



DALLAS ARBORETUM

Education

*Garden STEM at Home*  
*Career Critters*



WE GROW MINDS, TOO.



### OBJECTIVE:

STUDENTS WILL LEARN HOW ANIMALS AND PLANTS CAN BE USED BY HUMANS TO MANAGE SPECIFIC ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS.

### SOURCE

Project WILD K-12 Curriculum & Activity Guide

### BACKGROUND

Sometimes, the ecological niche filled by specific plants and animals can be used to help solve human-induced environmental problems. Organisms can help mitigate problems - from erosion to garden vectors - just by doing their 'jobs'.

While taking advantage of beneficial species carries rewards, it can also present inherent risks, including the spread of invasive species into new areas.

### INSTRUCTIONS

1. Prepare the Critter Cards, Ecosystem Cards, Critter Tokens and Ecosystem Map from the Project WILD link below.
2. Divide kids/families into groups of 4-8 people.
3. Give each group a copy of the Ecosystem Map, Ecosystem Cards and Critter Cards and three sets of Critter Tokens.
4. Divide the Critter Cards equally amongst the group. Each participant will be the expert of their species.
5. Arrange the Critter Tokens around the board. Shuffle and stack the 12 Ecosystem Cards and place face down by the map.
6. To play, take turns drawing an Ecosystem Card. Then, decide which critter(s) could be used to solve that problem. If the group agrees with each, place the token that represents that critter on the map.
7. Play continues until each Ecosystem card has been played and all ecosystem problems have been controlled.
8. Questions for discussion: Are there any risks with some of these biological controls? Is it okay to introduce non-native species? Could the map be redesigned to reduce some of the problems? In what ways is this activity realistic and unrealistic?

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Project WILD Career Critters STEM Connections:

<https://www.fishwildlife.org/projectwild/step-stem-and-wild-work/career-critters>