Some exotic ornamental plants behave badly when they escape from their intended establishment. Infestations have negative impacts on natural plant communities. Two examples are Vinca major and minor; common name: Bigleaf and Common Periwinkle.

Vinca major is native to Mediterranean Europe, Asia Minor and North Africa and was first brought to the Americas in the late 1700s. Vinca minor is from all of continental Europe and as far north as the Baltic Sea. Both are invasive vines to the United States. Used as ornamental ground cover, Periwinkle is commonly sold by retailers and planted by gardeners.

Periwinkle is a member of the Milkweed and Oleander Family (Apocynaceae). It is a perennial vine with scrambling or trailing stolons up to 3 feet in length. Vertical stems reach 12 inches in height. Bigleaf periwinkle has semi-evergreen leaves with a waxy cuticle and is triangular in shape. Common Periwinkle has evergreen leaves that are narrow and elliptical. Periwinkle flowers between March and June with fruit production from May to July in the Southeastern U.S.

Vinca is found at old home sites throughout the U.S. and easily invades riverine forests by vegetative spread of rooting at nodes; often colonizes lake banks and forms dense growth. It can tolerate a wide range of wet to dry sites. Vinca will form dense stands along lakes and rivers where it completely eliminates native plants. Infestations alter natural habitat and ecosystem processes; reducing biodiversity. Vinca has very little wildlife habitat value.

To control vinca, remove all plantings, sprouts, and stems. Bag and dispose of off-site or burn gathered plant material. To treat intact plants, apply a non-soil active herbicide when growth is young. Thoroughly wet all leaves with herbicide mixed in water with surfactant for successive years. Effective herbicides for summer applications include: 3% solution of Tordon 101, 2% solution of Tordon K. Spring applications to protect new growth of surrounding vegetation include a 2% solution of Garlon 4 or glyphosate. Winter applications should be on warm days only.

One native alternative to Vinca is Amsonia ciliata (Bluestar), a beautiful perrenial wildflower that grows 15 to 20 inches tall (http://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id_plant=AMCI).

Visit these internet resources for more details:
http://www.fs.fed.us/database/feis/plants/vine/vinspp/all.html
http://www.invasiveplantatlas.org/subject.html?sub=3081

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