

**Tennessee Invasive Plant Council**  
**Criteria for Evaluating Plant Species for Invasiveness in Tennessee**  
 December 2009

Criteria that must be met for plants to fall into the following categories: Severe Threat, Significant Threat, Lesser Threat, Alert.

Invasiveness category	Criteria that must be met for each invasive category
<b>Base criteria</b>	<b>1-4</b>
<b>Severe threat</b>	<b>5 or 6</b>
<b>Significant threat</b>	<b>All plants within this category must meet criteria 7 and criteria 8 or 9</b>
<b>Lesser threat</b>	<b>10-11</b>
<b>Alert</b>	<b>12 or 13 or 14</b>

**Base Criteria:**

- 1) The plant species or sub-species or variety is established outside of cultivation and is non-native to some portion of the region of North America within which it occurs.
- 2) The species has the potential for rapid growth, high seed or propagule production and dispersal, and establishment in natural communities of North America or in managed areas where it is not desired or the species persists in free living infestations (outside of cultivation) within Tennessee.
- 3) The species occurs in the state of Tennessee
- 4) The species is known to out-compete other species in native plant communities within the state of Tennessee.

**Severe Threat:**

- 5) The species meets criteria 1-2 and is listed as a noxious weed in Tennessee or by the federal government.
- Or 6). The species meets criteria 1-4 and occurs in at least 30 counties (ca. 30% of Tennessee counties), presents substantial management difficulties (For example, *Lespedeza cuneata* at a high density and narrow distribution poses less of a threat to native populations and is easier to manage than *Lespedeza cuneata* at lower density dispersed over large areas and growing among off-target native species, potentially affected by herbicide use while *Microstegium vimineum* occurs in dense populations creates substantial seed banks that are unmanageable over the short-term and require long-term efforts).

**Significant Threat:**

- 7) The species meets criteria 1-4 and meets either 8 or 9 below.
- And 8) The species occurs within at least 30 counties in Tennessee and management does not present substantial difficulties.

Or **9)** The species occurs in 10 to 29 counties within Tennessee and presents substantial management difficulties.

**Lesser Threat:**

**10)** The species meets criteria 1 through 4.

And **11)** The species occurs in 10 to 29 counties within Tennessee and does not present substantial management difficulties.

**Alert (comments):**

**12)** The species meets criteria 1 through 2 and shows invasiveness in similar habitats to those found in Tennessee.

Or **13)** 1 through 3 and shows invasiveness in similar habitats to those found in Tennessee.

Or **14)** The species meets criteria 1-4, occurs in fewer than 10 counties and is considered a severe threat in adjacent states or poses substantial management difficulties.