

The Contemporary Austin

INVASIVE SPECIES REMOVAL FACT SHEET

In consultation with experts from the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center and Reed Hilderbrand of Boston, The Contemporary Austin has launched an extensive project to remove invasive species from the grounds of Laguna Gloria. Invasive species prevail over much of Laguna Gloria today and persistently work against our native Texas plants, finding ways to thrive that leave our native species defenseless. The invasive species removal project will leave a dramatic mark on the landscape of Laguna Gloria that will:

- Clear sightlines for outdoor sculptures
- Allow native species to thrive
- Preserve heritage trees

Invasive Trees



CHINABERRY
Melia azedarach

- Introduced in the mid-1800s from Asia and was widely planted as a traditional ornamental; extracts were used for natural pesticides
- Forms dense thickets
- Negatively impacts wildlife dependent on native vegetation for forage, nesting, or cover
- Fruit is poisonous to humans and small animals
- Highly resistant to insects and pathogens
- Its leaf litter raises the soil pH, altering conditions for native plants and seed germination



CHINESE TALLOW
Triadica sebifera

- Introduced to the U.S. from China in 1776 by Benjamin Franklin and historically used to make soap and candles; now used for its unique ornamental qualities
- Establishes a monoculture, which lowers species diversity and the overall resilience of the area
- Tenacious nature with high growth rates and reproductive ability
- Quickly invades following a disturbance event
- A single Chinese Tallow can produce nearly 100,000 viable seeds annually, which remain in the soil for several years before sprouting and are easily dispersed by birds and water
- Few to no predators due to a poisonous feature of its leaves and berries

Invasive Shrubs



HEAVENLY BAMBOO
Nandina domestica

- This small evergreen shrub was introduced to the U.S. in the early 19th century from east Asia
- Outcompetes native flora by spreading through roots and through the dispersal of its seeds by birds
- Berries can be toxic to many animals, including cats and humans



JAPANESE KNOTWEED
Fallopia japonica

- This semi-woody perennial plant was introduced to North America in the 1800s as an ornamental species and was planted for erosion control
- Often mistaken for Bamboo, but distinguishable by its broad leaves
- Especially persistent due to its vigorous roots system, which can spread nearly 10 meters from the parent stem and grow through asphalt and concrete
- Creates dense thickets that degrade wildlife habitat, while thick layers of decomposing stems and leaves make it difficult for native plant species to establish
- Establishment along rivers allows pieces of roots to break off and float downstream to start new populations
- Able to survive severe floods and recolonize

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JAPANESE PRIVET
Ligustrum japonicum

- Introduced to the U.S. from Europe in 1845 as an ornamental plant used as a hedge or in gardens
- Invades and exploits open niche areas within the floodplain ecosystem because it has few shrub competitors
- Previously open and clear areas are invaded by a dense thicket, choking out other native plant life
- Replaces mid-canopy trees in woodland areas due to its fast-growing nature, completely dominating a forest or forest fragment
- Can adapt to different light conditions, thus competing with both trees and shrubs in both low and intense light conditions
- Reproduces both through seed and vegetatively, allowing it to be rapidly and easily distributed while root fragments in the soil sprout and grow new plants

Invasive Vines



ENGLISH IVY
Hedera helix

- A widely planted evergreen vine that was introduced to the U.S. from Europe and western Asia in the 18th century
- A familiar sight in many gardens, it climbs up walls and trees and along the ground, often growing to 100 feet in length
- Can strangle trees, causing their death, as its leaves reach for the sunlight
- Also serves as a reservoir for Bacterial Leaf Scorch, which can be harmful for many native plants including oaks, elms, and maples



POISON IVY
Toxicodendron radicans

- Native to parts of the U.S., but has invasive qualities due to its opportunistic nature and rapid growth
- Climbing and non-climbing species have cross-bred to produce vines with a range of characteristics and habits, including shrubs, groundcover, and climbing or trailing vines
- Readily locates itself in disturbed soil and can quickly adapt to new opportunities
- Normally found in wooded areas along edge zones at tree line breaks, allowing sun to filter through
- Commonly eaten by animals, and seeds are consumed by birds
- Often causes an allergic reaction in humans



CAT'S CLAW
Macfadyena unguis-cati

- A perennial vine first brought to the U.S. sometime in the early 20th century, either through human or natural dispersal
- Disrupts natural communities by aggressively climbing in the forest canopy and producing a thick blanket of vegetation that can smother trees and prevent sunlight from reaching plants below
- Under certain conditions, the vine has been observed to grow and fuse together over time, forming a single mass resembling the trunk of a tree
- When the vine climbs to the top of the forest canopy, seeds are freely dispersed by the wind, allowing them to travel long distances

Other



ELEPHANT EAR
Alocasia macrorrhizos

- An herbaceous perennial introduced to the U.S. in 1910 and often found growing along waterways and in wetlands
- Reproducing through both seeds and runners, its rapid takeover makes it difficult to control
- Extensive stands of Elephant Ear have altered the structure and function of many Texas waterways
- Toxic to some animals and leads to the creation of monocrops, without predators to reduce the population naturally