

Estimates of Cultivated, Native, Naturalized, & Weedy Plant Species in Florida

Carol Lippincott, in the Department of Botany at the University of Florida, was recently reviewing the literature on Florida's invasive plant species and noticed that several estimates of numbers of species were old enough to justify and update. Lippincott contacted the experts in Florida's flora and has provided the following information for Palmetto readers.

Cultivated Non-indigenous Plants

Dr. David W. Hall and a small group of IFAS (Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences) personnel years ago estimated that there were conservatively at least 25,000 species, including some cultivars, of non-indigenous plants being cultivated somewhere in Florida. (Personal communication between Hall and Carol Lippincott.)

Native plus Naturalized Non-indigenous

The Atlas of Florida Vascular Plants states that there are 4020 native plus naturalized vascular plant species in Florida (Dr. Richard Wunderlin et al., University of South Florida, Institute of Systematic Botany, 1995, available on Internet website).

Naturalized Non-indigenous

Based on personal communication at the Endangered Plant Advisory Council meeting on May 1, 1996, Dan Austin and Dan Ward estimate that there are about 1000 non-indigenous plant species naturalized (growing on their own without cultivation) in Florida.

Weeds

Dr. Hall estimates that there are at least 750 non-indigenous plant species that are economically important weeds in Florida. He does not think that there is usually a clear distinction between weeds in agricultural and urban areas and in natural areas.

Weeds in Natural Areas

The Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council's 1995 List of Most Invasive Plants contains ninety three non-indigenous species. Dr. Hall states that many more species could legitimately be added to this list. This is interesting in light of the controversy that often arises from the number of plants on the current list.

