

Butterfly Bush:

A Growing Problem



What is it?

Butterfly Bush (*Buddleja davidii*) is a large semi-deciduous shrub that grows up to 10 feet tall. Leaves grow up to 8 inches long, 2½ inches wide; tops are dark green; undersides are fuzzy and light. Small, fragrant, funnel-shaped flowers are borne in showy spikes at the ends of the stems, and are usually purple, though there are also red, pink, blue, orange, yellow and white varieties.

Why is it a threat?

- Readily escapes cultivation. Invades and colonizes natural areas, forest land, roadsides, vacant areas, river banks and gravel bars.
- Produces huge quantities of very fine, highly viable wind and waterborne seed. One plant can produce up to 3 million seeds, and one flower cluster alone can produce up to 40,000 seeds.
- Grows and matures very quickly, capable of blooming and producing seed in its first year.
- Displaces native plants that are critical for wildlife habitat, including native willows that are host plants for butterflies!



What can you do?



Choose alternatives, either native plants or those that don't invade natural habitats.



Remove spent flower clusters after blooming, bag and discard in trash that goes to landfill. Do not put into compost or yard waste recycling.



Watch for escaped plants and remove them.



If you have a butterfly bush, please clip off the flower heads as soon as they're finished. Bag them securely and dispose of in the trash. Do not put them in the compost or yard recycling. Please consider replacing butterfly bush plants with native plants or non-invasive alternatives.



Flower clusters are capable of producing up to 40,000 seeds. Each butterfly bush can produce up to 3 MILLION seeds. The extremely fine seed can be carried on the wind for miles. New seedlings grow and mature very quickly, sometimes blooming and producing seed in their first year.

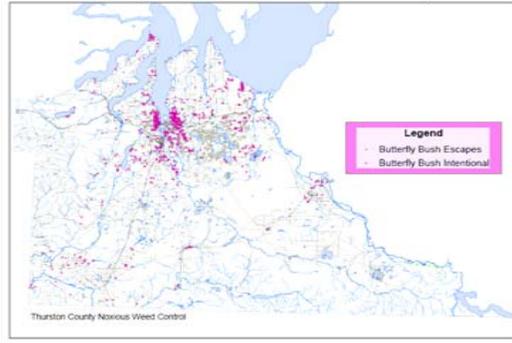


Escaped butterfly bush is now found throughout the county and much of Western Washington: along roadsides, vacant lots, river banks and gravel bars, from urban parking lots to remote forest land. Infestations have been found more than 30 miles from the nearest intentional planting.



On the Nisqually River, native willows that are an essential part of the natural habitat are rapidly being displaced by non-native butterfly bush. Willows are critical host plants for some species of butterfly caterpillars. The red arrows in the picture point to individual butterfly bush plants.

Butterfly Bush Sites in Thurston County



Butterfly Bush Alternatives

There are many choices of ornamental shrubs that are not invasive, provide a good nectar source for butterflies, and may also be good host plants, providing food for butterfly caterpillars.

New York Ironweed	California Lilac	Sweet Peppercub
Chaste Tree	<i>Buddleja globosa</i>	Virginia Sweetgum
Aster grandiflorus	Aster grandiflorus	Aster grandiflorus