

# INVASIVE, NONNATIVE PESTS IN TEXAS

## AN INCREASING FOREST HEALTH CHALLENGE

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Formosan Termites



Japanese Climbing Fern

To address the increasing number of invasive, non-native pests (insects, diseases and plants) that threaten the state's forest resources, the Texas Forest Service (TFS), with financial support from the USDA Forest Service, Forest Health Protection (USFS/FHP), has initiated a number of public awareness efforts and partnerships in recent years. Major invasive pests that warrant high priority in Texas include giant Asian dodder, Japanese climbing fern, Chinese tallow, Chinese privet, giant reed, salt cedar, *Phytophthora ramorum* (causal agent for Sudden Oak Death), exotic ambrosia beetles, and Formosan termites, among others. In conjunction with the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, the Central Southwest Gulf Coast Information Node (CSWGCIN) of the National Biological Information Infrastructure (NBII) housed at the Houston Advanced Research Center (HARC), and USFS/FHP, a new web site ([www.texasinvasives.org](http://www.texasinvasives.org)) is being developed to increase public awareness of invasive pests specific to Texas. Other accomplishments include the following:

- A cooperative project with the City of Houston was conducted in 2003-4 to eradicate giant Asian dodder, *Cuscuta japonica*, a noxious parasitic plant discovered in several Houston neighborhoods. Posters and flyers describing this pest were prepared and published in four languages (English, Spanish, Chinese, and Vietnamese) to inform various ethnic groups within the infested area. Known infestations were eradicated.
- In cooperation with Texas A&M University, nursery and perimeter surveys were conducted in 2004 and 2005 to detect *Phytophthora ramorum*, the pathogen responsible for sudden oak death (SOD). A SOD Task Force was organized to increase cooperation among involved federal, state, and private agencies in Texas. No infections outside nurseries have been found to date.

- Fact sheets, illustrated with color photographs, have been prepared describing *The Ten Most Unwanted Varmints in Texas* (invasive insects and diseases), *Unwanted Aliens on our Door Step* (12 invasive plants threatening to enter Texas), and *Common Immigrants in the Texas Landscape* (12 invasive, non-native plants well-established in Texas).
- A questionnaire has been distributed to all agencies administering natural areas in East, Central, South, and West Texas to gather information on the distribution and impact of invasive, non-native plants in the state's different ecological regions.
- In FY 2005, TFS, in cooperation with LBJWC, NBII and HARC, initiated a new project entitled "*Pulling It Together: A Texas-sized Partnership to Manage Invasive Plants.*" Goals include formation of a state exotic pest plant council and hosting the first state-wide conference on invasive, non-native plants, held in Austin on November 17 – 19, 2005.



Giant Asian Dodder



Chinese Tallow



Kudzu



Chinese Privet



Japanese Honeysuckle