Sea Grant
Pennsylvania
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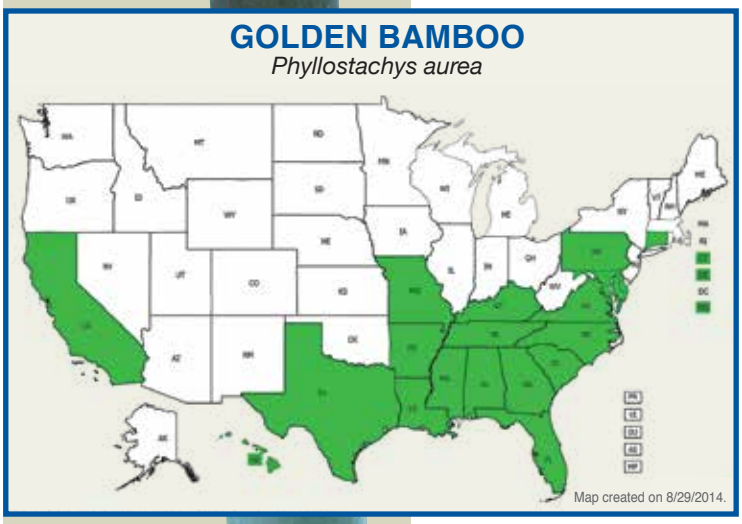
# Golden Bamboo

## *Phyllostachys aurea*

Map courtesy of Early Detection & Distribution Mapping System

## Species at a Glance

***Golden bamboo is a perennial, fast-growing, oversized member of the grass family Poaceae. It is one of the most common bamboos in the United States and is readily available from garden centers and nurseries. Invasive bamboos are among the fastest-growing plants on Earth, and can quickly form into dense, nearly impenetrable stands, making bamboo a popular plant for use as a noise-barrier or privacy screen. A single infestation of golden bamboo can spread to an area of nearly 10 miles.***




## Species Description

Golden bamboo reaches a maximum height of 30-40 feet and stands towering over most other grasses, forming a dense bamboo forest. The stems are woody, hollow, and jointed, starting out green when young and turning golden-yellow as they age and become exposed to the sunlight. The internodes, or the part of the stem between two joints, is short and swollen at the base of the stem, a characteristic that helps distinguish golden bamboo from other bamboo species. Leaves are slender, lance-shaped, and are often arranged in fan-like clusters. Leaves grow about 15 cm (6 in) long.

## Native & Introduced Ranges

Native to Southeast China, golden bamboo was introduced into the United States in 1882 in Montgomery, Alabama where mature stems were used for fishing poles and walking sticks. It has quickly spread and can be found throughout the Mid-Atlantic and Southeastern regions of the United States. Golden bamboo is not common in Pennsylvania and distribution data is lacking; however, it has been reported in several locations throughout the state.

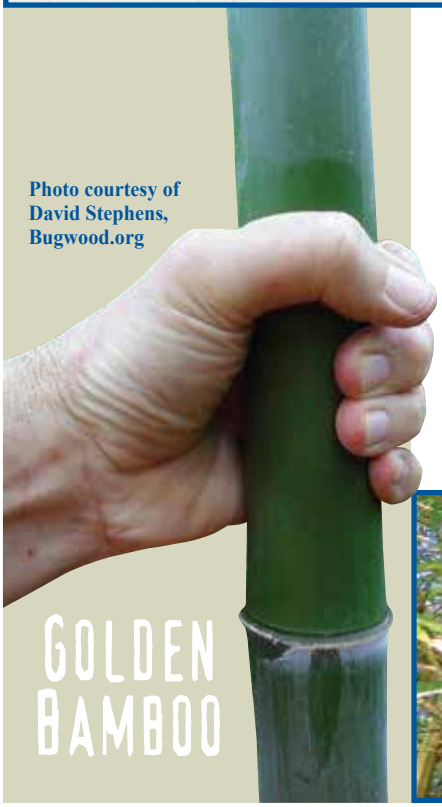



Photo courtesy of David Stephens, Bugwood.org

## Biology & Spread

Because golden bamboo is readily available from commercial nurseries, garden centers, and online sources, property owners often turn to this aggressive plant when needing a visual screen or noise barrier in their yards. It easily escapes confinement to nearby areas and uses an extensive network of underground stems, called rhizomes, to grow new shoots and form new plants. These rhizomes can be transported in yard waste, by roadside plows, and other movements of dirt and soil. Golden bamboo can rapidly infest soils that have been disturbed by fire, since rhizomes are protected underground. Golden bamboo only flowers every 7-12 years, but seed production is rarely observed.

Photo courtesy of Barloventomagico, Flickr

# Golden Bamboo

Photo courtesy of James R. Allison, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Bugwood.org

## Habitat

Golden bamboo grows best in full sun in moist, deep, loamy soils. It is often found along roadsides, lawns, urban landscapes and in residential right of ways, but will also tolerate shade and can spread into forested ecosystems and wetlands.

Photo courtesy of Chuck Bargeron, University of Georgia, Bugwood.org

## Impacts

### *Threat to Biodiversity*

This bamboo is fast-growing and will invade both natural and human-dominated areas. The thick, tall monocultures it produces suffocate and shade out native vegetation, allowing little if anything to grow beneath. Leaf litter from golden bamboo found along streams is said to have impacts on litter-feeding invertebrates, altering ecosystem processes and stream food webs. In addition, the large monocultures it forms provide little to no valuable habitat for wildlife.

### *Economic Costs*

Once introduced into urban landscapes, the thick root systems formed by golden bamboo can buckle sidewalks and driveways, damage structures, and have a negative impact on property values. It is difficult to control in gardens and can quickly dominate desirable garden species. It is also known to attract roaches in urban areas.

## Prevention & Control

Once established in an area, golden bamboo is very difficult to eradicate because of its rapid vegetative reproduction. Small infestations or areas where herbicides are not permitted can be controlled by cutting and mowing, although this needs to be repeated several times throughout the growing season since bamboo will readily re-sprout. Large areas of bamboo can be treated with herbicide, but only where risks to non-target species are minimal and chemical treatment does not always produce consistent results.

Preventing the introduction and spread of golden bamboo is the best way to protect natural habitats from harm. When selecting plants for garden, privacy, or shade purposes, choose species that are native to the region. Never use invasive pants, such as golden bamboo, that can escape and cause problems in natural areas. Native plants will provide an attractive setting and will support native wildlife.

Photo courtesy of James H. Miller, USDA Forest Service, Bugwood.org

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