

INVASIVE HITCHHIKERS

Fact Sheet # 1

What Hikers and Backpackers Need To Know!



Invasive species are taking over parks and natural areas throughout Pennsylvania, making hiking and backpacking difficult and damaging valuable habitat. Luckily hikers can play a critical role in slowing the spread of invasives.

“Invasive species” are non-native plants and animals that can cause harm to the economy, environment and human health.

Invasive plants tend to grow quickly and thickly, potentially blocking trails. This makes it more difficult for people to hike and backpack.

Mile-a-minute, for example, is a vine that can grow up to a foot per day! It can quickly make trails impassable with its painful spines (*see photo below*).

Invasive species are also a concern to hikers and backpackers because they can ruin the beauty of Pennsylvania landscapes and lower

biodiversity (the variety of living things in an area). We need biodiversity to maintain healthy habitats.

Plus it's simply more interesting and exciting to hike and backpack through a landscape full of different shrubs, trees, flowers and grasses, rather than through a boring field of the same invasive plant. But that is exactly what could happen if an invasive species appears... all other species, including wildlife, may be chased out!



Make A Difference!

Now that you know why invasive species are a concern, what can you do to help minimize their spread? Luckily there are many small, easy steps you can take to keep invasives in check.

- Know how to identify some of the more common invasive species in your area, so you can avoid hiking through them. Visit <http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/plants/invasiveplants/index.htm> to learn more.
- Clean clothing, shoes, pets and backpacks before going to a new area to remove hitch-hiking seeds and plant parts (bag the dirt and seeds, place in the trash).
- Don't move firewood! Buy it locally. This will help prevent dangerous insects like emerald ash borer from spreading.
- Volunteer to help prevent and control invasive species. Contact your local state park or forest office, conservation district, watershed group or hiking club to get involved.

