

# Native Plant Research Project

## Junior Level Activities (ages 9-12)

Language Arts and Art

**Source:** Beth Parks and Liz Hood

**Basic Description:** This activity can be done over a 3-5 day period, and is a great follow-up to planting native seeds. Done shortly after a planting experience, this will provide relevant context for the long term care of the seedlings, and the growing plants will provide a consistent grounding experience for the academic work.

### Materials:

- Library books on native plants of your region- lots of pictures and easy to read information
- A language arts, or creative writing booklet on which to write rough drafts
- Bristol board, cardboard, large sheets of white paper, and plain white writing paper
- Paint, pastels, pencil crayons
- A single hole punch
- A ball of string, twine or ribbon

**Time Allotment:** 30-40minute Language Arts/Science time, for 3- 5 days. The amount of time your class takes to do this is dependant on the grade level and the general abilities of the class.

### Procedure:

#### Introduction:

- Take some time to introduce the concept of indigenous plants to the class in more detail- why they are special, why some might be threatened, by what forces (pollution, habitat destruction), and what else relies on the continued existence of these plants (insects, animals)
- Explain that the class will be spending the week learning more about these important plants- and that while they are waiting for their real garden to grow (the newly planted seeds), they will create a garden of art and facts celebrating native plants

#### Activity:

- Day 1- Either bring a range of books about native plants in your area to class, or arrange for the class to go to the school library for the period. Your school library may have little resources on this specific topic- in that case, check out some books from the local library or school board office and bring them to class.
- Allow the class to page through the books, talking on topic about what they find, with the intention of finding their favourite native plant. By the end of the day, have each child write the name of the plant they want to learn more about in their booklet

- Day 2-4- Give students time with their books to go on a fact-finding mission about their plants. Have them answer questions like:
  - How big does their plant grow?
  - Does it flower? When? What colour is it?
  - Where does it grow?
  - What is one strange thing about this plant?
  - What is your favourite thing about this plant?
  - Is there an animal or insect that is connected to it in some special way?
  - Is your plant in trouble? If yes, how?
- Give students a day or two to compile the information, then collect the first drafts in their booklets to be checked for spelling, grammar and punctuation. Have them make a final draft with the corrections.
- During the same time period, take an art class to have the students draw or paint a picture of their plant. Ensure the picture is only the plant (no surrounding landscapes where possible), and is at least as tall as an 11” piece of paper- larger if possible.
- When it is dry, cut the picture out. Have the students use their picture to trace the shape on a piece of stiff Bristol board or cardboard, and on a normal piece of white writing paper, cut both of these shapes out too. Have the students glue their picture onto the hard backing.
- Day 5- Have the student write their good copy of their plant’s information on the white writing paper in the shape of their picture. When completed and signed, glue the good copy onto the other side of the hard backing.
- Have the students make a hole in the top with a single-hole punch and tie a length of string to the hole.
- During recess or after school, hang up the plants from the ceiling to display your new class ‘garden’

#### Follow-up/Discussion:

- The next week spend some time with your class discussing what they like about their plant and what, if anything surprised them in their research.
- Ask the class how they felt about hearing that many people don’t know much about native plants. Explore the ways in which some native plants might be threatened. Encourage discussion about ways that people can help native plants.

#### Extensions:

- **Special-** Plan a field trip out to a Botanical Garden, Arboretum, or wild space to explore native plants growing in situ.
- **Language Arts-** Choose a novel study related to the growing of plants, or about a child’s relationship to the natural world
- **Science-** If this is the grade to study the anatomy of plants in Science, this would be a great time to start that unit

