Some exotic ornamental plants behave badly when they escape from the place they are planted. Infestations of these plants have negative impacts on natural environments.

Preventing the introduction of invasive species is the first line of defense against invasions. However, even the best prevention efforts will not stop all invasive species introductions. Early detection and rapid response (EDRR) efforts increase the likelihood that invasions will be addressed successfully while populations are still localized and population levels are not beyond that which can be contained and eradicated. Once populations are widely established, all that might be possible is the partial mitigation of negative impacts. In addition, the costs associated with EDRR efforts are typically far less than those of long-term invasive species management programs.

The South Carolina Exotic Pest Plant Council has a state level system in place. Species have been targeted for EDRR action based on invasiveness, damage caused in other states, potential to spread in S.C., and those with low population levels in S.C. The Horticulture Industry can help. The first step for nursery owners, nursery staff, landscapers, mainenance staff, and gardeners is to become familiar with EDRR species and how to make a report if one is found. Factsheets can be found on the SCEPPC website: http://www.se-eppc.org/southcarolina/edrr.cfm.

If an EDRR species is observed,
1. Take a photo and GPS coordinates if possible, report the observation to EDDMapS: http://www.eddmaps.org/ (location, size of infestation, you can upload photos, etc.).
2. Send digital photo to John Nelson at the USC Herbarium: plantman@herbarium.org for verification (more info: http://herbarium.biol.sc.edu/).
3. If a State or Federally Regulated species is found, also call the Clemson University Plant Problem Clinic (864-646-2140) for guidance.

Horticulturists, landscapers, and gardeners are important in the line of defense against invasions of harmful non-native pest plants that threaten South Carolina’s natural communities.

Be sure to be able to recognize EDRR species and know where to report noxious plants and other exotic invasive species. This can keep harmful pests from being sold and from spreading into natural areas.

See also: http://www.se-eppc.org/southcarolina/ and http://www.se-eppc.org/