

Invasive Plants - Coming to America.

National Early Detection and Rapid Response System for Invasive Plants – Student Weed Stopper Program.

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Introduction. Currently, a **National Early Detection and Rapid Response (EDRR) System for Invasive Plants** is being developed to help minimize the establishment and spread of non-native invasive plants in the United States. Primary strategies to increase capacity for EDRR include: **early detection and reporting** of suspected new plants to appropriate officials (by trained volunteers and agency field personnel); **ID and vouchering** of submitted specimens (by cooperating botanists); **archival** of new plant records in regional and national plant databases [e.g., the Invasive Plant Atlas of New England (IPANE)]; **rapid assessment** of new plant species for invasiveness (by federal and state scientists); and **rapid response** to confirmed invaders (by impacted land owners/managers, and invasive plant task forces).

The Role of Educators. Educators across America can help address the problem by talking about invasive species in their science classes, and by stressing the importance of using non-invasive plants in the landscape that will not escape and establish free living populations outside of cultivation. Educators can become directly involved in the effort to develop a National EDRR System for Invasive Plants by forming **Student Weed Stopper Programs** to encourage students to report the appearance of unusual plants and animals in their communities. A primary goal is to help students become critical observers in their home environment and the natural world. The Student Weed Stopper Program involves *classroom and laboratory activities, field studies, and*

monitoring of Weed Stopper Zones as outlined below.

I. Classroom and Laboratory Activities – Learn About Invasive Species.

Main Objective – Learn about the introduction, biology, impacts, and spread of invasive species.

Activity 1 – *Introduce Students to Invasive Species* – Use PPT presentations and live specimens to provide an overview of the invasive species problem.

Activity 2 – *Develop a Weed Stopper Target List* - A list of new invasive species in your area.

Activity 3 – *Develop Outreach Materials* - Develop Weed Stopper fact sheets and wanted posters for display during National Invasive Weed Awareness Week (late February).

Activity 4 – *Tell Somebody* - Host an Invasive Species Awareness Day at school during National Invasive Weed Awareness Week in late February (Invasive Plants on Display, Invasive Species Symposium).



Example Widespread Species: Dandelion, English Ivy, Kudzu, Chinese Tallow, Oriental Bittersweet, Purple Loosestrife, China Berry.

Example Weed Stopper Species: Hydrilla, Beach Vitex, Giant Salvinia, Cogongrass, Bush Killer.

Basic Supplies and Materials: Digital Images, Plant Specimens, Hand Lenses.

II. Field Studies – See the Impacts of Invasive Species on Native Plants and Animals.

Main Objective – Learn about invasive species of local concern.

Activity 1 – *Take a Field Trip* - Take a class field trip to a nearby park, refuge, or beach that is being impacted by invasive species. Take pictures, and use standard field data forms to collect data on invasive species observed during the field trip.

Basic Supplies and Materials: Plastic Bags for Collecting Plants, North American Weed Mgt. Association Field Data Collection Forms, Hand Lenses, Digital Camera, Insect Repellent, First Aid Kit.



III. Take Action - Set up a Student Weed Stopper Program.

Main Objective – Set up a Student Weed Stopper Network Program to help detect new invasive species in your area.

Activity 1 – *Establish Weed Stopper Zones* – Put up a large area map showing where students live – designate Weed Stopper Zones near their homes that students can monitor.

Activity 2 – *Monitor Weed Stopper Zones* – Ask students to monitor and report on their assigned zones once a month during the school year.

Activity 3 – *Identify and Study* exotic plants that are reported by the students. The County Extension Service and local colleges can provide assistance with hard to identify specimens

Activity 4 – *Archive Weed Stopper Data* – Compile information on invasive plants reported (species name, associated native species, GPS coordinates, total area, total area infested). Submit the information to a regional Invasive Plant Atlas (e.g., Invasive Plant Atlas of New England, Invasive Plant Atlas of the Mid-South, or the Southeast Exotic Pest Plant Council – EDDMapS). Botanists with these organizations will determine if the specimens are new county, state, or national records.

Activity 5 – *Report New Invasive Plant Records* – New county, state, and national plant records should be reported to state university scientists, the State Department of Agriculture (agricultural weeds), or the State Department of Natural Resources (aquatic weeds, weeds of natural areas). *Rapid response depends on receiving such reports.*

Activity 6 – *Get Involved* - Encourage students and their families to participate in Volunteer Invasive Plant Removal Days at area refuges and parks.

Supplies and Materials: Weed Stopper Target List, Weed Stopper Fact Sheets, Personal Digital Cameras (where available), Large Area Map with GPS Coordinates, GPS units (where available).

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