



TEN WAYS TO OBSERVE NATIONAL INVASIVE SPECIES AWARENESS WEEK

February 23-28, 2014

1. Do Some Research: You don't even have to leave the comfort of your own home. Get on the Internet and find out what's invasive in your area, region or state. Identify which species might be growing in your backyard or neighborhood. Learn to recognize common invaders and keep an eye out for signs of new ones. Check trees, gardens, vacant lots, roadsides, yards, agricultural areas, wetlands, ponds, and lakes. Early detection is crucial to stopping the spread of invasive species! Visit www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov/unitedstates to get started.
2. Join in an Eradication Effort: Many parks and nature reserves manually remove invasive plants (and sometimes animals) with the help of local volunteers. These outings are a great way to get some exercise, enjoy time outdoors, meet new friends, and gain the satisfaction of knowing that you're helping to protect your natural heritage.
3. Become a Citizen Scientist: Working out in the field can be a very rewarding way to combat invasive species. Whether you are collecting scientific data to be used by local, state, or national agencies and organizations or actually helping get rid of the invasive plants and animals, you will be able to see up close and personal the impacts of invasive species and the results of your efforts. Visit Citizen Science Central (<http://www.birds.cornell.edu/citsci/>) to learn more.
4. Visit a Garden, Park or Nature Center: Spend an afternoon at a botanic garden, park or natural area and familiarize yourself with the native flora and fauna in your area. See if a guided tour is offered.
5. Read a Book: Not an outdoor type? Not to worry, even bookworms can participate in National Invasive Species Awareness Week. Authors have written field guides about invasive species in particular states. Find a book and read up on the threats posed by invasive species.
6. Donate: If you can't give time, you might be able to give money. Even small amounts can help local invasive species organizations with control and management and other costs.
7. Start a Garden: Replace your invasive landscape plants with native alternatives. Unlike many non-native plants, native plants are hardy, less susceptible to pests and diseases and unlikely to escape and become invasive. The great variety of plants native to any region give gardeners options that work well in any type of garden design. Because maintaining native plants requires less work, they provide excellent choices for large commercial landscapes as well as residential gardens. Of course, native plants have other benefits. They help conserve water, reduce mowing costs, provide habitat for birds, butterflies and other wildlife, protect the soil and save money on fertilizer and pesticides.

8. Legislate: Write a letter to your local state representative or get involved with an activist group. Let your lawmakers know your opinions about the impact of invasive species on our natural heritage.

9. Take the Invasive Species Challenge: One of the most effective ways to manage invasive species is for recreationalists such as boaters, fishermen, pet owners, and gardeners to not be unknowing vehicles of dispersion. Here are some easy everyday things you can do to meet the Invasive Species Challenge:
 - BOATERS – Clean, drain and dry your boat trailer and gear every time you leave a body of water.
 - PET OWNERS - If you have acquired an undesirable pet or fish species for your aquarium or water garden, it is important not to release these plants or animals into the environment. Follow these tips from Habitattitude (<http://www.habitattitude.net/>) for aquarium hobbyists and backyard pond owners.
 - TRAVELERS, HIKERS, BIKERS, BIRDERS, AND CAMPERS - If you engage in terrestrial recreational activities like camping, hiking, biking or birding, take care not to be an unwitting vehicle of dispersion.
 - GARDENERS - Not all non-native species are bad, but some plants that look lovely in your garden might be harmful invaders that will make their way into natural areas. The Be PlantWise website (<http://www.beplantwise.org/>) has easy tips on how to manage your garden to preserve the unique qualities of neighboring wildlands.

10. Spread Awareness: Take your National Invasive Species Awareness Week commitment beyond this week. Tell your friends, family, neighbors and others about invasive species! It's a big country and we can't get the word out to everyone without your help. Encourage them to get involved with National Invasive Species Awareness Week in their own way.