

# Broadleaf Bamboo

## *Sasa palmata*

**Introduction:** Bamboos are an ancient group of grasses that have a great potential to invade wildlands in the Pacific Northwest. The *Phyllostachys* and *Sasa* genera are a particular threat due to their ability to spread through underground runners. This fact sheet focuses on *Sasa palmata*, but other running bamboos are also a threat.

*Sasa palmata* is a highly invasive Japanese-native bamboo is widely used as a garden ornamental. As one of the longest cultivated bamboos in Western gardens, it was introduced into Britain in 1889 and into the United States in 1925. It is now considered an invasive threat to Oregon, with an invasion alert tagged for coastal regions of the state.

**Description:** The smooth, cylindrical culms, which can reach 6-10 feet in height, are thick, upwardly-curved and usually have purple streaks. A single branch is produced at each node. The smooth and glossy, bright green leaves are broadly elliptic and tapered, reaching 14 to 16 inches in length. The underside of the leathery leaf is paler, and one variety (the 'Warely Place') has a yellow streak along the midrib.

**Habitat:** *Sasa palmata* is able to thrive in full sun or deep shade, and can tolerate cold temperatures (as low as -4°F, -20°C). It prefers fertile, humus-rich, moist and well-drained soil. It is able to grow in open woodland or deciduous understory, as well as woodland gardens, both sunny and shady woodland edges, areas of dappled shade, and hedges.

**Distribution:** Northwestern and southwestern Europe, Soviet far-east and eastern Asia, and New Zealand. In the U.S., it has been declared an invasive only in Tennessee. It has not yet escaped into wild lands in the Pacific Northwest, but it is expected to invade due to the PNW ideal habitat.

**Reproduction and Dispersal:** This perennial grass reproduces by seeds and rhizomes. Plants flower at intervals of several years, making seed germination rare. Therefore, vigorous Rhizomous reproduction is most common, and the cause of its wide spreading capability. New shoots appear in mid-spring.

**Pathways of Introduction and Spread:** Bamboo was introduced as an ornamental. It is expected to escape into wildlands from neglected or poorly controlled domestic gardens. Since it is rhizomous and can adapt to a variety of light conditions, it can quickly and expansively spread.



**Threats/Impacts:** *Sasa palmata* is an aggressively-growing species that can easily dominate an area and, thus, has the potential to displace, as well as shade out native species.

**Early Detection and Prevention:** As a common garden ornamental, one can prevent its spread by either planting *S. palmata* in pots or by using native alternatives. Please help prevent the invasion of bamboo by looking for and reporting populations that have escaped from gardens. In Oregon, report this plant by calling 1-866-INVADER.

**Management Information:** To control Bamboo you must remove dig up and remove every piece of the rhizome. Herbicides will have to be applied for 2-3 years, and mowing rarely works to kill the plant.

**Research Needs:** Survey for escaping populations and research ecological impacts.

### References

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