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Invasive Species Awareness Week in Washington Goes Virtual

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OLYMPIA–Govenor Jay Inslee, in partnership with the Washington Invasive Species Council, has **proclaimed** February 22 through February 28 as Invasive Species Awareness Week in Washington.

Invasive species threaten our economy, environment, recreation opportunities and can even harm our health," Inslee said. "I'm calling on everyone who loves this state we call home to become aware of invasive species and take steps to prevent the spread of these damaging plants and animals."

In his proclamation, Inslee notes that everyone has a role to play in stopping invasive species. The council encourages Washingtonians to be on the lookout for plants and animals not native to Washington as they spend time outdoors, take their dogs for walks or go about their daily lives. Residents should report any potential invasive species they spot using the Washington Invasives mobile app or by visiting InvasiveSpecies.wa.gov.

To help, the Washington Invasive Species Council is offering a variety of virtual activities during the awareness week to help people learn to identify, report and prevent the spread of invasive plants and animals.

"If you see something, say something," said Justin Bush, executive coordinator of the council. "If you spot a plant, bug or animal that you don't recognize or you see an abnormally high number of organisms in a small area, you may have found a new invasive species. Your report could be crucial to triggering a response, containing the population and limiting damage."

Without early detection and response, invasive species can cause irreversible damage to crops, forests, fish, livestock and other wildlife in the Pacific Northwest and nationally.

"The public is key to the state's success in the fight against invasive species," said Derek Sandison, director of the Washington State Department of Agriculture. "Not only did a member of the public report the first-ever Asian giant hornet, but alert residents have been responsible for more than one-third of new invasive species detections in the state since 1990."

Due to the impacts and continued risk of COVID-19, the week's activities are going virtual this year, with most events being live Webinars shared via social media. Please make sure to register in advance for the Webinars because spots are limited.

Webinars and Events

- February 22–Feral Swine Identification, Planning, and Response
- February 23–Spotted Lanternfly Identification and Risk to Agriculture
- February 24–**Aquatic Invasive Species: Statewide Prevention, Monitoring, and Management Overview < https://invasivespecies.wa.gov/event/aquatic-invasive-species-webinar/>**
- February 25–**10th Annual Columbia River Gorge Invasive Species & Exotic Pest Workshop < https://columbiagorgecwma.org/2021-isepworkshop/>**
- February 26–**Asian Giant Hornet Identification, Risk, and Response < https://invasivespecies.wa.gov/event/asian-giant-hornet-identification-and-ipm-webinar/>**

"Much of what it means to be a Washingtonian is at risk," said Kelly Susewind, director of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. "Invasive species threaten our recreation, wildlife, land and water. Everyone who works or recreates outdoors should brush their boots and equipment and also clean, drain and dry their gear–especially boats and trailers–after every trip."

Being alert and reporting suspected problems is just one action that anyone can take. Other simple actions to prevent and stop invasive species include the following:

