

**Sustainable Conservation partners with agriculture, business and government leaders to find practical ways that the private sector can protect clean air, clean water and healthy ecosystems.**

#### **Restoration on Private Lands**

We help land-owners be good stewards of the environment by facilitating restoration projects and species protection.

#### **Sustainable Agriculture**

We promote the adoption of innovative farming practices so that farmers can protect the environment, boost their bottom lines and keep their land.

#### **Sustainable Business**

We stop pollution at the source by working proactively with business and regulatory agencies to solve problems through cooperation, rather than litigation.

# THE Bridge

LETTER FROM THE **Executive Director**

Dear Friends,

Many of us who love gardening have done it. We visit our local nursery or home-improvement store to pick up a new addition to our flowerbed. It's drought-resistant, beautiful and guaranteed to grow. Perfect, right? Maybe not.

There's a chance you've bought a pest – an invasive plant.

They may look harmless, but can become a real problem if they jump the fence into wildlands and open spaces. Invasive plants reproduce quickly, displace native plants and can alter entire ecosystems. Invasive species contribute significantly to the decline of nearly 50% of all endangered or imperiled plants and animals in the U.S.

Nationally, we spend more than \$135 billion annually to eradicate and control invasive species. Each year, California spends over \$85 million.

Many invasive plant species in the U.S. have roots in the horticultural industry. Over 50% of California's most invasive plants have horticultural origins. More than 30 species are still available through the wholesale and retail nursery trade in California.

To address this growing environmental issue, in 2003 The Nature Conservancy turned to Sustainable Conservation for help. While they pursue many strategies for preventing the spread of invasives, they were not working directly with the horticultural industry. They also trusted Sustainable Conservation's successful track record of partnering with the private sector to develop lasting, balanced solutions to environmental problems. Wanting to work with, not against, the horticultural industry, they knew a solution that wasn't based on collaboration simply wouldn't work.

In 2005, we launched our multi-partner California Horticultural Invasives Prevention (Cal-HIP) project. Cal-HIP brings together more than 20 representatives from the horticultural industry, landscape organizations, environmental groups and government agencies to find voluntary solutions that balance environmental and economic interests.

As you'll read inside, Sustainable Conservation and partners like The Home Depot, Monrovia Nursery and the American Nursery & Landscaping Association are finding practical ways the horticultural industry and gardening public can make the transition from invasive plants to non-invasive alternatives.

While we can't help you decide which plant will look best in your garden, we do hope to make the choice of not planting a pest an easy one.



Invasive ice plant extends from the Bay Area to Mexico.

Warm regards,

Ashley Boren  
Executive Director



Sustainable Conservation



# Weeding Out California's Invaders

**Y**ou may not know it, but there's a growing problem that's literally taking over some of California's most sensitive coastlines and wildlands – the costly and damaging spread of invasive plants.

Along the coast, it's the purple-flowering ice plant that's a big concern. Ice plant was introduced into the western U.S. for dune stabilization in the early 1990s and is still available at many California nurseries. It steals more than its fair share of water, makes soil inhospitable by dramatically increasing salt content and blocks light other plants need for survival. The almost impenetrable blanket of vegetation it creates extends from the Bay Area to Mexico.

**“This is not a one-size-fits-all situation. Invasives are a national issue with regional solutions.”**

Nicholas Staddon, California Horticultural Invasives Prevention (Cal-HIP) member and Director of New Plant Introductions at Monrovia Nursery

Inland, the prodigious giant reed, or *Arundo donax*, is not only harming native landscapes and biodiversity, but is also significantly increasing fire danger around homes and across our remaining wildlands. Unfortunately, the plant continues to be sold in California.

Sustainable Conservation created the innovative California Horticultural Invasives Prevention (Cal-HIP) project last year to stop the sale of invasive plants throughout California, offer scientifically sound alternatives that make economic sense to the horticultural industry and educate the gardening public about the invasives problem. Cal-HIP's 22 stakeholders – plant growers, plant retailers, environmentalists, academics, gardeners and government regulators – are working together to develop an effective model for preventing the growing and selling of invasives. Their solution will not only reduce the costs to control and eradicate invasive plants, but will also stave off regulation that could hurt the industry.

Invasive plants threaten wildlands and biodiversity.

Nicholas Staddon, Cal-HIP member and Director of New Plant Introductions at Monrovia Nursery, said, “This is not a one-size-fits-all situation. Invasives are a national issue with regional solutions. It is vital that the independent parties in the Cal-HIP collaboration find workable solutions without relying on blanket government regulations.”

Now in its second year, Cal-HIP is, well, growing like a weed.

Led by Terri Kempton of Sustainable Conservation, the group has assembled a comprehensive list of region-specific invasive plants known or thought to be available through California's horticultural trade. Cal-HIP is currently finalizing an official list of alternatives, proposing safe substitutes that possess the desirable traits of invasives but behave well in the garden.

For example, Cal-HIP is considering forsythia as a substitute for the troublesome family of brooms – including Scotch, Spanish, French and Portuguese varieties – which have invaded over a million acres across California and become a big fire hazard. Forsythia looks remarkably like the

brooms, right down to the delicate golden petals of its fan-like flowers, but isn't a threat to existing plants, animals or homes.

