

# Native and Invasive Plants



FRIENDS of the ENVIRONMENT  
ABACO, BAHAMAS



SGP The GEF  
Small Grants  
Programme  
The Bahamas



**What do plants  
provide?**

Clean Air





Homes and food for animals

# Healthy Environment



Clean Water



Reduce Erosion



# Classifying Plants: Let's Get it Straight!

**Native** - The species that were present in The Bahamas prior to the arrival of the Lucayan Indians can be considered *native*. e.g. *Seagrape*.



**Alien** - Plants from another country or region  
**Exotic** - Same thing! Plants from another country or region e.g. Tamarind (from Africa)

**Naturalized** - Plants from another region that have adapted to living in The Bahamas in harmony with the native plants. e.g. Almond Tree (from Asia, Africa and Australia)



**Invasive** - Plants from another region that grow aggressively and take space and nutrients from native plants. e.g. Casuarina (Australian Pine, from Australia)



# What makes a plant invasive?

- High reproductive rate
- Prolific growth
- Durable and will grow in disturbed areas and harsh soils where natives will not easily establish
- Absence of natural control/predator

# Invasive Impacts

- Destructive to native ecosystems
  - Alter physical environment (nutrients, sunlight, etc). Some invasive plants can change soil properties!
  - Affect ecosystem services
  - Affect Fire Ecology of Pine Forests
- Result in a loss of biodiversity
  - Displacement, *extinction*
- Loss of Genetic Diversity - all the plants are “relatives”
- Introduction of Diseases/Pests


# Accidental or Intentional?

- Storms
- Animal Transport
- Human transport
  - Seeds/pollen on shoes and tires
  - Travelers



- Humans/civilization
    - Agriculture
    - Travel/Tourism
  - Trade
    - Imports, landscaping
- Text





**The more kinds of native plants,  
the healthier the environment!**

**Invasive plants can make the environment  
less healthy.**



### **Brazilian-Pepper (*Schinus terebinthifolius*)**

A medium-sized evergreen shrub-like tree native to Brazil and Paraguay. This tree grows rapidly and can reach 15 to 30 feet in height. The Brazilian pepper is related to poisonwood, poison oak, and poison ivy and many people develop allergic reactions to it (especially the sap). This shrub-like tree produces dense clusters of small berries that change from green to bright red as they ripen. Local dispersal of this species is primarily by fruit-eating birds, and humans.

The rapid growth and sprawling form of Brazilian Pepper can quickly shade out other plant life, and can alter natural fire regimes.

Local alternatives include: Thatch Palm, *lignum vitae*



### **Hawaiian Seagrape (*Scaevola taccada*)**

Originally brought to The Bahamas for landscaping, Hawaiian seagrape has quickly spread beyond yards and gardens to more remote areas throughout the archipelago. The berries float, aiding in their dispersal through the islands.

Hawaiian seagrape displays classic characteristics of invasive species including rapid growth and tolerance to extreme conditions (e.g. drought, salt). Hawaiian seagrape is rapidly displacing diverse native vegetation such as Sea Oats, Sea Lavender, and Inkberry. Those native plants work together to stabilize our shoreline and provide homes and food for native wildlife.

As you remove your Hawaiian Seagrape try to collect all pieces of the plant as it will easily re-propagate. Remember to replace it with a native plant (e.g. Sea Oats, Sea Lavender, Inkberry, Seagrape, Buttonwood) to maintain the stability of your coast.



### **Australian Pine (*Casuarina equisetifolia*)**

Originally from Australia, Malaysia and Southern Asia, this plant was brought to The Bahamas sometime in the 1800's and has successfully invaded the whole country. Its original purpose is unknown, but it has been used for myriad purposes such as landscaping, fire wood, trunks for boat masts, furniture and fencing.

This tree is not a true pine, with leaves masquerading as needles and fruit as pine cones. Casuarina species are recommended for selective removal in areas where they are making a serious impact on the environment. Casuarinas displace native vegetation and their shallow root systems promote erosion. The roots have been known to disrupt turtle nesting on beaches and the "needles" change soil properties.

Consider planting Seagrape, buttonwood, or Gumelemi instead.

# Invasive Initiatives

- Bahamas National Strategy for Invasive Species (NISS)
- Coastal Awareness Month - April
- Friends of the Environment - Go Native!

# National Invasive Species Strategy

*“assess current mechanisms to address invasive species” and “enable public awareness and involvement”*

- Awareness*
- Training*
- Monitoring*
- Legislation*
- Recommendation*
- Management*

# How You Can Help:

Buy Native Plants

Keep a Native Plant garden

Remove Invasive Plants

Share your knowledge with others