

FHC Annual Meeting - June 2018
Invasive Plant Update
Nancy Loewenstein

1) Bamboo as a crop in the Southeast? Current status, questions, and concerns.

In collaboration with Southern Regional Extension Forestry, Clemson University and University of Florida IFAS, I'm working on a regional extension publication providing an update on bamboo culture and control the Southeast. A brief summary of the current situation is provided below in an abstract for a talk we'll be giving at the *Innovations in Invasive Species Management Conference*, Dec 12-14 in Nashville.

Interest in growing bamboo as a crop for timber and a variety of other products is on the rise across the Southeast, fueled in part by several bamboo-promoting companies. The majority of the proposed species are monopodial bamboos (i.e., running bamboos). One species that is being promoted in the region, *Phyllostachys edulis*, is a known invader in Japan and the congener of species that are currently spreading in the United States (e.g. *P. aurea*, *P. aureosulcata*). Invasive species specialists in the region have concerns with the widespread planting of these plant species. While running bamboos may be contained with dedicated efforts, with any lapse in efforts the bamboo will run - at which point it can drastically increase in area and extend well beyond original boundaries. Once established, bamboo is notoriously difficult to control. Some groups contend that bamboo is not invasive because many species only seed every 70-120 years and it is unlikely to produce seed while in production. However, seed production is not always the primary mode of dispersal and running bamboos clearly have strong potential to spread vegetatively and escape cultivation. Indeed, risk assessments by the University of Florida IFAS Assessment of Non-native Plants (<https://assessment.ifas.ufl.edu/>) have determined that several of the species proposed for widespread cultivation are predicted to be a high risk for invasion. We will cover basics of bamboo growth, risk assessments, and options for control and containment. We will also address other questions and concerns about growing bamboo in the Southeast, including potential economic and infrastructure issues. Bottom line, there is little information available about ecological impacts, management techniques, or economic return on investment for these species. We don't know enough about bamboo cultivation to recommend it. If landowners decide to grow bamboo, strong measures should be taken to ensure that growers follow best management practices to contain plantings and that viable options are available for growers who may wish to transition out of bamboo.

2) Updating Invasive Plant List - The Alabama Invasive Plant Council is beginning the process of updating their invasive plant list using protocol put forth by the National Association of Invasive Plant Councils. The goal of the protocol is to provide:

- the highest standards for objectivity, scientific rigor and ecological expertise
- transparent procedures and clear documentation
- consistent methodology to assure comparability across lists
- ample opportunity for public review

3) New Invaders of the Southeast - The US Forest Service recently published a guide providing identification and current distribution information on new and emerging invasive plants in the Southeast. It can be accessed online: http://bugwoodcloud.org/resource/pdf/FHTET-2017-05_New%20Invaders_SE.pdf.