LEISURE SERVICES DEPARTMENT INVASIVE SPECIES MANAGEMENT PLAN 2022



Contents

BACKGROUND	OVERVIEW OF INVASIVE SPECIES MANAGEMENT PLAN	1
JUSTIFICATION FOR INVASIVE SPECIES TREATMENT/REMOVAL	BACKGROUND	1
INVENTORY OF INVASIVE PLANT SPECIES THAT INTERFERE WITH MANAGEMENT GOALS (TOP 5)	INTRODUCTION	1
Old World and Japanese Climbing Fern (Lygodium microphyllum and japonicum) Category I	JUSTIFICATION FOR INVASIVE SPECIES TREATMENT/REMOVAL	2
Coral Ardisia (Ardisia crenata) Category I	Inventory of Invasive Plant Species that interfere with Management Goals (Top 5)	2
Ceasar's Weed (Urena lobata) Category I 3 Skunk Vine (Paederia foetida) Category I 3 Sword Fern (Nephrolepis cordifolia) Category I 3 INVASIVE SPECIES MANAGEMENT PLAN 4 GENERAL MANAGEMENT PHILOSOPHY 4 SETTING PRIORITIES 5 SUMMARY OF SPECIFIC ACTIONS PLANNED 7 Herbicides 7 PHYSICAL/MECHANICAL CONTROLS 7 Hand Pulling 7 Mowing 8 REFERENCES 10 TABLE OF FIGURES	Old World and Japanese Climbing Fern (Lygodium microphyllum and japonicum) Category I	2
Skunk Vine (Paederia foetida) Category I	, , ,	
Sword Fern (Nephrolepis cordifolia) Category I		
INVASIVE SPECIES MANAGEMENT PLAN		
GENERAL MANAGEMENT PHILOSOPHY	Sword Fern (Nephrolepis cordifolia) Category I	3
SETTING PRIORITIES 5 SUMMARY OF SPECIFIC ACTIONS PLANNED 7 Herbicides 7 PHYSICAL/MECHANICAL CONTROLS 7 Hand Pulling 7 Mowing 8 REFERENCES 10 TABLE OF FIGURES	INVASIVE SPECIES MANAGEMENT PLAN	4
### SUMMARY OF SPECIFIC ACTIONS PLANNED	GENERAL MANAGEMENT PHILOSOPHY	4
Herbicides	SETTING PRIORITIES	5
PHYSICAL/MECHANICAL CONTROLS	SUMMARY OF SPECIFIC ACTIONS PLANNED	7
### Hand Pulling	Herbicides	7
Mowing	Physical/Mechanical Controls	7
REFERENCES	Hand Pulling	7
TABLE OF FIGURES	Mowing	8
	REFERENCES	10
Table I Inventory of Plant Species that Interfere with Management Goals	TABLE OF FIGURES	
	TABLE I INVENTORY OF PLANT SPECIES THAT INTERFERE WITH MANAGEMENT GOALS	3
TABLE II CURRENT EXTENT OF SPECIES: PRIORITIES ARE ASSIGNED TO SPECIES IN ORDER TO FIRST. PREVENT THE	TABLE II CURRENT EXTENT OF SPECIES: PRIORITIES ARE ASSIGNED TO SPECIES IN ORDER TO FIRST, PREVENT THE	
ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW WEED SPECIES; SECOND, ELIMINATE SMALL, RAPIDLY-GROWING INFESTATIONS; THIRD,	•	RD.
PREVENT LARGE INFESTATIONS FROM EXPANDING; AND FOURTH, REDUCE OR ELIMINATE LARGE INFESTATIONS5		-
Table III Difficulty of Control		
Table IV Prioritized List		

OVERVIEW OF INVASIVE SPECIES MANAGEMENT PLAN

Invasive species control is part of the overall site management and restoration program for the Leisure Services Department (LS). Implementing preventative programs to keep our sites free of species that are not yet established but which are known to be pests elsewhere in the region will be one of the goals. Setting priorities for the control or elimination of invasive species that have already established, according to their actual and potential impacts on native species and communities, will be focused upon.

