

Warmer Winters, Bigger Problems

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Climate change and invasive species are linked, and the effects touch all of us. As temperatures warm, some native plants and animals struggle to survive. That opens the door for tough, fast-spreading invaders to move in, outcompete natives, and change the places we hike, the trees on our streets, and even the food we buy. Warmer winters have already helped certain pests spread north in Utah, raising costs for homeowners and communities.

“If you think about buying your food, food could be more expensive. Hiking in the mountains, you may see different trees, or even no trees. Birds, insects, a lot of things will be changing in our lives.” — Marion Murray, USU Extension

That sounds a little scary. But there’s good news: when everyday people pitch in, it works. Here are three things you can do right now to help:

1. **Clean your gear and tires.** After hiking, camping, or traveling, brush off boots, rinse off bikes and strollers, and knock mud and seeds off tires before you head home.
2. **Don’t give invaders a ride.** Buy firewood where you burn it. Check coolers, tents, and luggage for hitchhiking bugs or plant bits.
3. **Report what you see.** If you spot an unusual insect or plant, contact your county USU Extension office or the Utah Plant Pest Diagnostic Lab.

USU has experts who study these changes and how they affect Utah. Learn what’s coming—and how to help stop the spread.

[Read the full fact sheet here.](#)

Watch an interview with the author to learn more.
<https://youtu.be/fDYnx2yiO-g>

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