



### **Beware of Those Cute Plants That Can Take Over Your Yard!**

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We are learning, sometimes the hard way, about introducing exotic plants that have pretty flowers and bark, such as melaleuca and flashy red berries, such as Brazilian pepper into our landscapes. We extol these new discoveries and provide all of the tender loving care we can until, it seems overnight, the treasured plant has become a rampaging weed and we must turn on it in an effort to extirpate every little internode or seedling (eradicate seems to gentle a word!) to prevent it from rapidly overwhelming our landscapes. On a smaller, but more personal scale, I thought that I would warn readers of a few cute plants that have fooled me over the last few years. These plants, in a course of two years, will make themselves a menace and suck the enjoyment of your landscape right out of you because they demand constant vigilance and weeding when you discover the deception. I'm sure that this could become a weekly series, but we will start with a few plants to be wary of or just plain avoid altogether.

Imagine growing a fern that resembles a Boston fern in your very own front yard! Coming from Ohio, where I couldn't grow an acceptable looking specimen for more than two months, I was delighted to find these ferns for sale at a roadside nursery. The three little pots I planted filled in the 100 square foot area under my oak tree, where I wanted them, in less than 30 months. So I put a few starts in some larger, more open beds. And then before I realized how rampant this fern was, they had taken over another 100 square feet in less than a year. Time to extirpate! Turns out that I had selected the invasive, tuberous sword fern, *Nephrolepis cordifolia* instead of the native Boston sword fern, *Nephrolepis exaltata*. *The tuberous* There are several other species that could be confused with the desirable, less invasive Boston sword fern, for detailed descriptions and excellent pictures see: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/AG120>. A few hints, the exotic tuberous fern has a more upright habit and is shorter, about 3 feet; and the leaflets are smaller, about 1.9 inches long; and it frequently, but not always, has tubers; it has more upright foliage. The native Boston fern is taller, up to 4.5 feet with drooping fronds; the leaflets are almost 3 inches long; and it never has tubers. Plantings can be ripped out with a shovel and removed like sod or a 1.5% concentration of glyphosate (Roundup) will work, but may take two applications. Otherwise, keep this fern in a pot or basket! Identification of other enticing plants will be discussed in detail in future articles and will include: blue porter weed, *Stachytarpheta urticifolia*; instead look for the native S.

*jamaicensis* which stays around 3 to 4 feet and spreading dayflower, *Commelina diffusa*, wedelia, etc. I'm sure everyone has some favorites. Please send your comments in to me (dlcaldwell@ifas.ufl.edu) and save someone some landscape despair!

For more information on home gardening, contact the University of Florida, Collier County Cooperative Extension Service, Master Gardener Plant Clinic, at 353-2872. If you have a specimen that you want identified, the Extension Plant Clinic at 14700 Immokalee Rd. is open Monday, Wednesday and Friday, 9 a.m. to noon and 1 p.m. to 4 p.m., call 353-2872. Extension programs are open to all persons without regard to race, color, creed, sex, handicap or national origin. For updates on southwest Florida Horticulture and more landscape information visit: <http://collier.ifas.ufl.edu>