



Invasive Species Leaflet



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Phyllostachys aurea (Golden Bamboo, Fishpole Bamboo)

Initial Introduction and Expansion in Range



There have been hundreds of bamboo species introduced into the United States from various countries. In North Carolina, most of the cultivated bamboo species are in the genus *Phyllostachys*, and the most commonly cultivated species that is naturalizing is *Phyllostachys aurea*.

Introduced from China in the late 1800s, *P. aurea* is found throughout the southeastern United States from Maryland, south to Florida, west to Louisiana and Arkansas, and northwest to Oregon. This plant is still widely promoted and sold as an ornamental and to be used for privacy fences. Although *P. aurea* rarely flowers, infestations can rapidly spread through rhizomes,

often forming dense, monotypic thickets.

Description and Biology

- Although a member of the Grass Family, *P. aurea* is a woody, perennial, reed-like plant that can reach heights up to 30 feet.
- Golden to green stems (canes) are hollow with solid joints and measure between 1 and 6 inches in diameter.
- Lance-shaped leaves are arranged alternately along the stem in fan-like clusters.
- Rarely produces flowers and fruit.
- Can be confused with *Arundinaria gigantea* (giant cane), a native throughout the United States, but this plant usually only reaches a height of 6 to 8 feet.



Habitats Susceptible to Invasion

Phyllostachys aurea thrives in full sun but is also able to grow and spread in sparsely wooded forests. It is commonly found in suburban woodlands, around old home sites and along roads. It seems to spread most rapidly in moist soils.

Prevention and Control

As tempting as it may be to plant *P. aurea* for its striking growth form and ability to form an almost impenetrable living privacy fence, this plant should be avoided at all costs since it rarely remains contained within desirable boundaries. An established stand of *P. aurea* can take several years of hard work to completely eradicate. Small infestations can be controlled by repeatedly cutting or mowing the stems as close to the ground as possible several times during the growing season for successive years until the energy reserves in the rhizomes are exhausted. Large infestations of *P. aurea* can be killed by thoroughly wetting the foliage with a 2 percent solution of glyphosate and a 0.5 percent nonionic surfactant. Ideally, the plants should be sprayed in the late fall or early spring when temperatures are above 65 degrees Fahrenheit to ensure absorption of the chemical. Many native species are also dormant at this time. As long as the ground is not frozen, large plants can be killed by cutting them down near the ground and spraying the freshly cut stump with a 25 percent solution of glyphosate.

THE LABEL IS THE LAW!

WHEN USING ANY PESTICIDE, FOLLOW ALL LABEL INSTRUCTIONS

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Phyllostachys aurea photography by James H. Miller, USDA Forest Service, Bugwood.org (*left*) and Cheri Smith, NCDOT (*right*).

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