

Unit: Native Plant Knowledge

Activity: Plant Observation Skills

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Activity Time: 30 min. Prep time: 15 min. (collect leaves/branches) Review: 5 min.

Guiding Questions: How can we improve our ability and skills at Plant ID?

Brief Description of Activity: Students will use their observations skills to describe characteristics of plant samples. They will learn some of the terminology used to describe plant parts and understand why that is helpful.

Materials: ‘Plant Observations Skills- Leaf Descriptions’ master and student sheets; ‘Leaf Description Definitions’ master and student sheets; Branch Descriptions and Definitions master and student sheets; Jewelers loupes magnifiers;

Teacher Provided: Writing board/chalkboard, 6 or more field collected native plant leaves from at least three different species listed on Plant Observations Skills list (all easily available in Habitat Garden), (optional) ‘Plants of the Pacific Northwest’- Pojar and Mackinnon, and ‘Flora of the Pacific Northwest’- Hitchcock and Cronquist to use for more taxonomy descriptions

Activity

Discussion:

- What are observation skills, what senses do we use? Why won't we use taste in this activity?

Activity- Leaves

- Distribute the same species of plant parts to teams of students (2 or 3 students per team).
- Ask them to describe what they see, feel, touch, smell, (no taste), using their own words. Use hand lenses so look closely at leaf edges, bark, leaf nodes, underside of leaves, etc.
- List their descriptions on writing board.
- Hand out Plant Identification Skills- Leaf Description sheets. Identify the plants. Ask students to look at the sheets and see if they can find taxonomical terms that helps to further describe their plants.
- List their new descriptions on the writing board.

Activity- Branches

- Show live branches (go to habitat garden) or show branch samples of plants that are listed in Branch Descriptions. Most important characteristic to observe is Opposite and Alternate bud and branch arrangement.

Post Activity Question: How does using correct terminology help to learn how to ID plants? Discuss positive and negative aspects of taxonomical terms.