Native Species vs Invasive Species

Biodiversity:

There are an array of wild and natural areas, including coniferous and deciduous forests, swamps, bogs, marshes, rivers, streams, lakes, prairies, barrens, deserts and montane habitats comprised of diverse groups of native species adapted to particular habitats and conditions. All these species comprise our Native Biodiversity. Healthy ecosystems are essential for maintaining Native Wildlife populations and Native Plants that provide food and shelter that they require. Humans have been moving species to new areas, and introducing them to places that would not be able to be reached by means of wind, water, or wildlife. Exotic species that have escaped from plantings, are able to reproduce on their own in the wild. Some become extremely weedy or Invasive. These species are spreading and are replacing Native Plants which are altering natural habitats. Habitats are being damaged, degraded, and sometimes completely destroyed as a result of invasion by exotic species. Maintaining healthy ecosystems is also vital for human survival and quality of life.

Native Species:

Native species are those that occur in a particular place without human intervention. Non-Native (alien, exotic) are species that have been introduced by people from other continents, ecosystems, or habitats that would not have occurred by wind, water, wildlife, or other natural means. People introduce exotic plants intentionally and by accident.

Invasive Species:

Invasive species are alien species whose introduction does or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to humans. Healthy invasive plants are taking over and degrading natural ecosystems and wreaking havoc on the complex web of life involving native plants, animals, and other organisms. The invasive species compete for natural resources including soil, water, light, nutrients and space. These invasive species displace native plants and the exotic plants can be inedible, toxic, and otherwise harmful. This pushes native species to close to extinction and the overall reduction in the native biodiversity. These invasive species take an enormous amount of time, labor, and money to manage, and most are difficult if not impossible to eliminate. An estimate of the economic impact of managing invasive species, is $142 billion annually. Invasive species are hard to manage because they spread by seed, and by vegetative means including rhizomes, runners, shoots, tubers, and bulbs. Seeds and plant fragments may be dispersed by wind, water, wildlife and people. Prevention of the spread of invasive plants can be accomplished by avoiding the use of them in landscaping. When selecting plants for your use, always check your local lists of native species, and only purchase those plants that are not invasive.

List of invasive species and some examples:

Aquatic Plants:

Hydrilla

Parrot-Feather

Bamboos

Grasses and Sedges:

Bog Bulrush

Common Reed

Herbaceous Forbs:

Canada thistle

Ground Ivy

Common Daylily

Fig Buttercup

Shrubs and Subshrubs:

Amur & Morrow’s Honeysuckle

Winged Burning Bush

Japanese Barberry

Privets

Autumn Olive

Japanese Meadowsweet

Linden Viburnum

Trees:

Norway Maples

White and Paper Mulberry

Callery Pears

Princess Tree

Silk Tree

Tree of Heaven

Vines:

Chinese and Japanese Wisteria

Common Periwinkle

English Ivy

Japanese Honeysuckle

Oriental Bittersweet

Some Native Species Alternatives:

Herbaceous Forbs:

Blazing Star

Cardinal Flower

Creeping Phlox

Evergreen wood fern

Wild Geranium

Shrubs and Subshrubs:

Common Blackberry

Flowering Raspberry

Gray Dogwood

Highbush Blueberry

Pasture Rose

Trees:

American Beech

Black walnut

Flowering Dogwood

Red Maple

Sweet Gum

Sweetbay Magnolia

Willow Oak

Vines:

American Wisteria

Passion Flower

Trumpet Creeper

Trumpet Honeysuckle

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National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service