

BIOLOGICAL CONTROL OF INVASIVE PLANTS IN MINNESOTA. Monika A. Chandler and Luke C. Skinner, Weed Integrated Pest Management Program, Minnesota Department of Agriculture, St. Paul, MN 55101 and Invasive Species Program, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, St. Paul, MN 55155

Biological control, the use of natural enemies to control non-native pests, can be an effective tool in managing invasive plants. Non-native plants can become invasive because they lack the insects and diseases that control them in their native environments. Biological control reunites natural enemies, such as herbivores and pathogens, with their host (invasive plant) to reduce impacts caused by the pest. Frequently, this involves the use of specialized insects that were tested extensively for host specificity (safety) and efficacy. The goal of biological control is not to eradicate the invasive plant, but to reduce its impact to an acceptable level. The Minnesota Departments of Agriculture and Natural Resources have implemented successful biological control programs for leafy spurge, spotted knapweed, and purple loosestrife statewide. Development of new biological control efforts for garlic mustard and buckthorn are underway.