Leaf Pounding
Take out your frustration by hammering the pigments out of invasive plants and onto fabric or paper!

Materials:
• Freshly-picked leaves of invasive plants
• Paper or fabric
• Wood (use a wood chopping block or smooth scrap wood)
• Paper towels or paper
• Hammers (any hammer with a flat head will work)

Directions:
1. Working on the ground, place materials in this order: wood, paper toweling, fabric or paper to print, leaf (try both right side up and upside down to find the best way to print), and paper toweling.
2. Hammer over the entire leaf surface. Start with gentle taps to slowly break down the cells of the leaf. Gradually increase the power of your hammering until the print is the way you want it.
3. Gently separate the paper towel from the paper or fabric. If little pieces of crushed leaves are stuck to your print, wait until they dry before brushing them off.
4. If you want to do multiple leaves on the same piece of paper, do them one at a time. You can even overlap them!
5. Heat set the image on paper or fabric with an iron set for the fabric content. Iron each section for 45 to 60 seconds. Be careful not to scorch it.
6. Optional: Highlight the edges and veins of your design with a permanent, fine tip marker.

1 Most leaves will work, but remember that the amount of “juice” and pigment in leaves varies by species, season, and rainfall. You will probably get slightly different results each time you try this craft! Flowers also make very interesting prints, but they are a little harder to work with. See the reference book listed below for tips on working with flowers.

2 For a quick and easy activity, pound on paper. Try a smooth white or cream-colored paper without a glossy finish. Card stock, bond, or linen papers seem to work well. Be sure the students realize the print will fade with time. For a more lasting finished product, you can pound the leaves on fabric that has been pretreated to accept and hold the pigments. Some art stores sell prepared for dyeing (PFD) fabric. If you can’t find PFD fabric, use the reference book listed below for directions on how to pretreat fabric yourself. You can also pound the prints on paper and scan them! Then you can use the prints to make stationery, book covers, and even iron-on transfer prints!

3 Use better quality paper towels. The cheap ones just don’t stand up well to repeated hammering. The number of paper towels depends on the “juiciness” of the leaves. Fresh spring leaves might need several layers to soften the blow. Fall leaves might not need any padding. Simply use a piece of paper to protect your work surface.

For more information check out The Art and Craft of Pounding Flowers by Laura C. Martin.