




Native Plant Walk

LEARNING ACTIVITY #1: Native Plant Walk

 Overview	Students will spend time walking around the school yard or nearby forest, field, or river, learning and thinking about the plants and animals they find. The students are invited to engage with their senses, listening to birds, smelling the flowers, touching plants, tasting samples listed below, and witnessing their environment (OWL: Observe, Witness, Listen).
 Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basket, scissors • Journals, pencils (optional) • Preserved foods, i.e. wild berry jam (optional) • Yarrow skin salve (optional)
 Time	60 minutes

SEASONALITY: 

This lesson can be done at any time of year, though the Spring and Fall would allow for more plants to be examined as their leaves, flowers, and perhaps fruits may be available.

1. Opening (15 minutes): Acknowledge the traditional territory of the land you are on. Sit with the students in a circle. This could be done inside or outside.

a. Optional: Share one of the stories listed on page 45 from the xʷməθkʷəyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səlilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

b. Introduce yourself and personal history of where your family comes from. Invite students to respond to the following questions:

- Where are you and your ancestors from? What is your connection to the land?
- Highlight the diversity of cultures and people within the school community. Note how the diversity makes our classroom rich, and mirrors the diversity we will witness within different plants and animals.

c. Introduce the topic of seven generations:

- Are you familiar with the Seventh Generation Principle? “In our every deliberation, we must consider the

impact of our decisions on the next seven generations.” More information on the [Seventh Generation Principle](#).

- Our actions have had many impacts, and we want future generations to have the plants and animals and world that we do now, so we must protect the land.

d. Inquire about past experiences:

- What plants do you know? Have you ever eaten a wild plant?
- Have you ever seen a wild animal? How did it make you feel?
- How can we be good guests on this land? How can we protect wild spaces so other species can live?

e. Introduce the language (if using):

- When we go into the outdoor space, we will be naming the plants and animals that we see both in English and in the native language to the First Nations here (optional), but there is more richness to the creatures than just their names (for more on this, see *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer). Optional: Connect to your

school’s Indigenous Education worker or local Elder for more language options.

b. Themes to consider, the 5 R’s:

- Respect** for the environment, including each other
- Responsibility** of this **Relationship** through the practice of **Reciprocity**
- Reverence** to be grateful

2. In the outdoor space (35 minutes):

- Guidelines:** This is a time to invite sensory experiences, and students can use all of their senses in this learning experience.
- Samples (optional):** If there are berry plants, share some wildberry jam so students can taste what will be growing there (if it is the same berry). If there is yarrow growing, share the skin salve made from it.
- Discussion prompts:** Use the following prompts to guide discussion based on what you see outside in your school yard or nearby forest, field, or river. Pick and choose the following prompts based on your local context and experience.:

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- i. **Indigenous plants (for south-coastal regions):** How were/are the Indigenous peoples in this place in relationship with these plants? When and how were they grown and harvested?
 1. **Berries:** There are 23 different coastal berries including Salmonberry, Thimble Berry, and Oregon Grape. Do any of these grow here?
 2. **Edible plants:** What other native edible plants do you know? Do you think any of these are here?
 3. **Crafting:** Some plants can be grown and then crafted into other items and offered as gifts or for trade. Do you know of any of these plants and what they could be crafted into? (ie cedar, tobacco, depending on the local Nation's customs)
- ii. **Pesticides and herbicides:** What happens when we remove native plants using chemicals? How might it affect other creatures like the birds and insects who eat it?
- iii. **Insects:** Insects are a sign of a healthy environment. What evidence do we see that insects are here? How can we be good stewards and foster healthy ecosystems? For example, planting yarrow (a biocontrol plant) or nasturtiums (that are food for aphids). Birds, bats, and dragonflies eat insects, and butterflies need hosting and nectar plants ([Pollinator Curriculum](#)).
- iv. **Interconnectedness:** Everything that we do has an impact on the earth. It is all about creating relationships. Taking care of our own bodies is also part of taking care of the environment. For example, being outside like we are now is good for your mental health. What other ways

can you think of that help connect you to the land? For example, swimming in the ocean, witnessing the night sky, walking the land in your bare feet, or watching the clouds pass by.

3. Closing reflection, gathering class in a circle (10 minutes):

- a. How can you leave a small ecological footprint? What different choices can you make that can help our plant and animal friends?
- b. What plants did we see today? What insects did we see today? What birds did we hear today?
- c. What did you learn today? What do you want to learn more about?
- d. Share what you learned today as the teacher, demonstrating that adults are always learning too.

Additional Garden Activities

Other hands-on ways to build relationships between the students and plants (other than eating them):

- Make a herbarium (see page 159 in [FNESC/ FNSEA Secondary Science First Peoples Teacher Resource Guide](#))
- Making crafts with harvested plants (i.e. plants rubbings, collages, pressing leaves and flowers)
- Using plants as weaving materials (i.e. English Ivy or making Pine Needle baskets)
- School Garden themed beds:
 - Weaving plants ([Traditional Aboriginal Weaving with Wool and Plant Materials: Artists in the Classroom](#))
 - Sensory garden ([Creating a Sensory Garden](#))
 - Fruits and vegetables ([Farm to School BC School Garden Crop Planning Guide](#))
- Culinary herbs ([Farm to School BC School Garden Crop Planning Guide](#))
- Butterfly gardens ([Lower Mainland - Selecting Plants for Pollinators](#))
- Tea-making garden ([Surrey school district tea-making recipes](#))



