

LESSON 8: ETHI-REASONING—EXOTIC INVASIVE PLANT SPECIES TOPICS

NOTE: This lesson was developed by Project Wild (<http://www.projectwild.org/index.htm>) for their ethi-reasoning and ethi-thinking activities. It has been adapted for incorporation into this curriculum.

Duration: One 45-minute class period

Background information:

An open discussion of personal opinion in the classroom entreats student preparation. An atmosphere of effective communication, in which students are comfortable expressing their ideas appropriately, involves various interactive skills:

- *Active listening* shows interest in others, and in what they are saying.
- *Constructive Feedback* allows one's teammate(s) to know how they are doing.
- *Responsibilities of each team member* to team success:
 - *contribute/stay* involved
 - *take turns* speaking
 - *offer positive* comments/assistance
 - *focus on the issue*, not the person speaking
 - *support your opinion* with factual information
- *Freedoms* inherent in discussing opinions
 - everyone has an individual opinion/viewpoint
 - may express an opinion without fear of ridicule
 - may express an opinion respectfully
 - may respond to others' opinions respectfully
 - may agree to disagree

A *collaborative atmosphere* helps fulfill students' needs to feel safe in making mistakes, and exploring possible solutions. Clear expectations replace barriers to effective communication. Development of a non-threatening working relationship is critical to the success of a discussion involving opinions or ethics such as the one in this valuable activity.

Source: *Effective Communication in Schools*, online at <
<http://para.unl.edu/para/Communication/Intro.html>>

Objectives:

Students will clarify their own values related to exotic invasive species and hear the values of others.

Prepare in advance:

Copy Handout 1—Ethi-Reasoning Scenarios—for each student

Description:

The purpose of this lesson is to give students the opportunity to examine, express, and clarify their own opinions and reasoning.

Instructional sequence:

(10 minutes)

- **Review** the difference between OPINION and FACT with the students.
- **Instruct** students that this is an opportunity for them to reflect on what they believe about some exotic invasive species issues. Everyone will have a chance to voice their opinions on each issue. Common ground may or may not be reached. Participants may have to “agree to disagree.”

(5-10 minutes)

- **Hand out** a short exotic invasive species scenario to the students.
- **Give** students time to read the scenario.

(5-10 minutes)

- **Divide** class into small groups for discussion. If students are reticent to speak, **begin** the discussion with a question:
 - What is the main problem you see in this scenario?
 - Which solution do you like best? Why?

Optional assessment task:

After two scenario discussions, have students write a personal opinion paragraph about a new, third scenario.

After three scenario discussions, have students write an opinion paragraph to express the personal values they have (and/or have not) expressed in discussion.