

# OIPC Assessment Protocol Policies & Procedures

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## Overview

These Policies & Procedures are intended to accompany the OIPC Assessment Protocol. This document represents practical measures for carrying out the assessment process in an equitable and conscientious manner reflecting the interests and input from various stakeholder groups.

## Assessment Team

The five member assessment team will consist of a Chairperson appointed by the OIPC Board, two members representing conservation interests (such as land management and field botany) appointed by the OIPC, and two members representing the nursery industry appointed by the ONLA. The Chairperson should have research experience and be familiar with the invasive plant literature, a solid understanding of the OIPC Assessment Process and its development, a thorough understanding of the interests and expertise of groups represented in the process, and a proven ability to effectively administer and communicate science-based activities. Other team members should be selected based on their expertise within an applicable area and a willingness to serve a one-year, renewable term. Ideally, the Assessment Team should be comprised of professionals with expertise in one or more of the following areas: invasive plant biology, field botany, natural areas biology and/or ecology, management of natural areas, plant taxonomy, horticulture, horticultural research, and/or landscape design. All team members should be familiar with the "scientific method" and be willing to review and discuss research materials.

The chairperson will have broad discretion in determining the timing and manner (electronic or face-to-face) of assessments, meetings and communications, as well as conducting discussions and resolving any disputes among the team. The team will meet at least twice a year, and preferably more frequently, depending upon the number of plants brought to their attention.

Any member may be removed at any time by a unanimous vote of the other members of the Assessment Team, in which case another member will be appointed in a timely manner by the appropriate authority. No assessments will be determined in the interim.

## Assessment Selections

Plants for assessment will be selected by the Assessment Team following a solicitation for suggestions with the stakeholder groups. All species on the 2000 ODNR list of invasive plant species should receive priority for assessment. ONLA-designates are encouraged to consult the most recent nursery stock survey during the process of selecting plants for assessment. Plants should be announced in groups, ideally a year in advance. This would give interested parties time to perform or complete research, if necessary. The OIPC Board can provide feedback on the assessment schedule.

Any plant of interest can be assessed, including nursery production plants with significant potential for economic impact. In this case, nursery plants will be assessed, if practicable, along with one or more potentially non-invasive cultivars. Any cultivar will be evaluated on an individual basis, separate from the species designation; the resulting assessment will be reported only for that cultivar (i.e., not

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automatically for the species itself). All commercially-cultivated plants must be reviewed in Step II as well as Step 1 of the Assessment Protocol.

## Assessment Procedure

1. Assessment team members independently run the plant through the assessment protocol or review assessments previously run based on information from the scientific literature.
2. Chairperson requests detailed results from team members and assembles a summary.
3. Chairperson may, at his/her discretion, request that team members reassess the plant.
4. Chairperson reports scoring results to team members. Any discrepancy in the scores among team members will be examined closely on a question by question basis. The chairperson will have discretion to generate a consensus. The total score of the consensus indicates the *tentative determination*.
5. Sufficient time (preferably two months) will be provided at this stage for each team member to communicate, as needed, with his/her respective organization and solicit any additional available expertise. If a plant is determined invasive by Step I, any member of the Assessment team may request and require that the plant be examined through Step II as well (all commercially-cultivated plants must be reviewed in Step II as well as Step I of the Assessment Protocol).
6. One or more team members may offer objections to the scoring of one or more questions and request *re-assessment*.
7. Team members will re-assess the plant and report to the chairperson (time-frame established by Chairperson).
8. *Final consensus assessment* (scoring on each question and overall score) is reported to the Assessment Team by the chairperson.
9. At the discretion of the Chairperson, groups of assessments will be reported to stakeholder groups for 'comment'. All 'comments' should be addressed to the Chairperson and must be received within an 'comment period' of six months. Unless sufficient science-based 'comments' are received that warrant reconsideration of the assessment (as requested by three or more Team Members), the plant will be added to the appropriate 'list' at the completion of the 'comment period'. Plants that warrant reconsideration should be reassessed with the highest priority by the Team.
10. Plants 'listed' by the Assessment Team after the 'comment period' should be communicated to the general public through the OIPC website and list serve, as well as other appropriate media outlets:
  - a. List of plants assessed as Invasive, along with a short narrative explaining the scoring.
  - b. List of all plants that were assessed, including their total numerical score and individual scores to each question.
11. Any plant assessed as having Insufficient Data or Pending Further Review should be reassessed later, ideally within three to five assessment periods, or when new information becomes available.

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## Assessment Status and Determinations

- Assessed: Insufficient Data
- Assessed: Not Known to be Invasive
- Assessed: Pending Further Review
- Assessed: Invasive
- Currently under assessment

## Assessment Communications

Notice of plants to be assessed (as a group...annually)	To stakeholder groups and the OIPC website
Notice of assessments for Comment Period	To stakeholder groups and OIPC website
Notice of Assessment determination (as a group...annually)	To stakeholder groups To horticulture trade publications & conservancy journals To public news sources in Ohio

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