KENTUCKY’S 2003 LEAST WANTED PLANT

Promoting alternatives to invasive landscape plants

Least Wanted!

Crown vetch
Coronilla varia

Crown vetch is native to Europe, southwest Asia and northern Africa. This perennial herb forms a groundcover in open, sunny conditions and has been planted extensively along disturbed roadways as a soil stabilizer. Crown vetch spreads by seed and by a creeping root system. Once Crown vetch becomes established, it outcompetes the native understory vegetation: it has become a serious threat to native grasslands and open woodlands. We are requesting the help of nursery owners, landscapers and gardeners to prevent further spread of this species by not using this species in gardens. An alternative is presented below.

Good Native Alternative

The sunny, rocky sites where Crown vetch is often planted are ideal areas to plant a drought-tolerant low-growing mix of prairie species. Prairie species like Little bluestem (Schizachyrium scoparium), Prairie dropped (Sporobolus heterolepis), Indian grass (Sorghastrum nutans), Purple coneflower (Echinacea purpurea), Rough blazing star (Liatris aspera) and Gray goldenrod (Solidago nemoralis) are just a few of the plants that will thrive in dry, open sites.

Replacing Crown vetch with prairie species will increase the native diversity of the site, and will also increase the colorful displays of flowers throughout the growing season. Birds will be attracted to the many seeds produced by the prairie planting, adding even more beauty and diversity to the site.

Prairie mix

photo by Dave Imbrogno

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