

PRESS RELEASE

Massachusetts Invasive Plant Advisory Group

May 11, 2016

After a rigorous risk assessment process and discussion ending December 2015, the Massachusetts Invasive Plant Advisory Group (MIPAG) designated hardy kiwi, *Actinidia arguta*, as Likely Invasive in Massachusetts. Hardy kiwi is a fast growing vine that, in minimally managed habitats, climbs trees and other vegetation and has been observed to form dense stands in native hardwood forests, particularly in Western Massachusetts. A perennial vine native to Japan, Korea, Northern China, and Russian Siberia, hardy kiwi produces small fruit resembling the kiwifruit we see in grocery stores, and is commonly used in permaculture in the Northeast. Dense stands of hardy kiwi negatively impact forests by completely covering mature trees, resulting in tree decline and in severe cases complete destruction of canopy trees, leading to treeless openings in the forest. There are currently several sites in central Berkshire County where hardy kiwi is negatively impacting native forests and habitat for rare species. Likely Invasive plants are non-native species that are naturalized in Massachusetts but do not meet the full criteria that would trigger an Invasive plant designation. In this case hardy kiwi is not yet widespread in Massachusetts.

MIPAG is a voluntary collaborative representing organizations and professionals concerned with conservation of the Massachusetts landscape. The group began in early 1999 when it was charged by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs to provide recommendations to the Commonwealth regarding which plants are invasive and what steps should be taken to manage these species. MIPAG defines invasive plants as "non-native species that have spread into native or minimally managed plant systems in Massachusetts, causing economic or environmental harm by developing self-sustaining populations and becoming dominant and/or disruptive to those systems." In 2005 the group published its initial evaluation of 85 species, "The Evaluation of Non-Native Plant Species for Invasiveness in Massachusetts" which can be found at <http://www.massnrc.org/mipag/publications.htm>. This work formed the basis of a list of 66 plants designated as Invasive, Likely Invasive or Potentially Invasive (definitions found at: <http://www.massnrc.org/mipag/publications.htm>) that were added in 2009 to a Prohibited Plant List overseen by the Mass. Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR).

MIPAG determines a non-native plant's category of invasiveness using a set of biologically-based criteria to objectively evaluate plants suspected to be invasive in the state (see http://massnrc.org/mipag/docs/MIPAG_FINDINGS_FINAL_042005.pdf#page=6). Existing field and historical data about these species are gathered as part of this process. Following this risk assessment, determinations of invasiveness are presented to MIPAG and must be passed by a two-thirds vote of its members. Since the original 2005 publication, MIPAG has added three more species to its list, including flowering rush (*Butomus umbellatus*) as Likely Invasive, gray or rusty willow (*Salix atrocinerea/Salix*

cinerea complex) as Invasive and now hardy kiwi (*Actinidia argute*) as Likely Invasive. Currently, none of these recently designated species have been added to MDAR's Prohibited Plant List. Species are added to the Prohibited Plant List through a process separate from MIPAG's evaluation and in the past all species designated Invasive, Likely invasive or Potentially invasive by MIPAG have been placed on this list.

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