

Assessing Ornamental Species and Cultivars for Invasiveness in Wisconsin DNR

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INTRODUCTION

Invasive plants can cause significant harm to lands and waters by displacing and sometimes eliminating native species; changing ecological structure, composition, and/or function of native plant communities; negatively impact agriculture, recreation, tourism and other factors; and may cause harm to human health.

The Wisconsin invasive species rule (Wis. Adm. Code ch. NR 40) is aimed at preventing new invasive species from getting to Wisconsin, enabling quick action to control or eradicate those here but not yet established and educating the public about which species are or may become invasive and encouraging their control and limiting their spread.

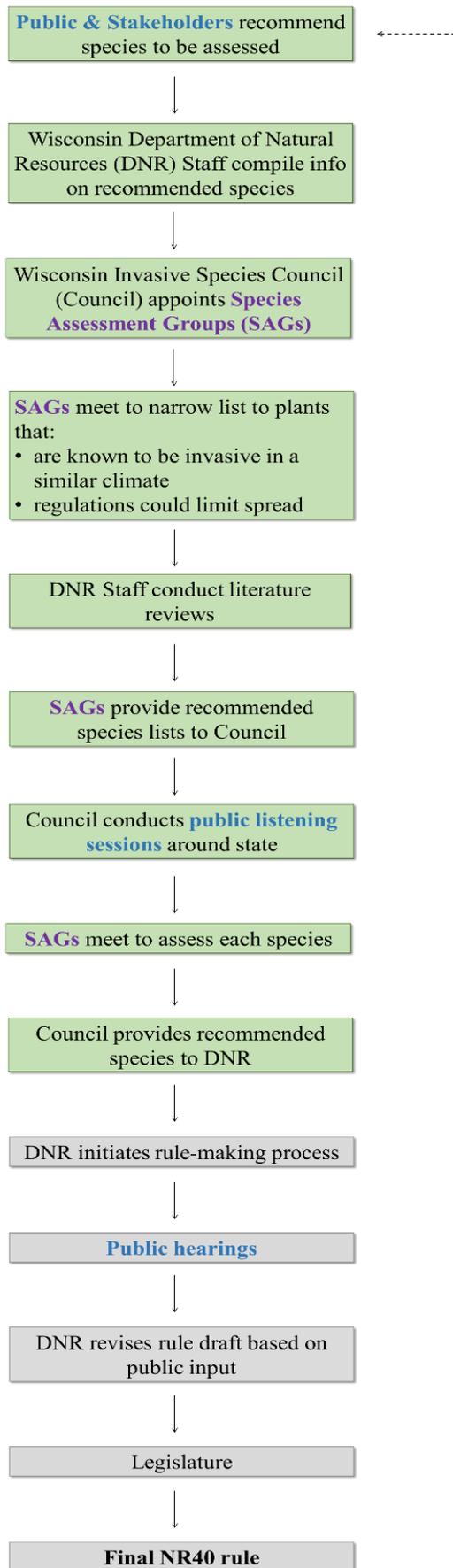
There are two categories of regulated species. For both groups no one may transport, transfer (including buying, selling or offering to sell) or introduce regulated species in Wisconsin. The categories include:

PROHIBITED: Those species likely to become invasive and which are either not currently known in the state, or only in small stands, such that eradication may be feasible. DNR may order the control of prohibited species.

RESTRICTED: Those species which are invasive and are already established in the state such that state-wide eradication may not be feasible. Control is recommended but not required.

Exemptions Include:

- Specific cultivars may be exempt.
- There is a phase-out period for restricted plants to allow instate growers to reduce their inventory of regulated species.
- Permits may be available for research and education.



- Transportation may be done for disposal or identification purposes.

Wisconsin Invasive Species Council (WISC or the Council)

The Wisconsin Legislature created the 12-member Wisconsin Invasive Species Council to assist the WDNR in establishing a statewide program to control invasive species. Among their duties, it has an advisory role to focus on current and future rules, statutes, and administrative policies to prevent the spread of and control of invasive species, particularly through NR40.

Species Assessment Groups (SAGs)

SAGs are appointed by the Council. They are made up of stakeholders and experts who are familiar with the species that a particular SAG is assessing. Examples include:

- Nursery owners, propagators, botanic garden staff, land managers, restoration ecologists, horticulture professors and others.

For assessing plants, there are five separate SAGs:

- Woody ornamentals.
- Herbaceous ornamentals, including grasses.
- Plants with agronomic uses.
- Plants with no known commercial use.
- Aquatic plants.

Criteria to Be Assessed for Each Species (as per state statute 23.22)

- Potential to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health.
- Species distribution and abundance in Wisconsin and in other states with similar climates.
- Likelihood of establishment and spread in WI if introduced.
- Potential for eradication or control.
- Socio-economic value of the species.

Enforcement

- Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection conducts regular inspections of all licensed nursery growers and retail nurseries. Inspectors look for regulated species and inform the nursery of any found. Regulated plants are returned to source or destroyed. Nursery staff are informed of plants that are restricted but within the phase-out period.
- If nurseries do not comply with NR 40, WDNR begins stepped enforcement process.
- Out-of-state suppliers and on-line nurseries selling regulated plants into Wisconsin are informed that must stop sales to Wisconsin buyers.

What Propagators Can Do to Assess and Prevent the Marketing of Invasive Species or Cultivars

- Grow new species and cultivars out to maturity in the nursery.
- Assess abundance and seed viability for all new species and cultivars.
- Avoid selling or marketing species with invasive tendencies.
- Use PlantRight Plant Risk Evaluation Tool that uses climate matching to help horticultural growers to screen plants to ensure they won't become invasive in specific regions. www.greeninfo.org/work/project/plant-risk-evaluator-tool
- Breed for sterility. Be aware of cross-pollination between cultivars.
- Share findings with other propagators and growers.