



Wisconsin's Urban Forestry Best Management Practices for Preventing the Introduction and Spread of Invasive Species

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Thanks to urban forestry stakeholders across the state, Wisconsin now has a set of urban forestry Best Management Practices (BMPs) for preventing the introduction and spread of invasive species. The adoption of these BMPs by practitioners will help to protect, maintain and enhance Wisconsin's urban and community forests.

It all began in 2004 when the Wisconsin Council on Forestry (WCOF) identified the threat of invasive species as the most critical issue facing Wisconsin's forests. Invasive species (including plants, insects and diseases) can kill trees, reduce the benefits provided by our forests, decrease overall biodiversity and burden property owners with exorbitant control costs.

In response, the WCOF initiated efforts to develop voluntary Best Management Practices for Invasive Species. The Forestry Invasives Leadership Team was established to oversee these efforts. Four different BMP tracks, each with their own advisory committee, were created to fully address invasive species issues in all of Wisconsin's forested areas. These include: Forestry BMPs, Recreation BMPs, Urban Forestry BMPs, and Transportation & Utility Rights-of-Way BMPs.

The Wisconsin Urban Forestry Council recognized the importance of this monumental task and became involved as a co-sponsor of the Urban Forestry track. With their help, an Urban Forestry BMP advisory committee of 21 representatives from the green industry, government agencies, municipalities, non-profit organizations and trade associations was formed. A technical team was created to work in collaboration with the advisory committee in developing this set of voluntary guidelines. The entire process was one of consensus. Each advisory committee member needed to be in support of the BMPs in order for the manual to be produced and finalized.

The Urban Forestry BMP Advisory Committee and Technical Team were made up of representatives from:

- Wisconsin Urban Forestry Council
- Wisconsin Nursery Association
- Wisconsin Arborist Association
- Wisconsin Landscape Contractors Association
- Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources – Division of Forestry
- UW–Madison Agronomy
- UW–Madison Landscape Architecture
- Town of Menominee

- UW–Madison Horticulture
- City of Oak Creek
- Wisconsin Garden Club Federation
- Wisconsin Turfgrass Association
- UW–Extension
- UW–Stevens Point College of Natural Resources
- American Society of Landscape Architects – Wisconsin Chapter
- Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection
- Invasive Plant Association of Wisconsin
- Wisconsin Park and Recreation Association
- City of Madison
- Door County Invasive Species Team
- Wal-Mart
- The Park People of Milwaukee County

A draft of *Wisconsin's Urban Forestry Best Management Practices for Preventing the Introduction and Spread of Invasive Species* was put out for public comment during the month of July. Many thoughtful comments were received and appropriate changes were made to the manual. This final draft received full support from the Wisconsin Urban Forestry Council and the Forestry Invasives Leadership Team before it was formally accepted by the Wisconsin Council on Forestry. The manual is available online at <http://council.wisconsinforestry.org/invasives/urban/>.

A unique challenge of addressing invasive species collectively is the large and growing number of species that threaten Wisconsin forests. Effective guidelines needed to address many different threats and a wide range of appropriate responses. It was also necessary for them to be easily adapted to address newly emerging threats. The Urban Forestry BMPs do just that. The resulting manual is a set of voluntary guidelines addressed to arborists, urban foresters, nursery growers, retailers, landscape architects, landscape contractors, grounds managers, non-profits, local governments, private property owners and others. The document contains recommendations on incorporating invasive species considerations into routine urban forestry activities.

The UF BMP manual is divided into chapters based on urban forestry practices: Planning, Design, Sales, Planting & Installation, Management/Maintenance, Sanitation & Debris Disposal, Research & Monitoring, and Education. Each chapter is written to stand alone, so a BMP may be

repeated in several different chapters. Considerations accompany each of the BMPs in order to provide additional information, examples or suggestions. The beginning of the document contains a "Scope & Purpose Statement" and a "How to Use This Manual" section, both of which help set the stage for what is contained in the manual. The last appendix is a simple listing of all the UF BMPs contained within.

Below is an example of a BMP and one of its considerations.

- ▶ **BMP 8.1: Prior to relocating equipment, vehicles and trailers, remove soil and debris from exterior surfaces by scraping, brushing, washing or using other methods to minimize the risk of transporting propagules.**

Considerations:

- c. Preferred locations for equipment cleaning areas are those where:
 - Equipment is unloaded and loaded.
 - Invasives are less likely to spread from cleaned equipment (e.g., a blacktopped parking lot). Collect, bag and dispose of properly.
 - Invasive species are already established.
 - Monitoring can be conducted at a later date.

We all have a hand in reducing the negative impacts of invasive species. The prevention and control of invasive species will require modifying behaviors, values and beliefs and changing the way decisions are made. A successful plan to address invasive species issues will depend on the understanding and acceptance of the magnitude and urgency of the invasive species problem. Because invasives do not respect boundaries, they, like urban forests, are best managed on various levels of scale. Individual property owners, urban forestry practitioners, professionals, local, state and federal governments and special interest groups all have a hand in the management of invasives in our urban and community forests. The UF BMPs serve as the initial step for management by helping to prevent the introduction and spread of invasive species.

Familiarity with the BMPs and their considerations is the first step of implementation. Know which BMPs relate to the urban

forestry activities you are involved in. For example, landscape architects have design considerations related to invasives; property managers and tree care companies have management and debris disposal considerations. The BMPs are meant to be incorporated into daily routines and existing systems already in place. The manual recognizes a wide range of possible response options to any invasive species situation. Determining appropriate actions involves complex decisions that are context dependent. Practitioners applying BMPs need to select strategies and responses appropriate for their circumstances. Implementation of the Urban Forestry BMPs will need to include education and outreach and will require a long-term commitment.

Ultimately, everyone involved in the care and management of trees, shrubs and other vegetation shares in the responsibility of preventing and controlling invasives. Individuals, companies and organizations alike will be helping to protect, maintain and enhance Wisconsin's urban and community forests by the adoption of these Urban Forestry BMPs. They provide our state with one of its best opportunities to prevent the introduction and establishment of invasive species and limit their spread. By taking reasonable and practical precautions today, we can help protect Wisconsin's urban forests and other lands into the future.