

SPOTTING INVASIVE PLANTS ON OUR ROADSIDES #4

New Milford CT, 4/11/21

Invasive Shrubs in April: Spot Them Now!



Barberry in the understory of a woodland, 4/9/21

Shrubs in wild places with new green leaves in mid-April are almost certainly non-native invasive shrubs.

Many invasive woody plants gain a competitive advantage by leafing out early. Spot them now, filling our roadsides, wild places, and unkempt spaces everywhere in town. There is often a mix, the dense green barberry, taller more upright honeysuckle, and thorny multiflora rose with long arching stems reaching outward. Burning bush is there too, and will leaf out soon.

SPOTTING INVASIVES #3, 3/26/21, asked whether barberry, burning bush, multiflora rose, or honeysuckle would win the race this spring. By the end of March, tiny leaves were visible on all except burning bush.

BARBERRY IS THE WINNER of the first-invasive-shrub-of-spring contest, leafing out early, and developing full dense foliage before the others. Look for it as dense rounded three foot shrubs in the understory of woodlands and as slightly larger bushes where there is more light next to roads.

Very few of our native deciduous shrubs leaf out before the end of April. Some, like pussy willow and spice bush, are in flower now, but have no new leaves yet.

Invasive plants displace native plants in our landscapes. Most native insects eat specific native plants, and the native plants that they eat are in short supply. Populations of native insects have plummeted. Bird populations have also plummeted - there aren't enough insects to feed them. Even seed-eating birds are in trouble: their babies are fed primarily on moths and butterfly larvae, ie caterpillars. Our native caterpillars evolved eating specific native plants. It isn't that our native plants are better than other plants – it is that they evolved with our native animals, including insects and birds, forming stable sustainable ecosystems.

Questions, comments? Contact Kathleen Nelson, knelson151@sbcglobal.net