An adaptive management strategy will be used to treat invasive species. First, we establish and record the goals for the site. Second, we identify species that block us from reaching these goals and assign them priorities based on the severity of their impacts. Third, we consider methods for controlling them or otherwise diminishing their impacts and, if necessary, re-order priorities based on likely impacts on target and non-target species. Fourth, we develop weed control plans based on this information. Fifth, the plan is implemented, and results of our management actions monitored. Sixth, we evaluate the effectiveness of our methods in light of the site goals (taken from the Land Management Plans), and use this information to modify and improve control priorities, methods and plans. Finally, start the cycle again by establishing new/modified goals.

We set priorities in the hope of minimizing the total, long-term workload. Therefore, we act to prevent new infestations and assign highest priority to existing infestations that are the fastest growing, most disruptive, and affect the most highly valued area(s). We also consider the difficulty of control, giving higher priority to infestations we think we are most likely to control with available technology and resources.

BACKGROUND

The Leisure Services Department was reorganized to the present day structure in 2007 and 2008. Initially, invasive plant control was being conducted at the program level in Natural Lands. As part of the Department and County strategic plan, a formalized plan to control invasive plants was mandated throughout Leisure Services. The following is background information on the two Divisions within LS.

The Greenways and Natural Lands (GNL) Division encompasses Natural Lands, passive parks, trails and medians. The Parks and Recreation Division includes all active parks. The approach to treating these areas differs greatly and therefore LS will be taking a tiered approach to maintenance control of invasive species.

Tier I

Under this category all invasive species will be treated to at least a maintenance control level. Natural Lands is the only program under this category.

Tier II

Target species of FLEPPC (now called FISC) Category I and II will be identified and treated when possible in passive parks and trails.

<u>Tier III</u>

Target species will be treated when they hamper activities at the active parks.

Medians are treated under contracted services.

INTRODUCTION

<u>Tier I Area</u>

The Natural Lands Program (NLP) began actively managing properties purchased through two County referendums, starting in 1995. The properties total approximately 6,600 acres and encompass a diverse suite of habitats including

sandhill, scrub, xeric hammock, scrubby flatwoods, mesic flatwoods, prairie hammock, hydric hammock, wet flatwoods, baygall, floodplain marsh, strand swamp, depression marsh, dome swamp, and flatwoods/prairie lake.

The NLP is committed to the stewardship of natural lands properties and the conservation of the natural flora and fauna. Management goals are to preserve and protect the existing natural plant communities, facilitate restoration where necessary, and conduct public education programs.

There are many rare and listed plant and animal species, located on NLP properties that depend on good land management practices in order to sustain and/or increase their populations. Removing invasive species from NLP properties is one way to maintain healthy plant and animal communities.

Tier II Areas

There are 61 miles of Showcase Trails and approximately 1,000 acres of passive parks. These parks and trails are not staffed but are inspected weekly and invasive species are noted. The Division is committed to treating certain FISC Category I & II species in the passive parks and trails, especially noxious vines.

Tier III Areas

There are four active parks. We will take action only when careful consideration indicates leaving the weed unchecked will result in more damage than controlling it with available methods.

Justification for Invasive Species Treatment/Removal

Florida is a magnet for many invasive species. Due to the warm, tropical climate, many foreign species thrive here. Most invasive species have proved to be impossible to eradicate and are extremely costly to treat. These invasive species displace native species, effecting both ecosystem structure and function (i.e. melaleuca introduced into swamps in south Florida became monoculture stands that eliminated other native plant species and changed the hydrology of the area (Laroche, 1999)).

Seminole County Leisure Services properties have at least 38 invasive plant species and at least 5 invasive animal species (excluding feral cats and dogs). This plan only discusses invasive plant species. All of the invasive plant species require treatment and maintenance control (except where indicated above). Any newly discovered invasive plant species should be treated immediately and monitored for any recurrence.

