

INVASIVE ID

How do we combat common invasive plant species in MN?



Approximate time needed:

45-60 minutes

Grade level:

High school (9-12)

Educator prep:

- Review [Invasive plant cards](#) and [answer key](#)
- Print and cut [invasive plant cards](#), if in person
- Check out one computer per student

Materials needed:

- Invasive plant cards - [virtual](#) or [print](#) version
- [Invasive plant cards answer key](#)
- Field guide that includes invasive plants of Minnesota - [virtual](#) or [print](#)

Essential student background information or skills needed:

- Know how to use a field guide, like [Minnesota Wildflowers](#)

Objectives and Standards:

- Students will be able to identify a plant that is invasive in Minnesota and discuss the habitat, harmful effects, and control methods for that plant.

Background Info for Educator:

- Browse [this webpage](#) on invasive terrestrial plants from MN DNR to learn more. The “How do I learn more about invasive plants?” section includes info on many of the plants listed on the invasive plant cards.

Activity Plan:

Introduction:

5 minutes

- Begin by asking students if they remember what an invasive plant is. Review with slide 8 of the [Native Plants 101 slideshow](#) if needed.
- Explain that native landscapes are especially susceptible to invasive plants and other opportunistic plants for the first couple of years after they are planted, so they need to be monitored.
- Explain that students will be identifying common invasive plants in Minnesota by using a field guide like [Minnesota Wildflowers](#). Then they will learn about their habitat, harmful effects, and how to control them.

Research:

30-40 minutes

- Assign or ask students to “draw a card” from the [invasive plant cards](#).

- Instruct students to look carefully at the photos on their card and use the [Minnesota Wildflowers](#) advanced search tool or other field guide to find out what their plant is called. Tips for the MN Wildflowers search engine:
 - There is a “grass search” button near the top of the page for finding grasses
 - Click on the question marks next to dropdown menus to see examples of flower shape, leaf attachment, etc.
 - It may be easier to start the search with only a couple of characteristics filled in (for example, flower color: purple, leaf attachment: alternate). Then, deduce from the results that show up.
- Instruct students to answer the following questions about their invasive plant:
 - What is its habitat?
 - Where is it native? In other words, where did it come from originally?
 - In which Minnesota counties is it found? Or if it is widespread, in which Minnesota counties is it NOT found?
 - What threat does it pose to other plants?
 - What are some methods of controlling it?

This information can be found on the [Minnesota Wildflowers](#) site and [MN DNR Invasive Terrestrial Plants](#) page under the “How do I learn more about invasive plants?” heading. For up-to-date, crowdsourced distribution maps, go to [eddmaps.org](#).

Closing:

10-15 minutes

- Allow time for students to share what they learned about their invasive plant.
- Discuss these questions as a class:
 - What are some common methods of controlling invasive plants?
 - How do you recommend we keep the Holland Basin free of invasive plants in the future?

Potential Extensions

- Students could make an infographic for each invasive plant that visually displays the answers to the questions in the “Research” section of this activity.
- Students could make a maintenance plan for a garden that includes information on how to combat invasive plants.

Potential Challenges

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