

# Unwanted Guests: Aliens on Your Site!

## *Surveying Invasive Exotic Plant Species*

### ***Pest Control Standards Check activity***

#### **Essential Question:**

*What is an invasive exotic? Why should I want to remove them from my club site?*

#### **At a Glance:**

Learners will identify invasive plant species on their club site and design a safe and effective plan for their removal.

#### **Background Information**

There are aliens on your club site! Alien plant species, that is. The term “alien” when used in the plant world, refers to invasive exotic species – plants that have been introduced by one means or another to a region that is different from its origin in geography but similar in climate and habitat. Sometimes the new climate and habitat is even easier for the plant to grow in than its original habitat. The climate may be warmer or the growing season longer, allowing for a longer period of flowering, greater seed production and increased survival rate. The new habitat most likely will not include the same competitors and predators further increasing the survival rate. When the new plants grow well in their new home, they sometimes outgrow the native plants species that already lived there. They become competition for light and nutrients. “Exotic” refers to the non-local origin of the new plant. “Invasive” refers to the fact that these new plants seem to have invaded (and conquered!) the territory of native plants.

**Note:** There are plants species on the Invasive Plant Species List that are still commonly used in landscapes. While GEN Club Members know that they technically should not be planted, mass pulling of liriope around school buildings will probably not go over well with the principal. In this survey of the GEN Club Site, we will try to focus on individual plants of invasive species that seem to have seeded in on their own and not those that have been planted on purpose.

#### **Procedure: How to Rid your GEN Club Site of Aliens**

1. For this activity choose a loop to walk on your school site and walk the same way each time you do this standards’ check.
2. Using the diagrams provided and/or Invasive Plant Identification Guide, survey the club site for invasive plant species. If you are unsure about alien identity, put flagging on a branch and ask someone.
3. Record information in the table on the Standards Checks Data Sheet.
4. Determine course of action to save your club site from the aliens!

**Location:** Checkpoints

**Objective:** Learners will

- 1) identify invasive plants on their site.
- 2) design a plan for their removal of invasive species.
- 3) incorporate safe and effective techniques to improve the school site ecosystem.

**Skills:** plant identification, mapping, classification

**Supplies:**

- Standards Checks Data Sheet
- Standards Checks Map
- Clipboard
- Pencil
- Invasive plant identification or Diagrams of most common invasive plants guide
- Shovel or trowel
- Gloves
- flagging

**Subjects:** science

**Time:** 30-60 minutes

5. Depending on the species of plant, you may be able to pull it out by hand or you may need a shovel or trowel. If you have gloves, wear them to protect your hands. You may want to gather all information and then plan to pull the plants on at another club meeting.
6. After digging or pulling the plant, put in a place where it can be composted. A pile separate from compost that you are planning to use for amending soil. Watch out for seeds! If the plants has ripe seeds, they can spread. You may need to make arrangements to carry away the plants that you have pulled. Often there is a club member whose family has gardeners. Where there are gardeners, there are piles of composting plant material – often a pile especially for seedy weeds.
7. Pulling a plant can create an excellent opportunity for planting another one! The soil will be loosened and the hole practically dug. Your club may have plants growing in a grow lab or plans for a service learning project to beautify your club site. If planting is a possibility, consider plants that will provide food sources and good habitat for pollinators, birds and other creatures that make up you club site ecosystem.

### **Discussion/Assessment**

Is surveying for aliens something you would enjoy doing in other places – like at home or a relative's home?

Did you run across other members of the club site ecosystem while surveying the plants?

What are some other ways the club site can be improved with plant material?

#### **Connections**

See this site for a complete list and more information:

<http://www.nps.gov/plants/alien/>

# Aliens on Your Site! Invasive Plant Species



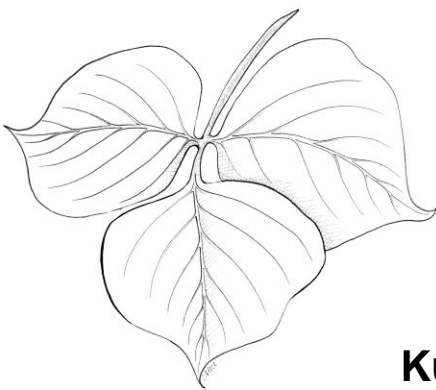
**Elaeagnus**



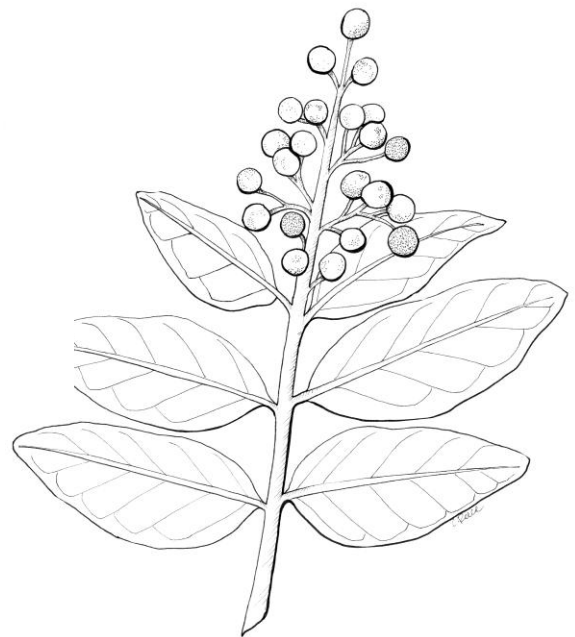
**Japanese  
Honeysuckle**



**Wisteria**



**Kudzu**



**Chinese Privet**

# Pest and Disease Control Department

## *ECO-STANDARDS CHECK*

### Unwanted Guests! Pest and Disease Walk

Team Members \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_

**NOTE:** For this activity choose a loop to walk on your school site and walk the same loop each time you do this standards' check.

**Location:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Weather Conditions:** \_\_\_\_\_

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Place a check (/) next to each unwanted guest you see on your site. At the end of your tour, add up the total number of each organism you saw.

Unwanted Guest	This many times. . .	Total
<b>Invasive Plants</b>		
- Kudzu		
- Japanese honeysuckle		
- Privet hedge		
- Other invasive plant (name it)		
- Other invasive plant (name it)		
<b>Pest Insects</b> (signs of damage or actual insect)		
- Chewed leaves		
- Other insect damage on plants (describe)		
<b>Diseases on Plants</b> (describe)		
<b>Other Unwanted Guests</b>		