In 1984, the Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council (FLEPPC) was formed to support the management of invasive plants in Florida's natural areas by providing a forum for the exchange of scientific, educational and technical information. In 2020, the name was changed to the Florida Invasive Species Council (FISC) to align with other states invasive plant councils and to update their terminology. FISC compiles a list of invasive plant species (as determined by professional botanists and other research scientists), splitting species into either Category I (they are altering native plant communities by displacing native species, changing community structures or ecological functions, or hybridizing with natives), or Category II (have increased in abundance or frequency but have not yet altered Florida plant communities to the extent shown by Category I species). This plan refers to this list in order to prioritize treatment.

Terminology

In an effort to standardize the language around invasive species, the University of Florida Extension office has recommended using the term "invasive" to describe a nonnative species that was introduced by humans and "does or can cause environmental or economic harm to humans" (lannone et al., 2021). The previous plan used the term "exotic" to describe invasive species, however the term nonnative better describes the species, and can be used for any species not native to the relevant region. A nonnative species does not have to be invasive, and can in fact be beneficial in some cases, but an invasive species does have to be nonnative.

Inventory of Invasive Plant Species that interfere with Management Goals (Top 5)
Old World and Japanese Climbing Fern (Lygodium microphyllum and japonicum) Category I

Old World climbing fern, *L. microphyllum*, is a non-native vine that is rapidly invading flatwoods, and hardwood and cypress swamps of southern and central Florida, and it is moving north. Since 1993, the area infested in Florida has grown to nearly 210,000 acres. A related species, Japanese climbing fern, *L. japonicum*, is spreading south into central Florida, from the north. Old World climbing fern smothers plants, including understory and canopy trees, and it creates thick mats of plant material on the ground. It is flammable and carries fire into the canopy and across wetlands. Japanese climbing fern does not appear to climb as much as *L. microphyllum* in central Florida; however, it does spread on the ground. Land managers and property owners should be vigilant for these weeds. Early detection and elimination can significantly reduce control costs and efforts.

Coral Ardisia (Ardisia crenata) Category I

Coral ardisia has been an ornamental plant for many years (also known as Christmas berry for its bright red berries), and escaped cultivation in 1982. Originally from Southeast Asia, it was declared a noxious weed in 2014 and can no longer be sold or purchased in Florida. It is able to regrow quickly after cutting, and quickly forms monocultures due to the large production of berries each year. Identifiable characteristics include the crenate pattern on the leaves (scalloped-shape leaf edges) and the bright red berries.

Coral ardisia is found on a number of properties, with very large infestations on Spring Hammock Preserve and Black Hammock Wilderness Area. The goal is to at least reach maintenance control with this species.

Ceasar's Weed (Urena lobata) Category I

This plant is in the same family as hibiscus and is occasionally referred to as hibiscus bur. Leaves are pubescent and it produces a fruit that has Velcro-like properties. The plant is originally from Asia and has invaded into moist tropic and subtropical environments. It colonizes disturbed areas and may become a monoculture in shaded areas.

The goal is to treat new infestations immediately and prevent existing infestations from expanding.

Skunk Vine (Paederia foetida) Category I

This species was introduced to the USDA Field Station near Brooksville before 1897. It is native to eastern and southern Asia and is illegal to possess, move or release, in Florida. It is a fast-growing vine with wide ranging adaptability. Invades disturbed and undisturbed areas including both xeric and wetland communities. It creates dense canopies and causes damage or death to native vegetation. The leaves are opposite, oval to lance shaped. It flowers late summer and early fall. The plant emits a pungent odor.

The goal is to treat new infestations immediately and prevent existing infestations from expanding.

Sword Fern (Nephrolepis cordifolia) Category I

The origin of this species is still uncertain. It forms dense stands in partial or full shade hammock areas, becoming a monoculture. It occurs throughout Florida. There is a native species, *Nephrolepis exaltata*, which can be hard to distinguish from the invasive species.

