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## Nursery biz nurtures native plants

by Celeste LeCompte - 2.2.07

Nurseries are big business in California, contributing \$20.4 billion to the state's economy. A new industry initiative could add more in the form of taxpayer savings.

Nationally, invasive plants are estimated to cost more than \$35 billion annually in control costs and crop losses. A study that looked at California calculated that the state spends \$85 million eradicating invasive species from public lands.

In an effort to curb costs without regulatory intervention, California nurseries, including Visalia, Calif.-based Monrovia Growers, are partnering with San Francisco nonprofit Sustainable Conservation to devise business-oriented strategies for stopping the spread of invasive plants.

Over half of all invasive species started out as ornamental plants before they "jumped the fence," says Terri Kempton, project manager for Sustainable Conservation. Landscaping plants are typically selected to be fast growers requiring little care — which also makes them ideal weeds.

The PlantRight initiative brought together industry members, environmental groups, scientists and government regulators to develop targeted lists of key invasive species for regions within California. Partner nurseries are encouraged to identify and eliminate invasive or potentially invasive species from their catalogs.

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