



Plant Invaders of Mid-Atlantic Natural Areas

Swearingen, J., K. Reshetiloff, B. Slattery, and S. Zwicker. 2002. Plant Invaders of Mid-Atlantic Natural Areas. National Park Service and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, 82 pp.

Bradford Pear

Pyrus calleryana 'Bradford'

Origin: China

Background

Bradford pear is a cultivar of the Callery pear that is widely used to landscape residential developments, parking lots and roadsides. The original 'Bradford' cultivar was introduced to Maryland in the early 1900s and had sterile fruits. However, new hybrids, developed to correct the tendency of the tree to split and fall apart under wind and snow events, were not sterile. Bradford pear has escaped plantings and is invading natural habitats in the eastern United States.



Britt Slattery, USFWS

Distribution and Ecological Threat

Grown throughout the United States, Bradford pear grows best in full sun but will tolerate partial shade and a variety of soil types and conditions, including occasional wet soils or drought. New hybrids produce viable seeds through cross-pollination with the Bradford cultivar. The descendents are aggressively invading natural and disturbed open areas, displacing native plant communities and disrupting natural succession.

Description and Biology

- Plant: grows 30 to 50 feet tall and 20 to 30 feet wide; exhibits rapid growth (12 to 15 foot increase in height over 8 to 10 years); has a short to moderate life span (25 to 30 years).
- Leaves: simple, alternate, deciduous, shiny green and leathery with round-toothed margins; turn mahogany-red and sometimes bright orange-red in late autumn.
- Flowers, fruits and seeds: produces showy white flowers in the spring before the leaves expand; small, round, brown fruits appear during late spring and summer.
- Spreads: by seeds that are dispersed to new locations by starlings and other birds that eat the fruits.
- Look-alikes: apple trees (*Malus* species), basswood (*Tilia* species).



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Prevention and Control

Do not plant Bradford pear. Seedlings and shallow-rooted plants can be pulled when soil is moist. Small trees need to be dug up or pulled out using a Weed Wrench®, ensuring removal of the root system. Large trees should be cut down and stumps treated with an appropriate systemic herbicide.

(e.g., glyphosate or triclopyr), following label directions, or ground up to prevent resprouting. If cutting is not possible, trees can be girdled during the spring and summer, by cutting through the bark all around the trunk, about 6" above the ground.

Native Alternatives

black haw (*Viburnum prunifolium*)



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serviceberry (*Amelanchier canadensis*)



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redbud (*Cercis canadensis*)



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fringetree (*Chionanthus virginicus*)



R. Harrison Wiegand

southern arrowwood (*Viburnum dentatum*)



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[[Home](#)] [[Contents](#)]



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