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THE MALDIVES NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Policy for the Prevention and Management of Invasive Alien Plant Species on MNU Campuses

Approved Date: 18th October 2026
Approved by: MNU Sustainability Committee

1. **Introduction**

   The Maldives National University (MNU) is committed to promoting environmental sustainability, protecting biodiversity, and maintaining healthy terrestrial ecosystems through the implementation of its Sustainability Policy. As part of this commitment, MNU recognises the importance of preventing the introduction, establishment, and spread of invasive alien plant species that may threaten native biodiversity, disrupt local ecosystems, and negatively affect campus environments.

   This policy outlines MNU's institutional commitment to the prevention and management of invasive alien plant species across its campuses by establishing guidelines for responsible landscaping, plant selection, monitoring, and management. It aims to promote biodiversity conservation, environmentally responsible campus management, and sustainable land-use practices, contributing to Sustainable Development Goal 15 (Life on Land).

2. **Purpose**

   To prevent the introduction, establishment and spread of invasive alien plant species within MNU campuses; reduce harm to native biodiversity, campus infrastructure and human health; and promote environmentally responsible landscaping suited to the small-island ecosystems of the Maldives.

3. **Scope**

   This policy applies to all MNU-managed campus grounds in Malé and, following institutional adoption, other MNU campuses; landscaped areas, courtyards, rooftops, nurseries, potted plants, construction sites, contractors, suppliers, staff, students and visitors involved in planting or vegetation management.

4. **Definitions**

4.1. **Alien plant:** A plant introduced outside its natural range through human activity.

4.2. **Invasive alien plant:** An alien plant that establishes and spreads and causes, or is likely to cause, environmental, economic or social harm.

4.3. **Watch-list plant:** Reviewers shall assess manuscripts across the following dimensions: A plant requiring assessment because of documented invasive behaviour elsewhere or uncertainty about its local status

4.4. **Native plant:** A species occurring naturally in the Maldives, subject to verification of local origin and suitability

5. Policy Principles

5.1. Prevention is preferred to costly removal after establishment.

5.2. Plant management shall be evidence-based, proportionate and documented.

5.3. No plant shall be labelled invasive solely because it is non-native.

5.4. Prioritise native and locally appropriate, non-invasive plants in new landscaping.

5.5. Avoid dispersing seeds, roots or viable cuttings during control and disposal.

5.6. Comply with applicable Maldivian environmental, waste, plant import and occupational safety requirements

5.7. Prevention is preferred to costly removal after establishment.

5.8. Plant management shall be evidence-based, proportionate and documented.

6. Priority Species and Planting Restrictions

6.1. Annex 1 identifies priority species documented as established or invasive in the Maldives and an additional watch list.

6.2. Species in Annex 1A shall not be newly planted, propagated, purchased or deliberately distributed for MNU landscaping.

6.3. Existing specimens shall be inventoried and assessed for phased control or removal based on spread, site risk and feasibility.

6.4. Annex 1B species require botanical verification and site-specific assessment before any action; listing does not imply a national legal prohibition.

7. Prevention and Procurement

7.1. Require scientific names and source details for all new landscaping plants and nursery stock.

7.2. Screen proposed plants against Annex 1, current national guidance and available invasive-species databases before purchase.

7.3. Do not bring untreated soil, seeds, cuttings or potted plants onto campus from uncertain sources.

7.4. Inspect delivered plants and growing media for volunteer weeds and unwanted propagules.

7.5. Use native or locally appropriate alternatives, with due regard to root behaviour, shade, salt tolerance, safety and maintenance.

7.6. Include invasive-plant prevention and disposal requirements in landscaping and construction contracts.

8. Campus Survey and Risk Assessment

The designated campus unit shall undertake a baseline plant inventory within six months of policy commencement. This includes recording the following: scientific name, location, approximate abundance, evidence of reproduction/spread, nearby drains or natural vegetation, photographs and recommended action. Inspect priority sites at least twice annually and after significant landscaping or soil movement.

9. Prioritization shall consider

9.1. verified species identity
9.2. documented local impact
9.3. rate of spread and reproductive stage
9.4. proximity to sensitive vegetation, drainage and neighbouring properties
9.5. feasibility and safety of removal.

