Invasive species are the number one threat to forest health in New York State. Non-native pests and diseases are more likely to cause damage because they don’t have any natural enemies. When they left their homeland, the invasive species left behind their predators and diseases. With nothing to control their populations, they can quickly take over an area.

Asian longhorned beetles attack many kinds of trees but prefer maple trees, especially sugar maples. This tree is infested and probably will not survive.

Purple loosestrife and Norway maple are non-native plants that have been sold at garden centers for use in landscaping. Their seeds traveled away from the gardens, and the plants “escaped” and spread into wild areas. They crowd out native plants and don’t provide food for native wildlife.

Garlic mustard was brought here from Europe in the 1860s to be used for food and medicine. It escaped from garden plantings into nearby woods. It comes out early in the spring, and shades native plants by growing 2-3½ feet tall. The native plants have trouble getting enough sunlight to grow. Garlic mustard produces many seeds, so the plants can spread far in just a few years.

To limit its spread, teams of people cut garlic mustard down or pull it up before the seeds form each year.

This tiny crustacean from northern Europe and Asia arrived in the Great Lakes in ballast water of ocean-going ships. It has spread to inland lakes, including Great Sacandaga Lake. Spiny water fleas disrupt food chains in the areas they invade by competing with native zooplankton (microscopic aquatic animals) for food, as well as eating native zooplankton.

Water chestnut seeds are hard nuts with four half-inch barbed spines.

Garlic mustard seeds are made from the garlic plant. The seeds spread by attaching to clothing, pets, and the fur of wild animals. This is how garlic mustard spread from Europe to New York State. It has spread to all of the states in the eastern U.S. But it hasn’t been found in other places in New York State. It can be a problem in New York State in the future. This is why it is important to check traps that are set to catch garlic mustard to see if any garlic mustard is found.

Water chestnut can become so plentiful that their leaves prevent sunlight from reaching underwater plants that need it for photosynthesis. To help limit the spread of water chestnut, people should completely clean their boats and all of their gear before moving from one waterbody to another.