

**NIE** **Connect with your environment**  
 Learn about environmental issues, in your community and how you can get involved.

## Learn how to select plants native to area

A portable guide, intended to help you select native alternatives and avoid plants likely to escape and cause problems, is available from Penn State Extension. It features invasive species and their native alternatives. The plants suggested are known to be native in Pennsylvania and the Mid-Atlantic region.

Using native plants can provide an attractive setting and support native wildlife whose presence will enhance the water feature. This guide is currently available in PDF form only. A link to the guide can be found at [www.paseagrant.org](http://www.paseagrant.org).

— Anna McCartney

**Pocket Guide to Mid-Atlantic Water Garden Species**  
 Featuring Invasive Species and Their Native Alternatives



Diane J. Oleson, MS  
 Penn State Extension

PENN STATE EXTENSION

This guide can help you protect the environment from invasive species.



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While water gardens can provide tranquil settings for humans, they can put native ecosystems at risk unless precautions are taken to avoid invasive species. Once introduced, they spread easily and disrupt ecosystems, reduce biodiversity and cost communities huge amounts of time, money, resources and lost revenue. Careful selection will ensure you aren't contributing to these problems.

# Water foul

## Don't introduce invasive species to aquascapes

By ANNA McCARTNEY  
 Contributing writer

That beautiful water garden where you spend time may be serene, but did you know it might be harboring invasive plants and animals that could cause irreparable destruction?

Many plants and animals sold for water gardens and aquascapes are not native. While the majority may never become problems, some are highly invasive. Once introduced, these species disrupt ecosystems, reduce biodiversity and cost communities huge amounts of time, money, resources and lost revenue. They obstruct navigable waterways, restrict drainage, clog water intakes, degrade water quality and interfere with fishing and recreation.

Their introduction can be accidental when rainstorms wash plants, seeds, fish and animals into

other waterways or when they are spread by wind or wildlife. But often people help these invaders spread unintentionally when they drain or dump their unwanted plants and animals or share them with others.

Many but not all states ban the sale, transport or possession of invasive species. However, it's impossible to control Internet sales or ensure that prohibited species are not being sold by retailers unaware of the restrictions. Retailers may also unknowingly sell plants or use packing materials with "hitchhiking" plant fragments or invertebrates (small animals) that may themselves be invasive.

The best way to make sure that water gardens or aquascapes will be attractive and trouble-free is careful selection. It is therefore up to retailers and water enthusiasts to

know more about invasive species to prevent their introduction and spread.

Educate yourself about plants and animals before you purchase. Ask retailers if they are aware of what species are regionally and federally restricted and to verify the identifications and their scientific names are correct (genus and species). Common names are sometimes used interchangeably for several different species, so you could accidentally buy invaders labeled with harmless pseudonyms.

The following guidelines will also help:

■ Check with your state natural resource agency to confirm which plants to avoid for your region.

■ Locate water gardens away from all waterways and flood-prone areas.

■ Choose regionally native or noninvasive plants and animals.

■ Ensure that your purchases are free of any hitchhikers. Rinse plants in a bucket to remove all dirt and attached vegetation, animals or eggs before planting. Strain this debris and dump water on dry land.

■ Freeze debris and any unwanted plants in a sealed plastic bag and dispose in the trash. Don't add to compost because seeds and other reproductive plant parts may remain viable.

■ If you find new homes for unwanted animals, make sure they won't be released into the environment. If euthanasia is an option, consult a veterinarian.

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CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Harding Elementary Students clean up school grounds for the International Coastal Cleanup.

## Harding classmates like cleaning grounds near their school

Harding School students once again participated in a school cleanup for the International Coastal Cleanup under the direction of teachers Erin Sabol and Beth Eubank.

Students share their comments:

The ICC was important because we are helping Mother Nature and our world. We don't want the Earth to turn into a dump!

— London Pineiro

When I grow up, I'll help other schools do the Coastal Cleanup. I liked it because it helped our environment and cleaned up around our school.

— Jivani Cooley

I hope no one will litter around our school again because we put so much work into it. If you ever see people litter, ask them to please pick it up.

— Lamonte Fuller

The ICC was important because garbage in the streets will go right into the lake and on our beaches. From now on, every weekend, I will clean up my neighborhood.

— Shrijana Timsina

Many animals in the sea are dying because of the trash in the water.

— Julia Grande

Did you know that if you don't pick up dog poop, it can go right into Lake Erie? We swim in the lake and that is gross.

— Kailee Davis

I don't want trash in the lake, or to eat fish that have trash in them.

— Carter Sontheimer

We protected fish and helped to make sure we can swim in the lake.

— Winston Elliott

I thought the cleanup was important because it helped a lot of animals.

— Molly Walsh

We helped the Earth stay healthy and clean and supported all living creatures.

— Aaron Mackrell

I collected 43 candy wrappers, 14 cigarette butts, two water bottles, one cap, 20 papers and four chip bags.

— Robert Uht

I enjoyed it and it was important to all of us. It made us feel good.

— Riley Joy

It's great to know that my classmates and I picked up so much trash from around the school. I'm so glad birds and other animals won't be harmed from it. It's so much cleaner!

— Mara Fromyer

I'm so glad I could help the Earth. Best of all was doing it with friends.

— Jordan Snyder

Our cleanup was important because all of that trash would have gone into the lake if we had not cleaned it up.

— Marisa Brandt



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Invasive fish like Koi (Cyprinus carpio) compete with native species.



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Native replacement for Koi include: Fathead Minnow, Rosy-red Strain (Pimephales promelas).



ANNA McCARTNEY/Contributed photo

Invasive plants include yellow flag or pale yellow iris (Iris pseudacorus).



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Native replacement for pale yellow iris is blue flag iris (Iris versicolor).

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Check out these websites to learn more:

<http://extension.psu.edu/natural-resources/water/ponds>  
[www.paseagrant.org/](http://www.paseagrant.org/)  
[www.anstaskforce.gov/impacts.php](http://www.anstaskforce.gov/impacts.php)

Check ads in the newspaper and decide which are most effective. What techniques can you use to create an ad to encourage people to use native species in their water gardens? Use today's page and visit the websites listed for facts and photos you can include in your ad. Send your ad to [axm40@psu.edu](mailto:axm40@psu.edu) for possible publication on the weekly "your space" feature.

