

BEYOND THE BINARY



LOADED
LANGUAGE



ALIEN

Botany: a plant introduced outside its natural range through human activity.

US Law: any person who is not a citizen of the United States.

INVADER

Botany: an alien species spreading beyond its point of introduction.

Common Usage: a person or army that enters by force, without permission.

NATIVE

Botany: a plant that evolved in a place.

Common Usage: A person born in a place.

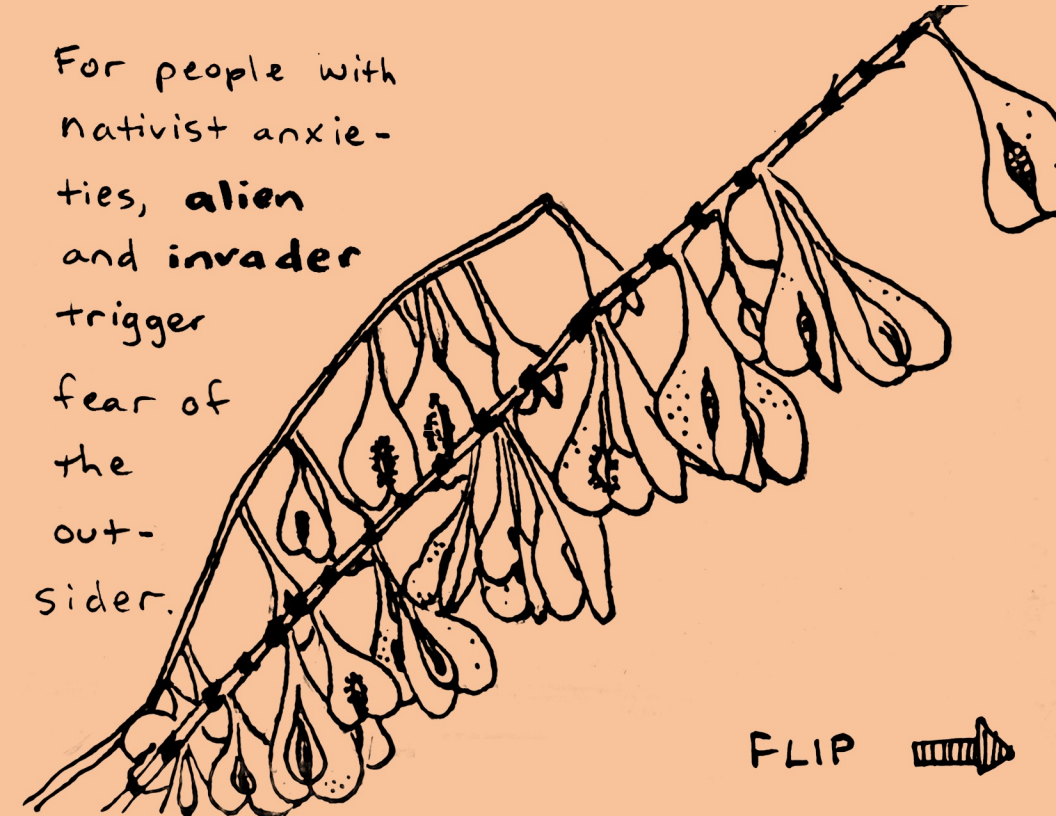
Legal/Historical: a colonial term for occupied peoples.

COLONIZER

Botany: a plant that spreads rapidly into new or disturbed territory.

History: a person or power that seizes and controls other people's land.

For people with
nativist anxie-
ties, **alien**
and **invader**
trigger
fear of
the
out-
sider.

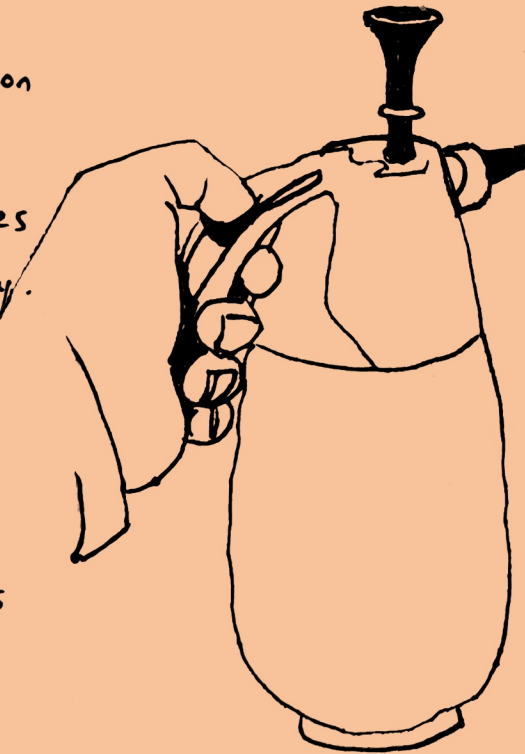


FLIP 

For people with anti-colonial politics, **invader** and **colonizer** carry the weight of historical violence.

Native becomes the victim to be defended at all costs.

This language works on almost everyone. In both cases, it evokes a moral emergency. Eradication of "invasive" species feels urgent, and not doing so feels like failure.



That urgency obscures what actually matters: the specific contexts of individual plants.

Japanese knotweed feeds pollinators and remediates contaminated land.

Once established, it is nearly impossible to remove without enormous, sustained resources.

It's understandable why you wouldn't want it in your garden, but in brownfields, on damaged riverbanks and ruderal ecosystems, knotweed is earning its place.



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SOURCES

