

Spotted Knapweed Activities

Serious Conversation
Play Audio Track #14
(15 minutes)

Levels
Grades 3-6
Subjects
Science, Sociology, Language Arts
Skills
Formulating, Justifying, Explaining
Concepts
Interactions among technology, science and society
Objectives
Students will learn how weeds spread and why the term invasive applies to noxious weeds.
Students will learn the four resources impacted by invasive plants: water quality, water quantity, productive land, and reduced habitat
Students will learn plant competition for needs of survival.

Materials (20 student class-size) <i>What's in Your World?</i> CD audio track #14 (inside the back cover) - 1 per class plastic objects to represent weeds at war - 20 total (chess pieces would work equally well)
Time Considerations Preparation - 10 minutes Activity - 15 minutes
Lesson Overview • Serious Conversation (15 minutes)
Background Some education programs describe invasive plant behavior as war-like, thus a website mtwow.org for “War on Weeds”, and signs “against noxious weeds”. Noxious weeds are not war-like and we should not be frightened by them. Plants are neither good nor bad, nor do they have personalities--they do have characteristics such as defense mechanisms, allelopathies (chemicals) to claim space, and reproduction systems to secure their species continuation. There are many ways to manage the negative impacts of invasive plants. That being said, a battle ground such as a chess match, or board game with soldiers enacting good management strategies is an appropriate way to get the message across that doing nothing is not an answer. There are many successful local programs that can help residents do something good to stop noxious weed impacts.

SERIOUS CONVERSATION LESSON DETAILS

STEP ONE. Pass out one plastic object or soldier representative to each student. Ask them to take their object and sit on either end of the floor placing their object in front of them on the floor. Tell ten students to sit on side and the other ten students to sit on the opposite side of the floor--*Can you name a negative impact that noxious weeds have on the water you drink?* (the quantity available can be reduced) (the quality of the water can be compromised indirectly by erosion and other run-off impacts)

Tell the students, one by one, to name one negative impact that spotted knapweed or another listed weed in your area may have on the landscapes and ecosystems. (economic impacts: cost to manage weed spread; reduced land value; contaminated seed for farmers and ranchers and outfitters; reduced forage for wildlife and livestock)

STEP TWO. Knowledge is a weapon in this battle. As each student provides an example of weed impacts in their community, instruct them to remove their object from the playing field.

STEP THREE. If there are still objects standing, and especially if answers are being repeated, ask the students-- *What can you do to stop weed impacts?* (volunteer for community weed pulls; check clothing and bicycle for weed seeds; learn how to identify weeds and where to report them--typically the county weed district) Any answer is a good answer and another object can be removed from the playing field. Once all of the weed objects are removed from the “battle” ground, ask the students to identify who in their community they should contact with their parents’ approval if they make a “noxious weed” siting. This could be the name of the local contact at the Weed District; Extension Service, Ranger District, Bureau of Land Management; Conservation District; or local volunteer organization.
Can you volunteer to help your watershed group?
Will your scouting group work on a weed project this year?
How about inviting one of the local weed contacts identified above into your classroom for a discussion?