The goal is to at least reach maintenance control.

Table I Inventory of Plant Species that Interfere with Management Goals

Common Name	Scientific Name	Population Status	FLEPPC Category
Air Potato	Dioscorea bulbifera	Stable	I
Arrowhead vine	Syngonium podophyllum	Increasing	I
Balsam-apple	Momordica charantia	Increasing	II
Brazilian Pepper	Schinus terebinthefolius	Increasing	I
Britton's Wild Petunia	Ruellia simplex	Stable	I

Caesar's Weed	Urena lobata	Increasing	ı
Camphor Tree	Cinnamomum camphora	Increasing	<u>'</u>
Castor Bean	Ricinus communis	Stable	II
Cat's Claw Vine	Dolichandra unguis-cati	Increasing	"
Chinaberry	Melia azedarach	Stable	ı II
Chinese Tallow			11
	Sapium sebiferum	Increasing	<u> </u>
Cogongrass	Imperata cylindrica	Increasing	
Coral Ardisia	Ardisia crenata	Increasing	<u> </u>
Creeping Oxeye	Sphagneticola trilobata	Increasing	II
Earleaf Acacia	Acacia auriculiformis	Stable	I
Elephant Ear	Xanthosoma sagittifolium	Increasing	II
Guineagrass	Panicum maximum	Increasing	II.
Heavenly Bamboo	Nandina domestica	Stable	I
Japanese Climbing Fern	Lygodium japonicum	Increasing	I
Old World Climbing Fern	Lygodium microphyllum	Increasing	I
Lantana	Lantana camara	Stable	I
Mimosa	Albizia julibrissin	Stable	I
Napier Grass	Pennisetum purpureum	Stable	I
Natal Grass	Rhynchelytrum repens	Increasing	I
Paper Mulberry	Broussonetia papyrifera	Increasing	II
Paragrass	Urochloa mutica	Increasing	I
Pothos	Epipremnum pinnatum	Stable	II.
Queen Palm	Syagrus romanzoffiana	Stable	II.
Rosary Pea	Abrus precatorius	Stable	ı
Skunk Vine	Paederia foetida	Increasing	I
Surinam Cherry	Eugenia uniflora	Increasing	ı
Swordfern	Nephrolepis cordifolia	Increasing	I
Torpedo Grass	Panicum repens	Increasing	I
Tropical Soda Apple	Solanum viarum	Stable	ı
Two-leaf Nightshade	Solanum diphyllum	Increasing	II
Wax Begonia	Begonia cucullata	Stable	II
White-flowered Spiderwort	Tradescantia fluminensis	Increasing	I
Wild Taro	Colocasia esculenta	Increasing	I
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INVASIVE SPECIES MANAGEMENT PLAN

General Management Philosophy

Controlling invasive species is part of the overall management and restoration program in LS. The focus is placed on the desired species and communities, rather than on simply eliminating invasive species. Preventative programs will be implemented to discourage any new invasive species from establishing. This plan will help to set priorities for controlling or eliminating invasive species that are already established, according to their actual and potential impacts on native species and communities.

An adaptive management approach will be used to guide the program. Goals will be established, species that interfere with these goals will be assigned priorities based on their impacts. Methods for maintenance control or elimination will be established. Control plans will be developed based on likely impacts on target and non-target species. The plan will be implemented and results of management actions monitored. Staff will evaluate the effectiveness of the treatment

and use this information to modify and improve control priorities, methods and plans. When necessary, goals will be modified or new goals will be established.

Setting goals will help to minimize the total, long-term workload. Goals include the following; preventing new infestations, assigning high priority to existing infestations that are the fastest growing, ranking the importance of the infested site according to what type of plant community and the condition of the plant community, and finally considering the difficulty of control.

Preventing new infestations falls under the Early Detection Rapid Response (EDRR) method that involve immediate eradication of any new infestations or new invasive species discovered with long-term monitoring.

