



## Aquarium Hobbyists

You can protect our environment by not releasing unwanted aquarium plants and aquatic pets into local waterways, storm drains, or sewer systems. Non-native species can threaten the environment, local economies, and human health. The best method of control is the prevention of species introduction and spread; however, this requires awareness and informed decision making on your part.

### Red Lionfish

#### *Pterois volitans*

Native to the western Pacific, the red lionfish is a common marine aquarium fish in the U.S. In 1992, several individuals were released during a hurricane in Florida, and the species has since become established along the Atlantic coast from southern Florida to New York. It is thought that these lionfish are impacting commercially important native fish populations through predation and that they could potentially spread parasites and disease. These fish also have venomous spines, and they may act aggressively, presenting a potential hazard to divers and fishermen.

*Photo credit: NC Aquarium at Fort Fisher*



#### **Other aquarium invasives include from left to right:**

Applesnail, Brazilian Elodea, and Goldfish.



*Photo credits: Applesnail, B. Frank; Brazilian elodea, L. Mehrhoff; Goldfish, USGS.*

*The prevention and control of invasive species requires modifying the public's behaviors, values and beliefs, and changing the way decisions are made.*

— *National Invasive Species Council's National Management Plan 2001*



## What Can You Do?

Become part of the solution to reduce the threat from invasive species by practicing the following responsible behaviors:

- Never dispose of aquarium plants or animals in local waterways, storm drains, or sewer systems.
- Pour aquarium water into the toilet or sink.
- Only purchase native species.
- Contact a retailer for possible returns or trades, as well as proper handling techniques.
- Give or trade with another aquarist.
- Donate to a local nature center, aquarium, school, or aquatic business.
- Seal aquatic plants in plastic bags, freeze for 24 hours, and dispose of in trash.
- Contact your veterinarian or pet retailer for guidance about humane disposal of animals.

**For more information on aquatic invasive species or to report an unusual sighting, please visit**

**[www.marex.uga.edu/shellfish](http://www.marex.uga.edu/shellfish)**

