

Unit: Native Plant Knowledge

Activity: Gaining Knowledge

Developed by: Heidi Bohan

Activity time: 30 min. Prep time: 5 minutes (photocopies) Review materials: 5 min.

Guiding Questions: What is a native plant? Which plants are native, and which are non native? How many native plants can you identify? How many would you think you can learn to identify by the end of this block?

Brief Description of Activity: Discussion about definition of 'native plant', non-native, naturalized, etc. Interactive discussion to learn about which commonly known plants are native or non-native, Student worksheet to self evaluate native plant ID knowledge.

Materials: [Native/non-native plant list](#), [Westside Lowland Forest Plants checklist Master](#)

Teacher Provided: "Plants of the Pacific Northwest", "Sunset Western Gardening" or other field guides to determine native vs. non-native plants; copies of Westside Lowland Forest plant checklist for each student;

Activity

Discussion

- **What is the definition of a native plant?** (Prompt if necessary with what is a Native American?) Generally a native plant is one that was in a land before explorers brought new plants. The definition of a native plant in Washington State is a native plant that was here before the first explorers arrived in the 1700's, therefore, 300 years ago.
- **How did non-native plants get here?** Explorers used ballast (weight) in their ships made of soil and sand with seeds from the lands they came from and often unloaded the ballast when they traded for furs and other items here, settlers brought their favorite plants, etc.

Interactive discussion/make group list

- **What are some native plants you know? Non-native plants?** List them on the chalkboard (refer to list, or look up in field guide to be sure).
- **Are all non-native plants bad?** When are they bad? Invasive (a plant that dominates and kills existing plants), naturalized (plants that have adapted and reproduce, generally not considered invasive), wildlife friendly (even non native plants can benefit wildlife). Pass out definitions sheets, discuss

Student Self Evaluation/ Goal setting

- **How many native plants do you think you can you identify with certainty?** Who can ID 12 or more? 7 or more? 3 or more? Etc.
- **How many plants do you know on this checklist?** Hand out Westside Lowland Forest checklist and have students check plants they feel they can identify.
- **Do you know more plants than you thought?**
- **How many plants would you like to know by the end of this unit?** Have students list their goal on the checklist form. A reasonable number is 6- 12 more than they already know.