

# Applegate Elementary gets grant to fight invasive species

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OF THE NEWS

CROW — Armed with superior reproductive capabilities, insatiable appetites and sometimes even poisonous pustules, invaders are upon us. And they have no local natural enemies.

They have names like *Daphne laureola*, *Centaurea solstitialis* and *Potamogeton amplifolius*. You might have heard them called invasive species.

Joining regional organizations in the fight against these invad-

ers, the local population has a generation of new champions — the fifth and sixth-graders of Applegate Elementary School. This spring, these students will have the opportunity to use technology and biology to battle the ranks of invaders.

The students, led by teacher Robin Chinburg, will learn about invasive species, identify them in the area and report their locations to the Oregon Invasives Hotline using Global Positioning Software (GPS). The Willamette Education and Early

Detection of Invasives Network (WEEDIN) will partner with the class to inform the students about invasive species using examples and a fieldtrip.

Applegate substitute Teri Robertson assisted Chinburg in writing an ecology grant to fund the project.

“I believe that students learn best by actually getting out in the field and doing things with their own hands,” Robertson said in an e-mail interview. “It’s

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PHOTO BY ZOË LIVELYBROOKS

**The seed pod of a Yellow Flag Iris floats in water, where the seeds can remain viable for several weeks.**



# INVASIVES: Prevention is key to fighting unwanted species

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valuable for them to see the kind of damage that invasive plants can do to the natural environment and empowering to have the opportunity to make changes for the better."

The Diack Ecology Education Program funded the \$2,000 award Applegate Elementary received. The organization, according to its website [www.diack-ecology.org](http://www.diack-ecology.org), works to promote youth involvement in field-based ecology. Last year, Crow Middle/High School science teacher Lisa Livelybrooks received a Diack grant for a laundry list of ecological studies, including building Western Bluebird and Mason Bee houses and related investigations.

"From our farms and gardens, to healthy habitats, to the value of our land, invasive species have a negative impact on pretty much everything that people care about," said Tania Siemens, Watershed and Invasive Species Education (WISE) coordinator in an e-mail interview.

"Invasive species can be any kind of organism," Siemens said. Unfortunately, many invasives are imported as ornamentals or pets. When they are no longer controlled, these vegeta-

tive and zoological invaders often spread rapidly.

One such species is the Yellow Flag Iris, a plant with sword-like leaves similar, but wider and shorter than, those of cattails and a bright yellow flower, which blooms from June to July. The iris (*Iris pseudacorus*) has two methods of reproduction: by seedpods present in the fall and root divisions, which can float downstream to new areas.

It can be found near water and in marshlands. The suggested methods of removing the iris are hand pulling, though the sap may irritate unprotected skin, or cutting followed by herbicide treatment.

Prevention is key to diminishing the chance of seeing another invasive species in your area.

"If you are a gardener, make sure that (a) new cutting from a friend, or a plant you would like to buy from the nursery, is not an invasive species," Siemens said. "People who like to hike, ride horses or walk their dogs can make sure they are not spreading weed seeds around on their boots or fur!"

In the case of aquatic invaders such as zebra and quagga

mussels, "boaters need to be extra careful and only launch their boat if they are sure it is clean and dry."

Siemens encourages people to share information about invasive plants with others. She also suggests interested people can host "a screening of the OPB documentary: 'Silent Invasion' as part of a statewide awareness campaign."

WEEDIN trains those interested in identifying and reporting invasive species and also those "who would like to adopt an area to survey for new invaders," Siemens said. One website that lists invaders is <http://www.wetlands.org/weedin.php>. The website to report species is [www.oregoninvasiveshotline.org](http://www.oregoninvasiveshotline.org)

Though experts say it is important to fight harmful invasive species, some nonnative species are quite beneficial.

"It is important for people to realize that not all nonnative species become invasive," Siemens said. "In fact, many of the species that we depend on for our way of life are introduced, such as corn, wheat and apple trees!"