

Here is how we combat invasive alien species across Helsinki's allotment gardens, allotments and summer hut areas

Invasive alien species are combated together in Helsinki

The City of Helsinki is aiming to prevent damage caused by invasive alien species by pre-emptively preventing them from spreading and combating species that have spread already. However, the City cannot do this alone – the prevention efforts call for collaboration.

The City has been combating invasive alien species together with organisations, associations and volunteers.

Combating invasive alien species at allotment gardens, at allotments and in summer hut areas is the lessee's responsibility, but the City provides advice and support where needed, as the prevention efforts serve everyone's best interests.

Why must invasive alien species be combated?

Invasive alien species are plants and animals that people have purposefully or accidentally transferred from their original habitat to a new area. An alien species is classified as invasive when it begins to compete with the original range of species for living space or changes the habitat in a manner that is unfavourable for the original range of species and people.

Many invasive alien species reproduce and spread very efficiently. For example, a single Spanish slug can fertilise itself if needed and produce up to 500 eggs in one summer. Many invasive alien plants produce thousands of seeds per year and are also capable of growing a new shoot from even a tiny piece of root or rhizome.

For these reasons, it is important to make an effort to prevent invasive alien species from spreading. The prevention efforts are the most efficient when targeting the species' key spreading methods. Many invasive alien species have spread into nature from gardens and cultivation areas, and the only way to stop them from spreading is to collaborate to eradicate them from the entire area.

Species to be combated

1. Legally prescribed to be combated: must be eradicated

The national list of invasive alien species is determined in the Act on Managing the Risk Caused by Alien Species (1709/2715). The Act prohibits the following species from being imported, grown, sold or possessed and released into the environment.

- Hogweeds (*Heracleum persicum* group)
- Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*)
 - *The touch-me-not balsam (Impatiens noli-tangere) is a native species in Finland and must not be eradicated.*
- Knotweeds (*Reynoutria* group: Japanese, giant and Bohemian knotweed)
- Rugosa rose (*Rosa rugosa*)
- Large-leaved lupine (*Lupinus polyphyllus*)
- Aleutian ragwort (*Jacobaea cannabifolia*)
- Large goldenrods (*Solidago* group: Canada, late and giant goldenrod)
 - *The European goldenrod (Solidago virgaurea) is a native species in Finland and must not be eradicated.*
- False spiraea (*Sorbaria sorbifolia*)
- White meadowsweet (*Spiraea alba*; incl. *Spiraea alba* var. *alba* and *Spiraea alba* var. *latifolia*)
- Sycamore maple (*Acer pseudoplatanus*)
- Spanish slug (*Arion vulgaris*)
- The *Krynckillus melanocephalus* slug

2. Species that must be prevented from spreading into the environment: should be removed pre-emptively

Prohibition to release into the environment

- Hedge bindweed (*Calystegia sepium*)
- Butterburs (*Petasites*)
- Common Michaelmas daisy (*Symphotrichum salignum*)
- Red elderberry (*Sambucus racemosa*)
- White dogwood (*Cornus alba* ssp. *alba*)
- Running shadbush (*Amelanchier spicata*)
- Pin cherry (*Prunus pensylvanica*)
- Creeping yellow cress (*Rorippa sylvestris*)

What you can do yourself, with your neighbours or as an association:

- **Find information and identify correctly.**
Learn about the different invasive alien species and their prevention. Make sure that you have identified an invasive alien species correctly. For example, the prohibited rugosa rose can easily be confused with permitted cultivars bred for garden use. The *Vieraslajit.fi* website provides useful instructions for identifying invasive alien species.
- **Chart.**
Walk around the area to chart the situation and take notes of any invasive species that you have found and identified. You can also take a look at what invasive alien species are growing outside your own area.
- **Handle garden waste correctly.**
Make sure that garden waste from the area is handled appropriately and in accordance with the City's instructions. For example, waste from food plants and other useful plants must not be left in the environment or an open compost heap, as it may benefit and increase the local rat population. See the City's instructions on the website: [Instructions for the use and management of the City of Helsinki's allotments \(PDF\)](#).

Check also whether there are any unpermitted plant waste dumpsites nearby. Report any dumpsites by contacting the customer service department of the [City of Helsinki Urban Environment Division](#) (tel. +358 9 310 22111 or palautteet.hel.fi).

- **As a rule, only plant species that are not quick to spread.**
You can also read the [Helsinki Urban Plant Life Guide](#) (kaupunkikasviopas.hel.fi, in Finnish), which provides information such as a list of what plant species the City no longer uses in its plantings.

Note! In summer hut areas, no plantings are allowed in the environment, nor can the terrain be altered in any other way.

- **Weed out or eradicate any invasive alien species you find in the area without delay.**
If prevention efforts can be started before an invasive alien species has an opportunity to spread and establish itself, the prevention process is easier and quicker. For example, start checking the most typical egg cluster hiding spots of invasive alien slug species from April onwards. Examples of such spots include moist and shady places such as leaf piles and boards lying on the ground. Look for and remove any slugs throughout the summer. Remember to kill the slugs before placing them in mixed waste.

- **Organise a voluntary work event.**

Prioritise the prevention sites based on the time available, the number of people at your disposal, and the harmfulness and growth area of the invasive alien species. In terms of mitigating the spreading of species, it is better to first only focus the prevention efforts on newly appeared growth areas before larger areas that have remained the same size for years.

The City of Helsinki provides instructions and support for organising invasive alien species prevention events. The City will pick up and dispose of the waste generated during the event, provided that the disposal is agreed upon well in advance. If you have any questions about invasive alien species prevention events, please email puistokummit@hel.fi.

- **Repeat the prevention process.**

Eradicating an invasive alien species from a site usually requires prevention efforts carried out several years in a row and repeated up to three times during the growth season. The site should be monitored even after a successful prevention process.

- **Ask for information and help.**

You can receive help and advice regarding invasive alien species and their prevention from the Hyötykasviyhdistys garden association. They also provide support for organising an invasive alien species prevention event. Any enquiries can be sent by email to neuvonta@hyotykasviyhdistys.fi.

More information and instructions:

- Instructions on combating harmful invasive alien species provided with a lease agreement (2019):
https://stplattaprod.blob.core.windows.net/helfikuvaproduct/vieraslajiohjeet_a5_en_netti.pdf
- Hyötykasviyhdistys garden association's instructions for allotment cultivators (in Finnish):
<https://hyotykasviyhdistys.fi/palstat/ohjeita-palstaviljelijalle/>
- Instructions for handling invasive alien plant waste correctly (in Finnish):
<https://vieraslajit-dev.laji.fi/ajankohtaista/i-1934>
- Lists of invasive alien species in the EU and Finland:
<https://vieraslajit.fi/lajit>
- Frequently asked questions about invasive alien species:
<https://vieraslajit.fi/info/i-151>