



# East Kootenays Invasive Species Council

## Educational Activity - Invader Tag

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**Grade Level:** K-4

**Subject Area:** Science, Life Sciences, Physical Education

**Duration:** 20-45 minutes

**Description:**

In this interactive activity students will take the role of native and invasive plant species. This game shows the advantages that invasive plants have, versus the native plants.

**Learning Objective:**

Explore how certain adaptations of invasive plants enable them to outcompete native plants to attain their basic needs.

**Materials:**

- Markers, cones or flags to create boundaries
- Native and Invasive Plant ID books to choose plants

**Preparation:**

- Find a large space outdoors for the activity
- Flag off community boundaries

**Procedure:**

1. Tell the class they are going to play the role of native plants in a given community (forest, grassland, riparian area etc). Discuss the region you live in and name some of the native trees, shrubs and other plants that live there. Have them decide which plant they'd like to be.
2. The cones/markers/flagging serve as the boundaries of the community (e.g. the field, forest, etc.) and the plants can grow anywhere they choose within the boundaries.
3. Discuss with the class the types of invasive plants found in your region and their impacts. Discuss the characteristics that make a plant invasive.
4. Choose one kid to be an invasive plant, such as Spotted Knapweed, Blueweed, Hawkweeds, or another that is common in your area. Introduce this plant into

the area anywhere they wish to grow. The invasive plant is going to grow, spread and reproduce rapidly by tagging native plants and forming a long “vine” or chain (classmates holding hands).

5. “Native plants” are free to run anywhere in the boundaries of their community to escape the effects of the invader. Of course, plants are not mobile in nature, but they must compete with invasive plants for soil, nutrients, space, sunlight and water, and running is a simulation of this competition for resources. When the invasive plant tags a native plant, the two join hands and tag another plant. The third plant joins hands and becomes part of the invasive chain or population. Note: only the kids at the ends of the vine can tag other plants.
6. The vine continues to grow as other native plants are tagged and join hands. Once a chain has six classmates, it “reproduces” by splitting apart (or use four if your group is smaller). The two new invasive plant chains can then both tag native plants, and each time it grows to six, it splits apart again.
7. The climax comes when there is only one native plant left in the area: alas there is no escape! The last native plant tagged can be the “introduced” invasive plant in the next round. Play as many rounds as time permits.

**Discussion:**

1. So why did the invasive species outcompete the native plants?
2. What kind of advantages did the invasive plants have over the native plants?
3. How can we stop the invasive species?