

### They Might be Pretty, but...

Did you know over the years over 1,000 non-native species of plants and animals have been introduced to Oregon? Some of these such as the ring-necked pheasant have fit in quite well but in most cases exotic species have become a nuisance, and some have even pose a danger to humans, livestock, fish and wildlife.

Most invasive species were brought here with the best of intentions. Himalayan blackberries were a source of food and English ivy was brought in as a ground cover. Now both species are running rampant, crowding out native plants and creating impenetrable barriers to livestock and humans alike.

Until recently Scotch Broom was sold at garden centers as an ornamental, but thanks to its hardy nature and its ability to reseed now it can be found everywhere.

Of course, not all invasive species were brought here intentionally. Seeds and sprouts often hitchhike a ride on animals, vehicles, bicycles, and oftentimes boaters can transfer harmful plants or organisms to new bodies of water.

Why should we care about exotic species, and what can be done about them?

There are a number of reasons why we should be concerned. For one, they often crowd out natives. An example is the mosquito fish; this fish is bought by landowners who put them in their backyard ponds to help control mosquitoes. When they escape the ponds into streams and rivers, mosquito fish then out compete the native fish for food source. Mosquito fish are prolific and their numbers are becoming alarmingly high in the McKenzie River. Another common example is English Ivy which chokes out many seed and nut bearing plants that our songbirds need for food and cover.

Once they are established, exotic species are virtually impossible to eradicate (therefore called "invasive" species), but there are measures we can all take to control their numbers and health. One of the easiest things we can do is not repeat our mistakes.

According to the Native Plant Society of Oregon, there are a number of ornamental plants that pose a threat to our natural resources. They include: Butterfly bush, reed canary grass, purple loosestrife, Japanese knotweed, false broom, everlasting peavine, evening primrose, periwinkle, foxglove and spotted knapweed. All of these plants are in our watershed and need to be controlled.

For more information on invasive exotics, please contact the McKenzie Watershed Council, McKenzie River Ranger District or the City of Springfield, Environmental Services.