Setting Priorities

Table II Current Extent of Species: Priorities are assigned to species in order to first, prevent the establishment of new weed species; second, eliminate small, rapidly-growing infestations; third, prevent large infestations from expanding; and fourth, reduce or eliminate large infestations.

Rank	Common Name	Scientific Name	Population Status	FLEPPC Category
С	Air Potato	Dioscorea bulbifera	Stable	I
D	Arrowhead vine	Syngonium podophyllum	Increasing	I
В	Balsam-apple	Momordica charantia	Increasing	II
В	Brazilian Pepper	Schinus terebinthefolius	Increasing	I
Е	Britton's Wild Petunia	Ruellia simplex	Stable	1
В	Caesar's Weed	Urena lobata	Increasing	1
В	Camphor Tree	Cinnamomum camphora	Increasing	1
F	Castor Bean	Ricinus communis	Stable	II .
D	Cat's Claw Vine	Dolichandra unguis-cati	Increasing	1
Е	Chinaberry	Melia azedarach	Stable	11
D	Chinese Tallow	Sapium sebiferum	Increasing	1
D	Cogongrass	Imperata cylindrica	Increasing	1
В	Coral Ardisia	Ardisia crenata	Increasing	1
В	Creeping Oxeye	Sphagneticola trilobata	Increasing	11
E	Earleaf Acacia	Acacia auriculiformis	Stable	I
D	Elephant Ear	Xanthosoma sagittifolium	Increasing	II
D	Guineagrass	Panicum maximum	Increasing	11
Е	Heavenly Bamboo	Nandina domestica	Stable	1
Е	Japanese Climbing Fern	Lygodium japonicum	Increasing	I
Α	Old World Climbing Fern	Lygodium microphyllum	Increasing	1
С	Lantana	Lantana camara	Stable	I
Е	Mimosa	Albizia julibrissin	Stable	I
Е	Napier Grass	Pennisetum purpureum	Stable	I
В	Natal Grass	Rhynchelytrum repens	Increasing	I
Е	Paper Mulberry	Broussonetia papyrifera	Increasing	11
В	Paragrass	Urochloa mutica	Increasing	1
Е	Pothos	Epipremnum pinnatum	Stable	II
Е	Queen Palm	Syagrus romanzoffiana	Stable	11
F	Rosary Pea	Abrus precatorius	Stable	I
В	Skunk Vine	Paederia foetida	Increasing	I
Е	Surinam Cherry	Eugenia uniflora	Increasing	I

В	Swordfern	Nephrolepis cordifolia	Increasing	I
В	Torpedo Grass	Panicum repens	Increasing	I
Е	Tropical Soda Apple	Solanum viarum	Stable	I
D	Two-leaf Nightshade	Solanum diphyllum	Increasing	II
Е	Wax Begonia	Begonia cucullata	Stable	II
D	White-flowered Spiderwort	Tradescantia fluminensis	Increasing	I
D	Wild Taro	Colocasia esculenta	Increasing	1

- **A** = Species present as <u>new populations</u> or outliers of larger infestations, especially if they are expanding rapidly.
- **B** = Species present in large infestations that continue to expand.
- ${\it C}$ = Species present in large infestations that are not expanding, or stable.
- **D** = Species present in small infestations that are increasing.
- **E** = Species present in small infestations that are stable or decreasing.
- **F** = Species present that are stable.

Table III Difficulty of Control.

