



Native Plants

Age Group

Grades 3-5

Duration

15 mins

Materials Needed

Print and cut out Game Cards

Items to mark Start and Finish lines

Optional - Dice

Location

Indoor

Grade Standards

3 = Ecosystems; Structures and Functions of Living Organisms

4 = Ecosystems

5 = Ecosystems, Structures and Functions of Living Organisms

Objectives

Students will learn what a native plant is and why they are important to habitats.

Background

Native plants are plants that are from a specific region in which they usually grow. Plants that are native to an area will require the temperature, amount of sunlight and rainfall that are characteristic of the habitat and rely on the species around it in that certain area in order to grow. Some native plants require very specific things from their habitat while others are not as strict. For example, plants that grow in the tropics like lots of rain and sunlight while plants that grow in cold environments require less rain and sunlight. Native plants are the foundation to food webs within each habitat. They are food for other species within these habitats and when an area does not have these plants, animals and insects have a hard time finding other food and shelter. When native plants get moved to an ecosystem they are not native to, they may grow faster than other plants and survive much easier since they have no predators but do not offer food and shelter to the native wildlife.

Activity

For this activity, play a game while learning about native plants.

Set Up:

- 1) Research (can do this with the class or before you do the lesson) some of your local native plants and how they benefit your habitat. Use this and the background information to inform your students of what a native plant is.
- 2) You can assign each student or a group of students to a native plant if you want or keep it arbitrary.
- 3) Cut out and use the cards on page 2 to guide students through the game.
- 4) Mark a start and a finish line on the ground using any materials you have. The space between the lines should be as big as your space allows and can depend on how many students you have or how much time you can spend.

Game:

- 1) Group students up at the start location and have them all pretend to be a native plant (general or assigned as noted in step 2 in "Set Up" section).
- 2) Depending on the number of students you have, choose a method to decide which student goes first and when students will take their turns. You can use a die or a spinner from another game or have them line up and be numbered. Use your discretion here to keep things fair and fun for everyone.
- 3) To play: When it's the student's turn, you will draw a card for them and read out the instructions for how they will move closer to the finish line. The game is over when all students make it across the finish line as the goal is to learn about the benefits of native plants rather than who can finish first, so keep shuffling and cycling through the cards until everyone makes it across. This game should also promote that all natives are good in their habitat rather than one being better than the other.

After the game, spend some time outdoors looking for some native plants. You can download the "iNaturalist" app on your phone or tablet and research plants in the field by just taking a picture!

<p>You provided food for song birds, take one big step forward!</p>	<p>Your habitat had a drought, instead of turning around, jump backwards with one big hop.</p>
<p>You grew in a habitat that you are not native to, you can't provide food and shelter to the native wildlife here so spin 3 times back to the starting line, stopping when you reach it.</p>	<p>Migrating butterflies relied on your food and shelter, flap your wings like a butterfly and take 2 steps.</p>
<p>You provided shelter to wildlife in your habitat, give yourself a pat on the back while taking a step forward.</p>	<p>You are doing a lot of photosynthesis which allows you to grow, while taking a step forward, do your best "plant dance"!</p>
<p>A bird ate your seeds and pooped them out in a similar habitat, you just reproduced, pick up your roots and take 3 hops forward on one leg.</p>	<p>A caterpillar ate some of your leaves, you can take a step forward but you must now play the rest of the game with one of your arms behind your back.</p>
<p>You're a plant that requires fire to grow. A fire just burned through your habitat allowing you to grow. Take 2 big steps forward while holding your breath through the fire!</p>	<p>You're a plant that does not require fire to grow. A fire just burned through your habitat preventing you from growing. Take 2 big steps backward while holding your breath through the fire!</p>
<p>A bee just landed on you for some pollen. It got food from you and pollinated you at the same time. Buzz like a bee and fly while you take one step forward.</p>	<p>As a tree, a family of squirrels are nesting in your branches and eating the nuts growing on your branches. Do your best squirrel impression while taking one step forward.</p>
<p>You are outgrowing native species in a habitat you are not native to because no species are eating you. Move all the way to the finish line but in order to cross it you have to get a high five from every other plant in the game!</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">BONUS CARD</p> <p>All native plants are good for their habitat so everyone cheer as loud as you can. Now everyone shake your leaves (arms) and roots (legs) about while taking 2</p>