

# DON'T LET IT LOOSE!

It's bad for your pets. It's bad for the environment.

## DISPOSE OF CLASSROOM PLANTS AND ANIMALS PROPERLY!



### WHY SHOULDN'T I RELEASE CLASSROOM PLANTS AND ANIMALS INTO THE WILD?

Common aquatic plants and animals can become invasive when released into the wild, including:

- ✓ goldfish and other aquarium fish
- ✓ Chinese mystery snail
- ✓ elodea, hydrilla, and other aquarium plants
- ✓ crayfish
- ✓ red-eared slider turtle



### WHAT DAMAGE DO INVASIVE SPECIES CAUSE?

- |                                       |                                  |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| ✓ Degrade aquatic habitats            | ✓ Limit recreation               |
| ✓ Outcompete desirable native species | ✓ Damage infrastructure          |
| ✓ Decrease biodiversity               | ✓ Contaminate water resources    |
| ✓ Alter food chains                   | ✓ Necessitate expensive controls |
| ✓ Introduce diseases                  |                                  |



Chinese mystery snail



Red-eared slider turtle

### WHAT IF MY CLASSROOM PLANT OR ANIMAL IS NATIVE TO MY REGION?

Even if your plant or animal is native to your region, it may carry diseases and should never be released into the wild.



Bullfrog  
iStockphoto.com/Jim Jurica

### WHAT SHOULD I DO WITH UNWANTED CLASSROOM PLANTS AND ANIMALS?

**PLANTS:** Completely dry or freeze aquatic plants, then put them in your garbage. Composting should be avoided, as seeds can still sprout.

**FISH, INVERTEBRATES, AND REPTILES:** Return to the seller or find them a home with a friend or another classroom. Ask the new owner to take a pledge\* not to release. If you cannot find a new home for your animal and you want to consider euthanasia as an option, consult a veterinarian.

**WATER:** The water that contained your aquatic plant or animal could be contaminated and should be sterilized. To sterilize, add 5 drops of bleach for each quart (about 1 liter) of water, 1/4 teaspoon for each gallon, or 5 teaspoons for 10 gallons of water. Put the sterilized water down the toilet or sink—never down a storm drain.

**PACKAGING:** Invaders can also hitchhike on packaging. Inspect packaging and remove any visible plants or animals. Rinse containers with a bleach solution that contains 2 fluid ounces of bleach per quart of water (or 1/4 cup bleach per gallon of water). Dispose of it in your garbage.



### LEARN HOW YOU CAN TAKE ACTION ON THESE WEBSITES!

Fun ways for teachers and students to learn about aquatic invaders:

[www.iiseagrant.org/NabInvader](http://www.iiseagrant.org/NabInvader)

Educational Toolkit on Aquatic Invasive Species:

<http://seagrant.oregonstate.edu/invasive-species/toolkit>

\*Classroom animal adoption pledge:

[www.iiseagrant.org/NabInvader/Lakes/admin/classroom.html](http://www.iiseagrant.org/NabInvader/Lakes/admin/classroom.html)

\*\*Aquatic species regulations database:

[www.iiseagrant.org/speciesregs](http://www.iiseagrant.org/speciesregs)

Ways you can prevent invasions:

[www.protectyourwaters.net/prevention](http://www.protectyourwaters.net/prevention)

The Urban Ocean Program at USC Sea Grant:

<http://www.usc.edu/org/seagrant>

Information from Canada about invasive species:

[www.InvadingSpecies.com](http://www.InvadingSpecies.com)

### THINKING OF GETTING A CLASSROOM PLANT OR ANIMAL?

- ✓ Plan ahead and research the best species to use in your classroom. Select species that are native or non-invasive.
- ✓ Use the aquatic species regulations database\*\* as a resource.
- ✓ Develop a plan for future care or disposition of the animal or plant in case it can no longer be held in your classroom.



Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant  
University of Southern California Sea Grant  
Oregon Sea Grant  
Washington Sea Grant

