

Classroom Guidelines for Preventing the Introduction and Spread of Aquatic Invasive Species

Rusty crayfish, giant salvinia, Brazilian elodea, goldfish... these are only a few examples of organisms that can severely damage the environment if improperly disposed of following classroom use. Keep reading to learn how to avoid harming the environment when working with animals and plants in an educational setting.

Before obtaining a classroom plant or animal:

- ✓ Research the best species to use in your classroom. Select species that are native or non-invasive. (<http://nas.er.usgs.gov/>)
- ✓ If plants or animals are sent as part of a science learning kit, check with the vendor on the scientific name and required care of the organism to make sure that you will be able to meet its needs.
- ✓ Comply with federal, state, and local laws and regulations. Use an aquatic species regulations database (www.iiseagrant.org/speciesregs) to determine any restrictions on the species you intend to use.
- ✓ If an organism is allowed to be taken home, have the student and a parent/guardian sign adoption pledge form (see attached Appendix).
- ✓ Don't Let It Loose! Dispose of classroom plants and animals properly (see below).

Proper disposal of classroom plants and animals:

Plants

Freeze unwanted plants in a sealed plastic bag and dispose in the trash. Unwanted plants should not be composted because their seeds and other reproductive plant parts may remain viable.

Fish, Reptiles and Invertebrates

Find a new home for unwanted animals such as a pet retailer, animal shelter, or other classroom. If your animal finds a new home with another classroom, make sure that it won't be released into the environment in the future. If euthanasia is an option, consult with a veterinarian.

Water

Sterilize water in which your organism was contained to kill any potential invaders. To sterilize, add 5 drops of bleach for each quart of water, ¼ teaspoon for each gallon, or 5 teaspoons for 10 gallons of water. Pour sterilized water down the toilet or sink, never down a storm drain.

Packaging

Remove potential invaders from all packaging. Inspect the packaging and remove any visible plants or animals and dispose as stated above. Rinse all containers with a bleach solution that contains 2 fluid ounces of bleach per quart of water (or ¼ cup of bleach per gallon of water), and then dispose all packaging material in the garbage.