

INVASIVE OR NOT?

An invasive species is one that's not native to an area and has the potential to spread at a harmful rate. Whether a plant is invasive or not depends on its characteristics and location. Many invasive plants have similar characteristics that make them more likely to take over an area.

Directions:

1. Choose a plant in a forest or other outside area to assess.

Plant name _____
 (the plant's actual name or a short description)

Location _____

2. Look for the following characteristics, which many invasive plant species share. Place a checkmark next to each characteristic that describes your plant. The more checkmarks, the more likely the plant is invasive.

Is a "bully"

- Grows up and over other plants, often smothering them.
- Forms a dense cluster of plants that the sun cannot penetrate.

Defends itself

- Has thorns, burrs or spines.
- Has chemical defenses that prevent other plants from growing. (Look for a lack of plants growing around your plant.)

Produces lots of seeds

- Has too many seeds to count.
- Its seeds are dispersed by the wind. (Look for seeds with wings.)
- Its seeds can stick to fabric or animal fur. (Look for seeds with barbs or hooks.)

Can spread through roots or fragments

- Has stems called "runners" that grow near the ground, with roots or stems coming from them.
- Has tiny rootlets growing from pieces of stem.

Displaces native species

- Is the main or only species growing in a 6-foot-wide circle around the plant.

Question:

Based on your findings, do you think this plant could be invasive? Why or why not?

Did You Know?

Controlling invasive plants in Oregon's forests is a constant battle for forest managers. Invasive plants such as Scotch broom, English ivy and non-native species of blackberry and thistles outcompete young trees and other native plants for sunlight, water and nutrients.