Science V12/S2 - Invasive Plants

Plants are very important for the environment. They help clean our air and convert sunlight to energy. Different plants are found in different habitats and are a food source for many types of life. A habitat is where an animal lives, and usually the animal and the habitat are a special fit for each other. For example, sea turtles eat seagrass, so it is important they live where seagrass grows. If there were no more seagrass, the sea turtles would need to find a new habitat.

Seagrass is an example of a native plant where sea turtles live. Plants that have always grown in a certain area are called native plants. That means they have lived in that area for hundreds or even thousands of years. Native plants are important. They are homes and food for the insects and animals that live in the area.

Some habitats around the world are changing. In some areas, new plants are trying to take over. They are called invasive plants because they are new to the area and spread quickly. Invasive plants do not belong there and can affect the habitat. Most of these plants are brought into the habitat by humans. Some of these plants are planted by gardeners who think they are pretty. Some are planted to keep soil in place. Others are planted by farmers.

Invasive plants can hurt the animals that live in these habitats. Moose that live in North America are very big and must consume (eat) large numbers of plants to get enough food. Many invasive plants have taken over their habitat and moose are having a difficult time finding their native grasses that they need to eat. They cannot eat the invasive plants, so they have to move from their habitat to look for the native plants they can eat.

Environmental groups are working to remove invasive plants. People are also learning to plant native gardens. This means that gardeners only plant native species in their gardens to help the local wildlife. These actions can make habitats healthy again and make sure there is enough food for all kinds of wildlife.