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## The View from Laughing Springs: Hans Reimann's ecological notes

Spring 2008

### **Invasive Plant Report**

On Feb 21, 2008 my wife and I attended the annual Land Ethics Symposium, hosted by the Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve. We were impressed with every speaker, from John Peter Thompson with his sustainable sites index, to a pair of Natural Lands Trust speakers on land stewardship, to a Maine gentleman speaking on stream bank restoration. But we were most amazed that every speaker spoke on the dangers of invasive plants in our life. Sound science continues to pile up across the country that when invasive plant populations crowd out native plants and farm their own communities (for example in our area: garlic mustard, Japanese honeysuckle, multiflora rose, and stilt grass) the ecosystem is horribly tweaked.

Garlic mustard will insert foreign chemicals into the soil; high concentrations altering nutrient cycles by killing off certain microbes critical to naturally fertile soils. Japanese honeysuckle as a creeping and climbing vine, tolerant of light shade, will smother emerging native perennial wild flowers, as well as tree and shrub seedlings. This leads to a loss of native insect habitat, leading to a shortage of native pollinators of existing native plants. Further up the food chain, song birds find it harder to find insects to sustain themselves and their offspring. Multiflora rose and stilt grass are coexisting in riparian and flood plain areas, crowding out flood mitigating natives and thus contribute to flooding and sedimentation problems in stream beds.

Now for some good news: My annual native plant lists that mail order seed & plant catalogues offer.

- From Gurney's catalog, the good guys: shellbark hickory, maximillian sunflower perennial, Joe Pye weed, Coneflowers, Black-eyed Susan, meadowsweet, orange butterfly plant, Bee balm, wood poppy, Virginia bluebells, trillium, lady fern, ostrich fern, fern leaf bleeding heart (flowers the whole growing season), lily of the valley, creeping phlox, red twig dogwood, pink smoke tree, beauty berry, Canadian hemlock, tulip tree, redbud, sugar maple, sassafras, pin oak, red oak, switch grass, white pine, red cedar, mountain laurel.

- The bad guys to avoid from Gurney's are: Russian olive, Norway maple, sawtooth oak, mimosa, Amur maple, burning bush, privets, butterfly bush (very invasive), vinca minor, crown vetch, pampas grass, maiden grass, hostas.

- These good guy and bad guy lists don't change much between the Gurney's and Henry Field's catalogs that most of us receive. Some exceptions of note: Henry Field's wildflower seed mixes (ask them for native species list in mixes). Henry Field's does offer the invasive red leaf barberry (North Dakota, West Virginia, and Michigan don't allow this plant to be sold in their states).
- The Henry Field's catalog and Burgess's catalog both offer native daylilies.
- Henry Field's, however, has their own niche of native plants for sale: staffa aster, tall garden phlox, cinnamon fern, maidenhair fern, jack in the pulpit, Dutchman's breeches, coral bells, golden sedum, American arborvitae, American bittersweet vine, American linden, black gum, mountain ash.
- The Burgess catalog overall has the weakest offering of native plants, all of which are offered by Field's and Gurney's. However, Burgess gets the greatest criticism for offering the Tatarian honeysuckle (invasive) which is banned from New Hampshire, offering burning bush twice in the same catalog (invasive) banned from Arizona, and offering barberry (invasive) banned from West Virginia. I always recommend buying vegetable seeds from Field's and Gurney's, but please buy local or regionally for your native plants.
- Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve ... [www.bhwp.org](http://www.bhwp.org), and Edge of the Woods Nursery ... [www.edgeofthewoodsnursery.com](http://www.edgeofthewoodsnursery.com), are good sources of Native Plants.