Rank	Common Name	Scientific Name	Population Status	FLEPPC Category
Α	Air Potato	Dioscorea bulbifera	Stable	I
С	Arrowhead vine	Syngonium podophyllum	Increasing	Ι
С	Balsam-apple	Momordica charantia	Increasing	II
С	Brazilian Pepper	Schinus terebinthefolius	Increasing	Ι
С	Britton's Wild Petunia	Ruellia simplex	Stable	Ι
С	Caesar's Weed	Urena lobata	Increasing	Ι
В	Camphor Tree	Cinnamomum camphora	Increasing	Ι
Α	Castor Bean	Ricinus communis	Stable	II
Α	Cat's Claw Vine	Dolichandra unguis-cati	Increasing	Ι
Α	Chinaberry	Melia azedarach	Stable	II.
Α	Chinese Tallow	Sapium sebiferum	Increasing	I
С	Cogongrass	Imperata cylindrica	Increasing	I
С	Coral Ardisia	Ardisia crenata	Increasing	Ι
D	Creeping Oxeye	Sphagneticola trilobata	Increasing	II.
Е	Earleaf Acacia	Acacia auriculiformis	Stable	I
D	Elephant Ear	Xanthosoma sagittifolium	Increasing	II.
С	Guineagrass	Panicum maximum	Increasing	II.
Е	Heavenly Bamboo	Nandina domestica	Stable	I
С	Japanese Climbing Fern	Lygodium japonicum	Increasing	Ι
С	Lantana	Lantana camara	Stable	I
Α	Mimosa	Albizia julibrissin	Stable	I
Α	Napier Grass	Pennisetum purpureum	Stable	I
С	Natal Grass	Rhynchelytrum repens	Increasing	Ι
С	Old World Climbing Fern	Lygodium microphyllum	Increasing	I
Α	Paper Mulberry	Broussonetia papyrifera	Increasing	II
D	Paragrass	Urochloa mutica	Increasing	I
D	Pothos	Epipremnum pinnatum	Stable	II
Α	Queen Palm	Syagrus romanzoffiana	Stable	II
Α	Rosary Pea	Abrus precatorius	Stable	I
С	Skunk Vine	Paederia foetida	Increasing	I

Α	Surinam Cherry	Eugenia uniflora	Increasing	I
С	Swordfern	Nephrolepis cordifolia	Increasing	1
D	Torpedo Grass	Panicum repens	Increasing	Ţ
Α	Tropical Soda Apple	Solanum viarum	Stable	I
Α	Two-leaf Nightshade	Solanum diphyllum	Increasing	II
Α	Wax Begonia	Begonia cucullata	Stable	II
С	White-flowered Spiderwort	Tradescantia fluminensis	Increasing	I
С	Wild Taro	Colocasia esculenta	Increasing	1

- **A** = Species likely to be controlled or eliminated with available technology and resources and which desirable native species will replace with little further input.
- **B** = Species likely be controlled but will not be replaced by desirable natives without an active restoration program requiring substantial resources.
- **C** = Species difficult to control with available technology and resources and/or whose control will likely result in substantial damage to other, desirable species.
- **D** = Species unlikely to be controlled with available technology and resources.
- **E** = Species is not in need of control measures but should be monitored.

Summary of Specific Actions Planned

The three principal approaches to control of invasive plants in LS are: (1) chemical (2) physical/mechanical, and (3) monitoring. Monitoring will help to quantify results of chemical, physical and mechanical treatment. Long-term success will depend on receiving grants for treatment, dedicating staff time to control measures and evaluating progress. Staff will refer to property management plans for more specific treatment methods and priorities.

Herbicides

Herbicides are an incredibly important tool for upland invasive plant management. Many species require herbicide treatment, as hand-pulling, cutting, or other types of mechanical treatment will not control the invasive plant. Herbicide use is also more efficient and cost-effective than other types of treatment in many situations. Herbicides are carefully examined by the Department before being used on any of the properties, and environmental concerns are addressed through proper use and disposal.

Herbicides work through several modes of action, including the inhibition of electron transport, growth regulation through auxin/cytokinin mimicry, amino acid synthesis inhibition, seedling growth inhibition, photosynthesis inhibition, lipid synthesis inhibition, cell membrane disruption, and pigment inhibition. Herbicides can be divided into two categories: selective and non-selective. Selective herbicides affect some types of plants, but not others. For example, some selective herbicides will kill broadleaf weeds, but not affect grasses. These are popular for turf grass areas. Non-selective herbicides can kill most types of plant. They are used to control all vegetation in an area or as spot treatments on deep-rooted plants and those that spread by rhizomes.

