

### Plant Invaders: The Threat to Natural Ecosystems

Written by Quentin C.B. Cronk  
and Janice L. Fuller

Reviewed by Anne Gometz

This useful little manual is one in a series being cooperatively produced by the World Wide Fund for Nature, UNESCO, and the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. They are intended to aid in practical conservation work, especially in tropical countries. If the rest of the series is as well done as this title, they will be very useful to a wide audience.

The authors dive right into their subject on page one with "What are invasive plants?" Topics covered in the first section of the book include the nature of plant invasion, how invasion occurs, and action against invasive plants, the latter discussing everything from education and awareness to chemical and biological control. The writing style is semi-technical; you definitely don't have to be a botanist or ecologist to read with understanding. However, in keeping with its intended use as a handbook, there is for quick reference a three-page glossary of such technical terms as *adventive* and *endemic*.

The second portion of the book is devoted to case studies of seventeen species. One of these is *Melaleuca quinquenervia*, the tree that native plant loving Floridians love to hate. However a second example is *Andropogon virginicus*, native to North America including parts of Florida, but a serious invasive pest in Pacific areas, including Hawaii and parts of Australia. The moral to be drawn should be self evident, as are many morals: no plant is automatically good or bad. It was startling to read of the invasion of native melaleuca forests in some parts of the world by one or another species.

The case studies are followed by a list of over two hundred species which have been known to be invasive. Some have only minimal information while others provide more detail or links to further reading. Interestingly, as the authors point out on page 30, "Invasive species follow different patterns of taxonomic distribution and are

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found in a wider range of families than those in which weeds of cultivation appear." Taken in conjunction with the manual's text on predicting invasion, this list of species might be a useful indicator to gardeners, landscapers, and nursery operators of genera which have a known potential for trouble.

This is an excellent book. Succinct and understandable, it could be useful to readers ranging from a motivated high school student, biologist, someone in a plant-related business or land management, to an instructor in academia. As a librarian, this reviewer would suggest that readers of *The Palmetto* and members of FNPS suggest this publication as an addition to the collection of their local public or academic libraries, or even consider a donation by the local chapter. Then it will be there the next time someone (perhaps a local planner) says to you, "Just what is all this fuss about invasive plants?"

*Plant Invaders: The Threat to Natural Ecosystems*, by Quentin C. B. Cronk and Janice L. Fuller. ("People and Plants" Conservation Manuals) London: Chapman & Hall, 1995. 241 p., illus., bibliography. approx. \$32.00 (depending on exchange rate). Can be ordered by bookstores. ✨

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Thanks to Anne Gometz for this book review! Read something recently that we all ought to read? Reviews of books or other materials of interest to our readership are very welcome. See page 3 for information on contacting the editor. -Ed.

#### One more thing ...

Speaking of invasive plants, have you heard that North Carolina is spending a fortune planting oxeye daisy while next-door neighbor Tennessee is spending a fortune trying to eradicate it? Talk about a lack of cooperation and communication! Perhaps it's all a secret federal jobs program.