Leaf Discovery Walk I

Developed by Heidi Bohan/ Starflower Foundation

Description: Students observe characteristics of native plants by looking at leaf shape, edges and texture; as well as plant form. Then, students record this information to learn basic taxonomic terminology and the details on which to focus when using leaves for plant identification. Leaf Discovery Walk I activity familiarizes students with the skills and language necessary for Leaf Discovery Walk II.

Objectives:
• Students learn basic leaf taxonomy to identify plants in habitat areas.
• Students use observation skills to identify leaf shapes on different plant species.
• Students find differences and commonalities between leaves by examining their shapes, edges, and textures and between plant shapes by examining their growth forms.

Print Materials:
• Images: ‘Plant Forms’
• Master: ‘Plant Observation Worksheet’

Kit Materials:
• Foam core clipboards: 1 per student

Teacher supplied:
• Copies: ‘Plant Observation Worksheet’: One or more per student
• Pencils: 1 per student

Activity:
• Gather students near habitat area and say, “We will be learning more about characteristics that we can use to identify plants.” Pass out clipboards, ‘Plant Observation Worksheets’ and pencils.
• Show the students examples of different plants and their characteristics (see below). Have students look at their ‘Plant Observation Worksheet’ while you point out the following characteristics on several plants. Ask students to place their finger on the appropriate box as you describe each plant characteristic on their form.
• Walk through the habitat area checking for understanding as you cover each of the following points:
  o Leaf characteristics:
    ▪ Leaf shape: Stop at plants with different shapes of leaves. Ask students to look at the worksheet and find words that describe the shape of the leaves that you find.
    ▪ Leaf edge: Stop at plants with different types of leaf edges. Ask students to use words from the worksheet to describe the edges of the leaves that you find.
    ▪ Leaf texture: Stop at plants with different types of leaf texture. Ask students to use words from the worksheet to describe the textures of the leaves that you find.
  o Plant form: Show related image: ‘Plant Forms’ while discussing the following:
    ▪ Tree: Stop at a tree and ask, “How can we describe the form of this plant? This plant is a type of tree. A tree has a trunk. It has branches that form a canopy. Can you point out some other trees in this area?”
    ▪ Shrub: Stop at a shrub and ask, “Is this a tree? How can we describe the form of this plant? This plant is a shrub. A shrub is a woody plant with many stems coming up from the ground. Can you point to other shrubs nearby?”
    ▪ Groundcover: Stop at a groundcover and ask, “Is this a shrub? How can we describe this plant? This plant is a type of groundcover. A groundcover is a plant that grows low to the ground. Can you point to other groundcovers?”
• Select a plant and work as a group to describe the plant while students fill out their own ‘practice’ worksheet.
• Summarize: Ask, “How can we use all of these characteristics to help us learn about native plants?” Say, “In the next activity we do in our habitat area we will use these characteristics to help us identify different types of plants.”

Vocabulary
Observation: an act of noting a fact or occurrence, often involving a measurement, a record or description.
Taxonomy: the study of the general principles of scientific classification.

Washington State EALRs
Science 1.1 Use properties to identify, describe, and categorize; and use characteristics to categorize living things.
Science 2.1 Develop abilities necessary to do scientific inquiry.
Communication 1.1, 1.2 Focus attention, listen and observe to gain and interpret information.

Seattle School District Standards
Science 1.1 Use properties to identify, describe, and categorize substances, materials, and objects. 1.2 Identify, describe, and categorize living things based on their characteristics, some are very different from one another. 1.3 Diversity of Life: Some plants are alike in the way they look and in the things they do, and others are very different from one another.