- Clean your hiking boots, bikes, waders, boats, trailers, off-road vehicles and other gear before you venture outdoors to stop invasive species from hitching a ride to a new location. Learn about **pathways < https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Finvasivespecies.wa.gov%2Faddress-pathways%2F&data=04%7C01%7Calexis.haifley%40rco.wa.gov%7Ce02947fcf76148f4a87008d8d2ba8910%7C11d0** that spread invasive species.
- On your next walk, look out for noxious weeds. Visit the Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board's Web site to **learn about noxious weeds < https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.nwcb.wa.gov%2F&data=04%7C01%7Calexis.haifley%40rco.wa.gov%7Ce02947fcf7614** and if you spot some in your yard or while walking in your neighborhood, notify your **county noxious weed control board < https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.nwcb.wa.gov%2Fcontact-your-county-weed-boards&data=04%7C01%7Calexis.haifley%40rco.wa.gov%7Ce02947fcf76148f4a87008d8d2ba8910%7C11d0e21726** .
- Dispose of unwanted pets, aquarium plants and water, science kits and live bait the proper way and NOT by dumping them into waterways. Released pets often suffer a slow death in winter or may become invasive and damage wildlife and crops. Visit the council's "Don't Let It Loose" Web page to learn the **proper ways to dispose of unwanted pets and plants < https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Finvasivespecies.wa.gov%2Fcampaigns%2Fdont-let-it-loose%2F&data=04%7C01%7Calexis.haifley%40rco.wa.gov%7Ce02947fcf76148f4a87008d8d2ba8910%7C11d0e21** .
- Buy firewood where you'll burn it or gather it on site when permitted. Remember not to move firewood from the local area where harvested. Learn more about the **potential dangers of moving firewood < https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Finvasivespecies.wa.gov%2Fcampaigns%2Fbuy-it-where-you-burn-it%2F&data=04%7C01%7Calexis.haifley%40rco.wa.gov%7Ce02947fcf76148f4a87008d8d2ba8910%7C11d0e21726** .
- Protect salmon and steelhead by not moving any fish from one waterbody into another. This will prevent the spread of fish diseases and protect salmon and steelhead fisheries from non-native predatory fish. Visit the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's Web site to learn more **about moving fish < https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwdfw.wa.gov%2Flicensing%2Ffish_transport%2Ftransport_app.html&data=04%7C01%7Cal** .
- Use weed-free, certified forage, hay or mulch. Visit the Washington Department of Agriculture Web site to see details of its **certification program < https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fagr.wa.gov%2Fservices%2Flicenses-permits-and-certificates%2Fplant-services%2Fwwham&data=04%7C01%7Calexis.haifley%40rco.wa.gov%7Ce02947fcf76148f4a87008d8d2ba8910%7** .
- Plant only **non-invasive plants in your garden < https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.nwcb.wa.gov%2Fgardenwise-online&data=04%7C01%7Calexis.haifley%40rco.wa.gov%7Ce02947fcf76148f4a87008d8d2ba8910%7C11d0e21726** and remove any known invasive plants.
- Volunteer to survey public lands and trails as a Citizen Science Invasive Plant Monitor with the Pacific Northwest Invasive Plant Council. Learn more on the **plant council's Facebook page < https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.facebook.com%2FPNW.IPC%2F&data=04%7C01%7Calexis.haifley%40rco.wa.gov%7Ce** .
- Become a Washington State University **Master Gardener < https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fmastergardener.wsu.edu%2F&data=04%7C01%7Calexis.haifley%40rco.wa.gov%7Ce02947fcf** and help your community identify, report and properly manage exotic and invasive pests.
- Volunteer to help remove invasive species from public lands and natural areas. Contact your state, county or city parks and recreation department, **land trust < https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwalandtrusts.org%2Fabout-us%2Four-land-trusts%2F&data=04%7C01%7Calexis.haifley%40rco.wa.gov%7Ce02947fcf76148f4a87008d8d2ba8910%7C11d0e21** , **conservation district < https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fscc.wa.gov%2Fconservation-district-map%2F&data=04%7C01%7Calexis.haifley%40rco.wa.gov%7Ce02947fcf76148f4a87008d8d2ba8910%7C11d0e217**

, or **Washington State University's Extension Office < https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fextension.wsu.edu%2Flocations%2F&data=04%7C01%7Calexis.haifley%40rco.wa.gov%7Ce0**
to learn more.

- Don't pack a pest. When traveling internationally, review travel guidelines on items that should not be brought back to the United States. Learn more about **Don't Pack a Pest < https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Finvasivespecies.wa.gov%2Fcampaigns%2Fdont-pack-a-pest%2F&data=04%7C01%7Calexis.haifley%40rco.wa.gov%7Ce02947fcf76148f4a87008d8d2ba8910%7C11d0e217**
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More information about the **Invasive Species Awareness Week < https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Finvasivespecies.wa.gov%2Fprojects%2Finvasive-species-awareness-week%2F&data=04%7C01%7Calexis.haifley%40rco.wa.gov%7Ce02947fcf76148f4a87008d8d2ba8910%7C11d0e217264e**
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