Holley

Master Gardener Peter Cole will present “How Invasive Species Affect You” on Tuesday, December 18, 5:30 p.m. at the Clint W. Murchison Memorial Library, 121 S. Prairieville, Athens, TX. A part of the Henderson County Master Gardener Association’s ‘Learn at the Library’ series, this presentation is free to the public.

Invasive species in Texas include plants, animals and insects. Cole will identify what makes a species invasive and the impact they have on our lives. Kudzu, emerald ash borer, feral hogs, fire ants and bed bugs are all invasive species. Billboards advise you to “clean, drain and dry” your boat. Do you know why?

Because invasive species crowd out native species, they cause damage to the local environment. They have become a big problem in Texas and many other states. For instance, *Melaleuca quinquenervia* can produce over a million seeds each year. Just one *Melaleuca* tree can form a stand approximately 600 feet in diameter in only one year. *Melaleuca* has already taken over several million acres in the Florida Everglades, and there is concern this plant will spread to the Galveston Bay area.

Some of these invasive plants are dangerous. Giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantagazzianum*) makes people sensitive to ultraviolet light. Because of that unique feature, contact with this plant can cause severe burns after exposure to sunlight. Other invasive plants may be toxic to livestock.

Invasive species can also damage crops and ornamental plants. Rose growers are aware of the damage chilli thrips can cause. But chilli thrips have over 100 host plants, many which are crops such as strawberries, citrus, cotton, soybeans, peanuts and others. Total crop loss can result from a severe infestation.

Those are just a few examples of problems with invasive species. Cole will expand upon this important topic. Come learn the consequences of having these species in our environment, and what you can do to help prevent their spread.

For more information, call 903-675-6130, email hendersonCMGA@gmail.com, or visit txmg.org/hendersonmg.