

Is this the worst Invasive Plant? – ‘Bradford’ Callery Pear (*Pyrus calleryana*).

One way to help the ecosystem is to grow more trees. Trees provide many ecosystem benefits including improving water quality and mitigating stormwater runoff. Another way is to kill a certain white flowering tree, said Sally Holbert, Landscape Architect, and project manager for the Stillmeadow Climate Resiliency project. Pennsylvania banned the sale of Bradford Pears, native to Asia, in February of this year. They have been on PA’s Noxious Plant list since 2021.

The Bradford Pears, once popular as ornamental trees in our Pennsylvania landscapes, have fallen out of favor and are considered a property liability due to several significant drawbacks. Initially, they were prized for their fluffy white blossoms in the spring, symmetrical shape, and rapid growth. However, as they aged, numerous problems became apparent.



One of the primary issues with Bradford Pears is their structural weakness. These trees are notorious for their poor branch structure, which often leads to splitting and breaking during storms or heavy winds. The branches tend to grow at narrow angles, with multiple branches coming off at one place creating weak points that are prone to failure. This not only poses a hazard to property and people but also results in a shorter lifespan for the tree, often only 15-25 years.

Additionally, Bradford Pears were initially believed to be sterile, which contributed to their widespread planting including in Stillmeadow Park. However, it was later discovered that when different cultivars of callery pears cross-pollinate, they can produce viable seeds. This has led to the proliferation of invasive offspring in the wetlands and meadows with tough woody thorns, which spread aggressively and out compete native plant species. The resulting wild Callery Pears form dense thickets, disrupting local ecosystems and diminishing biodiversity.

Due to these significant drawbacks—structural weaknesses, invasiveness, and susceptibility to breakage, disease and pests—Bradford Pears are no longer available for sale at nurseries. As part of the Stillmeadow Climate Resiliency project at Stillmeadow Park, Bradford Pear will be targeted for removal and replacement with native tree varieties.

Here is a link to more information on the harm the trees are doing to our ecosystems.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PDmGPRRcQM8>

Bradford Pear Article for Manchester Stillmeadow Newsletter

