

Yellow Toadflax

Invasive Species Alert Sheet

Capital Region Invasive Species Program

The spread of non-native invasive plants has serious ecological, economic and health impacts.

Local governments and other partners are asking for help from all residents to report and monitor Yellow Toadflax (*Linaria vulgaris*), also known as Spurred Snapdragon, or Butter-and-eggs, on both private property and public lands. Homeowners can manage this plant themselves or reach out to professionals for support.

Originally introduced from Europe as an ornamental plant over a century ago, Yellow Toadflax has since escaped cultivation and now poses a serious threat to ecosystems across North America. Its dense root system allows it to form extensive colonies that displace native species and resist control. Although it is not yet widespread in the capital region, it is important to develop awareness and management practices to ensure it does not spread. Once established, it is extremely difficult to eradicate.

Why is Yellow Toadflax a problem?

- **Forms dense colonies** that displace native vegetation and reduce biodiversity.
- **Reproduces through both seeds and an aggressive creeping root system (rhizomes).**
- **Outcompetes native plants** for sunlight, space, and nutrients.
- **Can be mistaken for beneficial wildflowers** and is inadvertently spread via wildflower seed mixes.
- **Not palatable to livestock**, leading to dominance in grazed pastures.



Small toadflax



Flowering toadflax

What does it look like?

- **Stems:** Erect, hairless, often unbranched, **15 cm to 1 m tall**.
- **Leaves:** Numerous, soft, lance-shaped, pale green, often alternate but may appear opposite on lower stems. The leaves are up to 10 cm long.
- **Flowers:** Bright yellow, snapdragon-like with orange throats and long spurs. Found in dense clusters at stem tips. Flowering time varies, potentially as late as July in higher elevations.
- **Seeds:** Dark brown to black, winged and disk-shaped. A **single plant may produce up to 5,000 seeds**, though germination rates are low.
- **Roots:** Extensive creeping root system that can regenerate from small fragments.

Could be confused with:

- **INVASIVE Leafy Spurge** (*Euphorbia esula*): Similar before flowering but contains a milky sap and has different leaf and stem structures.
- **INVASIVE Dalmatian Toadflax** (*Linaria dalmatica*): Similar yellow flowers but with broad, heart-shaped leaves that clasp the stem.

Habitat and biology

- Perennial from the Plantaginaceae family (formerly Scrophulariaceae).
- Prefers sandy or gravelly soils but is adaptable to a range of habitats.
- Spreads via seeds and creeping rhizomes; seedlings as young as 2-3 weeks can develop spreading roots.
- Can dominate disturbed areas, roadsides, pastures, meadows, and grasslands.

What should you do if you spot a Yellow Toadflax plant?

- **Prevent:** Avoid purchasing wildflower seed mixes unless all contents are listed.
- **Report:** Report all outbreaks to the contacts below for support and monitoring.
- **Remove:** If you have an outbreak on your property, follow the instructions below for careful removal and follow up. Work to prevent and limit further spread.



- **Prevent spread:** Clean tools, clothing, and vehicles when working in infested areas.
- **Monitor:** Especially during flowering season, check for new infestations.

Small infestations

- **Manual removal:** Hand pulling is most effective in moist soils but requires removing all root fragments. Repetition is key.
- **Replant:** Revegetate cleared areas with native or non-invasive species.
- **Monitor:** Re-check sites for several years.

Large infestations

- **Mechanical:** Repeated mowing or cutting can stress plants but won't eliminate them alone.
- **Cultivation:** Tillage can help destroy root systems but should be combined with other methods. Clean equipment thoroughly.
- **Chemical:** Herbicides may be helpful depending on local and provincial regulations.

Proper disposal

- **Do not compost:** Root and seed material can survive and spread.
- **Garbage only:** Place all plant material in sealed garbage bags. Label as "invasive species" and dispose at Hartland Landfill.



CONTACT INFORMATION

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