Cal-HIP will continue developing its information-packed toolkit of materials and services to educate the nursery industry, landscaping trade and home gardeners about invasive horticultural plants in their regions, as well as the beautiful and safe alternatives they can plant in their place. The toolkit will include teaching materials to train landscape professionals, informational posters for display in nurseries and an interactive website. Cal-HIP will track the impact of its toolkit and outreach efforts in the coming months by conducting a survey of nurseries and plant retailers statewide. With the survey, Cal-HIP hopes to find that the pots once occupied by invasive plants are filled with non-invasive varieties.

Cal-HIP's innovative work hasn't gone unnoticed. The partnership was featured as the cover story in the California Invasive Plant Council's (Cal-IPC) popular newsletter, as well as in several radio interviews on both Northern and Southern California stations. Cal-HIP was

also highlighted in a report to the U.S. Department of the Interior developed by the National Invasive Species Council as a promising model for voluntary industry self-regulation to prevent the sale and spread of invasives.

According to Kempton, “Cal-HIP is making great progress in promoting an effective, regulation-free model for solving California's invasives problem. Our progress is due to the cooperation of our steering committee members who have come together from different sectors to diligently and creatively seek solutions to horticultural invasions. Our collaborative model takes into account all perspectives and is the only way we can hope to find a ‘win’ for both the environment and the horticultural industry in California.”

The dialogue and teamwork taking place through Cal-HIP is building the foundation for long-term collaboration with the horticultural industry to address future invasive plant concerns. Cal-HIP's partnership has the potential to alter the direction of an entire industry and cultivate a truly pioneering model for collaborative, balanced conservation and the protection of natural resources.

Invasive grasses can increase fire danger and flooding.

**What's in a Name?** Invasive? Exotic? Native? Plant identification can be confusing. Our short course, though, can help you become a plant expert – and avoid planting an invasive pest in your garden.



PHOTO: SPANISH BROOM. COURTESY OF THE NATURE CONSERVANCY

**Invasive**  
**An introduced species that takes over natural landscapes.** They're often difficult to remove or control. Invasive plants can reduce biodiversity by choking waterways, promoting flooding and increasing the risk of fire. California Horticultural Invasives Prevention (Cal-HIP) relies on objective, scientific criteria to produce sound, region-specific recommendations for invasive plant alternatives that are also good for business.



PHOTO: TULIP

**Exotic**  
**A non-native species that does not threaten wildlands.** They are often introduced by humans for beneficial agricultural and garden use. The vast majority of exotic plants used in gardens will not invade or damage the surrounding landscape, which is great news when looking for substitutes for problem plants. According to Cal-HIP member Carolyn Villa-Scott of Yamagami's Nursery, “Exotics are not the enemy, invasives are.”



PHOTO: CALIFORNIA GOLDEN POPPY

**Native**  
**A naturally occurring species.** Native plants often fall prey to invasives, which can drastically alter entire ecosystems by out-competing native plants, animals and insects. California alone spends more than \$85 million annually on the control and eradication of invasive species. Cal-HIP supports both native and exotic plants that don't jump the fence and threaten California's wildlands or wildlife.





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## Milestones

### Biofuels Project Receives Widespread Coverage

Interest in Sustainable Conservation's leadership role in promoting renewable fuels in California is heating up. Program Director Allen Dusault was featured on numerous television and radio programs over the past few months, including the Bay Area's KTVU-TV and KCBS-AM, National Public Radio (twice) and EcoTalk (a national syndication of Air America Radio). Our work to lessen the country's dependence on oil, minimize the negative impacts of fossil fuels and create a new energy economy in California also caught the eye of *The New York Times* and *The Fresno Bee*, among others. Visit us at [www.suscon.org/biofuels/index.asp](http://www.suscon.org/biofuels/index.asp) to find out more.



### Encouraging Results of Farming Field Trials Published

We recently released a report on the environmental and economic benefits of two innovative farming practices: conservation tillage and triple cropping. Sustainable Conservation, U.C. Cooperative Extension and 12 Central Valley dairy farmers conducted field trials in 2005 and reduced the farmers' total costs by almost \$30 an acre on average. The farmers saved money on fuel and labor because conservation tillage involves fewer tractor passes than traditional cultivation techniques. Conservation tillage also made it easier for the farmers to grow a third forage crop – called triple cropping – which reduced their cow feed costs. A summary of our report is available online at [www.suscon.org/dairies/conservationtillage.asp](http://www.suscon.org/dairies/conservationtillage.asp).

### Leopold Conservation Award Comes to California

In partnership with the Sand County Foundation and California Farm Bureau Federation, Sustainable Conservation is helping launch the Leopold Conservation Award in California. The \$10,000 grand prize and two \$1,000 runner-up prizes will recognize private landowners' commitment to responsible environmental stewardship and land management. The aim of the awards is also to inspire and educate the public about the important role farmers and ranchers play in sustaining a healthy environment. Qualify or know of someone who might? Visit [www.leopoldconservationaward.org/ca](http://www.leopoldconservationaward.org/ca) before the July 14th deadline.

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Sustainable Conservation



121 Second Street 6th Floor San Francisco, CA 94105 [www.suscon.org](http://www.suscon.org) phone 415-977-0380 fax 415-977-0381 e-mail [suscon@suscon.org](mailto:suscon@suscon.org)

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