Physical/Mechanical Controls

Hand Pulling

Hand and mechanical pulling has been around since the dawn of agriculture. It is by far the least invasive method of control for weeds. Studies done by The Nature Conservancy (TNC) have shown that "weeding", while labor intensive

and expensive, can effectively reduce small patches of invasive plants. When used in combination with other control techniques, control can reach up to 100%. This method will be used specifically with volunteers. The GNL Division works with the Seminole Education, Restoration & Volunteer Program to organize group invasive removal projects on our properties, as well as individual volunteers.

Mowing

For certain plants, it has been shown that mowing prior to or at seed onset reduces the spread, thereby maintaining current invasive plant populations. Although mowing can be an effective mechanism for invasive plant control, it's vital that mowing take place during the optimum life stage of the plant, thereby avoiding the risk of increasing the plant's population. This method has been used on natal grass in conjunction with other methods and will be evaluated in the future for other species.

Table IV Prioritized List.

Priority	Common Name	Scientific Name	Population	FLEPPC Category
			Status	
1	Cogongrass	Imperata cylindrica	Increasing	1
2	Coral Ardisia	Ardisia crenata	Increasing	I
3	Skunk Vine	Paederia foetida	Increasing	I
4	Old World Climbing	Lygodium microphyllum	Increasing	I
	Fern			
5	Brazilian Pepper	Schinus terebinthefolius	Increasing	I
6	Japanese Climbing	Lygodium japonicum	Increasing	1
	Fern			
7	Swordfern	Nephrolepis cordifolia	Increasing	1
8	Chinese Tallow	Sapium sebiferum	Increasing	1
9	Caesar's Weed	Urena lobata	Increasing	1
10	Guineagrass	Panicum maximum	Increasing	II
11	Natal Grass	Rhynchelytrum repens	Increasing	1
12	Balsam-apple	Momordica charantia	Increasing	II
13	Cat's Claw Vine	Dolichandra unguis-cati	Increasing	1
14	Camphor Tree	Cinnamomum	Increasing	1
		camphora		
15	Two-leaf Nightshade	Solanum diphyllum	Increasing	II
16	White-flowered	Tradescantia	Increasing	I
	Spiderwort	fluminensis		
17	Air Potato	Dioscorea bulbifera	Stable	I
18	Tropical Soda Apple	Solanum viarum	Stable	I
19	Lantana	Lantana camara	Stable	1
20	Rosary Pea	Abrus precatorius	Stable	1
21	Wild Taro	Colocasia esculenta	Increasing	1
22	Britton's Wild Petunia	Ruellia simplex	Stable	1
23	Creeping Oxeye	Sphagneticola trilobata	Increasing	II
24	Paper Mulberry	Broussonetia papyrifera	Increasing	II
25	Chinaberry	Melia azedarach	Stable	II
26	Arrowhead vine	Syngonium	Increasing	I
		podophyllum		
27	Queen Palm	Syagrus romanzoffiana	Stable	II
28	Surinam Cherry	Eugenia uniflora	Increasing	I
29	Paragrass	Urochloa mutica	Increasing	1

30	Mimosa	Albizia julibrissin	Stable	I
31	Wax Begonia	Begonia cucullata	Stable	II
32	Torpedo Grass	Panicum repens	Increasing	1
33	Earleaf Acacia	Acacia auriculiformis	Stable	1
34	Elephant Ear	Xanthosoma	Increasing	II
		sagittifolium		
35	Napier Grass	Pennisetum purpureum	Stable	1
36	Pothos	Epipremnum pinnatum	Stable	II
37	Heavenly Bamboo	Nandina domestica	Stable	Ī
38	Castor Bean	Ricinus communis	Stable	II

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