10. Control, Removal and Restoration

10.1. Confirm species identity before major removal; seek botanical or relevant government advice where uncertain.
10.2. For small infestations, remove seedlings and roots manually where safe, preferably before flowering or seed set.
10.3. For larger woody plants or dense infestations, prepare a site-specific removal plan including equipment, worker safety and regrowth checks.
10.4. Contain viable seeds, fruits, roots and cuttings in secure bags; do not compost potentially viable invasive material in ordinary campus compost.
10.5. Dispose of plant waste through approved local waste-management arrangements; avoid dumping in public spaces, coastal areas or vacant plots.
10.6. Chemical control is not the default: any herbicide use must be separately authorized, legally compliant and undertaken by trained personnel with safeguards for students, drains and groundwater.
10.7. Replant cleared areas promptly with appropriate low-risk species and monitor regrowth.

11. **Reporting and Awareness**

Staff, students and contractors shall report suspected invasive plants to the designated campus focal point, ideally with a photograph and location. The University shall provide annual awareness messages, contractor induction and educational signage where appropriate. Reports shall be verified before public identification or removal instructions are issued.

12. Roles and Responsibilities

12.1. MNU senior management: approve policy, designate an accountable unit and provide resources.
12.2. Campus facilities: maintain inventory, inspect grounds, implement approved control and keep records.
12.3. Designated environmental or academic adviser: support identification, risk assessment and periodic species-list revision.

12.4. Procurement and contractors: comply with planting restrictions, inspection and safe disposal requirements.

12.5. Staff and students: avoid unauthorised planting and report suspected invasive species.

13. Monitoring and Performance Indicators

13.1. Baseline campus plant inventory completed within six months.

13.2. 100% of proposed new landscaping species screened before purchase

13.3. At least two documented inspections per year per campus.

13.4. Number and area of priority infestations identified, treated and rechecked.

13.5. Number of staff/contractor awareness sessions and confirmed incident reports.

14. Policy Review

The policy shall be reviewed at least once every three years. Annex 1 shall be reviewed annually or sooner if authoritative Maldivian information changes.Proposed amendments should be assessed by relevant MNU academic and administrative personnel and approved through the applicable university governance process.

ANNEX 1

Annex 1A

Priority control and no-new-planting list. The four species below are explicitly illustrated as established and spreading in the Maldives State of the Environment report (Figure 3-23, p. 109). They are not asserted to be present on any particular MNU campus until surveyed.

Scientific name	**Common / Dhivehi name**	**Key concern**
Prosopis juliflora (syn. *Neltuma juliflora*)	Velvet mesquite / Giulhilaashi	Dense thickets suppress native plants; thorny woody growth.
Lantana camara	Lantana / Kashikothan	Bird-dispersed seeds and vegetative spread; threat to coastal vegetation.
Sphagneticola trilobata	Singapore daisy / Valu Mirihi	Rapid groundcover spread; crowds out native regeneration.
Bidens pilosa	Hairy beggarticks / Enbureymaa	Prolific weed forming dense stands and competing with native vegetation.

Annex 1B:

Additional species for campus screening and verification.

FAO's regional inventory lists the following under Maldives. Their inclusion here is precautionary; actual presence, impacts and control priority at MNU must be verified: Acacia farnesiana (syn. Vachellia farnesiana), Adenanthera pavonina, Ageratum conyzoides, Antigonon leptopus, Ardisia elliptica, Leucaena leucocephala, Mimosa pudica, Parthenium hysterophorus and Psidium guajava. Lantana camara is already included in Annex 1A. These species shall not be newly introduced into landscaping until a documented assessment is completed.

ANNEX 2.

Inspection and Response Procedure

- Record report and photograph; note precise campus location.
- Verify identity against Annex 1 and obtain expert confirmation when needed.
- Assess spread, exposure, safety and ecological risk.
- Approve control method and arrange trained personnel and waste containment.
- Document removal and replanting; reinspect after 1–3 months and thereafter as appropriate.
- Update campus inventory and annual performance report.

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