

Interview a Plant

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OBJECTIVE: Students will enjoy learning about some native plant species using flash cards and field guides and actual observations.

MATERIALS:

- List of plants that the students might see on their field trip (one species for each student)
- Several field guides with good photos and drawings of the plants and interesting information about each species
- "Interview a Plant" questions
- Vase full of some of the dried plants (optional)

LENGTH: Initially 1/2 - 1 hour for answering questions and then time to present their "interviewee." Then time in the field to see some of the plants.

PROCEDURE:

1. Have students choose a plant from the list and you can choose one also (the list could be put on an overhead.) They may be choosing just from the sound of the name (shooting star, skunk cabbage, side oats grama, etc.).
2. Pass out the flash cards or field guides and have the students answer the questions. This can be done with everyone during one time period or in smaller groups to facilitate access to field guides and references, etc.
3. Have each student present/introduce their plant to the rest of the class: giving at least the name, where it grows, and one interesting fact while showing a picture of it.
4. When you go to your field trip site the students will enjoy seeing "their" plant and the other ones they learned about. We got comments like, "Oh, that's Dave's plant --he said it smelled good!" You can have additional questions for the students to notice about their plant in the field.

LIST OF POSSIBLE QUESTIONS:

- What names (s) does your plant go by?
Why do these names "fit" the plant?
How tall will it grow compared to a human (knee high, waist high . . .)?
What habitat does it grow in?
What are some interesting features that it has?
How is it connected to other things (insects, rocks, etc.)? or What other things depend on the plant for food, shelter, soil enhancer, etc.?
When does it bloom?
What color is the flower?
What makes it happy?
What is its greatest fear?
What features does it have to help it survive? (Sun, winter, dry winds, clay soil, etc.)
What does it smell like, feel like?
When seeing it in the field . . . write down any animals on the plant (including insects) or any signs of animals using the plant (such as chew marks).
What stage is the plant in (flowering, going to seed, drying up in preparation for winter)? Is it growing in the same habitat or soil as was expected?

EXTENSIONS

- As the students are presenting their plant they can list species in the habitats they occur (prairie, wetland, woodland, swamp, fen, etc.)
- Have students draw plants in actual height -- make a mural for the school.
- Measure their own height against "their" plant, put a height chart on your wall or door frame and list some plants at some heights like big bluestem 9 feet, rattlesnake master 3 feet, etc.



classroom creativity