Meet Bigleaf Maple
Developed by Heidi Bohan/Starflower Foundation

Description: After meeting ‘Douglas Fir’, students now meet ‘Bigleaf Maple’. While students are sitting at the base of a bigleaf maple tree in the habitat area they listen to one or more children’s stories about maple trees while viewing related images. Guiding questions help students focus their attention, test comprehension and emphasize main themes. Students use drawings and graphic organizers to show understanding and to compare differences between Douglas fir and bigleaf maple trees.

Objectives:
• Students learn about the ecological function and life cycle of an important tree in urban habitats.
• Students identify big-leaf maple using key field ID characteristics.
• Students compare differences and commonalities between two important native trees.

Print Materials:
• ‘How-to-do Activity: Suggested Books & Sample Venn Diagram’
• Images: ‘Meet Bigleaf Maple’
• Masters: ‘Meet Bigleaf Maple’ student worksheet; ‘Life Cycle of Bigleaf Maple’ and ‘Tree Comparison Venn Diagram’ graphic organizers

Teacher Supplied:
• Story book (one or more) as suggested in ‘How-to-do Activity’
• Copies of ‘Meet Bigleaf Maple’, ‘Life Cycle of Bigleaf Maple’, ‘Tree Comparison Venn Diagram’: 1/student
• ‘Tree Characteristics Matrix’ begun in Meet Douglas Fir activity: 1 per student
• Pencils and/or colored pencils, and student journals

Before activity: Locate a mature bigleaf maple in your habitat area, or visit one at a nearby habitat area. The more mature the tree and associated ecology the more relevance this activity will have.

Activity
• Bring students to a bigleaf maple tree and seat them nearby. Tell students that now that they have met ‘Douglas Fir’ you would like to introduce them to ‘Bigleaf Maple’. Formally introduce them.
• Show students images: ‘Meet Bigleaf Maple’. Point out the bark, leaves and seedpods or flowers (look on the ground if needed). Have students come to the tree and touch the bark. Have students touch and look at the leaves and branches. Look for fallen leaves on the ground. Ask students for words they would use to describe the bark and leaves.
• Ask students to fill out the ‘Tree Characteristics Matrix’ graphic organizer that they started in Meet Douglas Fir activity. Personalize the story to the living tree and surrounding forest as much as possible. After reading the story, ask key questions about the content of the story (see ‘How-to-do Activity’).
• Ask students to fill out the ‘Tree Characteristics Matrix’ graphic organizer that they started in Meet Douglas Fir activity. Personalize the story to the living tree and surrounding forest as much as possible. After reading the story, ask key questions about the content of the story (see ‘How-to-do Activity’).
• Find a fallen seedpod (there are usually some on the ground nearby). Show the seeds to students. Tell them that these special seeds are called samaras. See if there are any seed clusters on the tree. Ask them if they have ever seen one of these before? Ask students to share what they have observed about these seeds (fly through the air, they look like helicopters, have sharp hairs). If samaras are available show how they fly through the air by tossing them into the air.
• Look around and see if students can see other bigleaf maple trees. Compare the sizes of the trees you find. Notice the difference in the bark of younger bigleaf maple trees (bark is green or red). Optional: Create a Venn diagram to compare young and older maple trees.
• Pass out ‘Meet Bigleaf Maple’ student worksheets and ask students to draw the whole tree and then label its plant parts (leaves, trunk, branch, seed/flower). Optional: Ask students to write an expository paragraph using one of the suggested prompts.
• Return to the classroom or remain in the field. Ask students to fill in graphic organizer: ‘Life Cycle of Bigleaf Maple’.
• Ask students to create a Venn diagram that compares Douglas fir with bigleaf maple, using graphic organizer ‘Tree Comparison Venn Diagram’ (see ‘How-to-do Activity’) If this is a new concept for students, create the diagram as a class.
• Student journals: Ask students to write an expository paragraph about bigleaf maple. How is bigleaf maple important to other living things in the forest? Describe the life cycle of bigleaf maple. What animals depend on bigleaf maple? Describe how to identify bigleaf maple. List five new things you learned about bigleaf maple tree.

Optional: As a class, create a ‘myth’ about the origin of the Bigleaf Maple seed, similar to the Douglas fir cone myth.

Vocabulary
Characteristics: a distinguishing trait or property
Habitat: the environment where a plant or animal naturally lives and grows
Identify: to make known by observing recognizable characteristics

Washington State EALRs
Science 1.1 Properties: Understand how characteristics are used to categorize life in living systems. Identify observable characteristics of living organisms. Sort by multiple simple properties (e.g., texture and color; size and shape); Identify and describe the differences between common natural objects using properties. Understand that plants and animals have life cycles. Observe and describe the life cycle of a plant or animal.

Reading 1.1 Use word recognition and meaning to read and comprehend text.

Comprehension 1.2.1 Comprehend important ideas and details.

Communication 1.1 Focus attention 1.2 Listen and observe to gain and interpret information.

Outdoors
45-60 Minutes

Quick & Easy Habitat Education Activities
Second Grade

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