LESSON 27

Schoolyard Plant Safari

Grade level: K-8
Subject Areas: Botany, environmental education, art, science inquiry skills
Duration: 1 Hour
Setting: Outdoors
Season: Fall, Spring or Summer
Conceptual Framework Topics: Plant identification, data collection, weed invasion

OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to record basic scientific information in a field journal, and identify and record plant and habitat characteristics.

METHOD

Students will be guided in the use of journals to record scientific discoveries.

MATERIALS

- ✎ kNOweeds Journals (from ***Lesson 4: Making a kNOweeds Journal*** in this guide) or field notebooks
- ✎ **Schoolyard Safari Data Collection Sheet**
- ✎ Pencils
- ✎ Rulers
- ✎ Thermometer
- ✎ Field guides to plants and insects
- ✎ Digital camera (if available)

BACKGROUND

Biologists and resource managers collect information to help them learn more about organisms and natural processes they study. To help them recover potentially important information gathered in the field at some future time, they collect these field records according to a standard procedure or protocol. In this lesson, students will follow a similar approach to collect scientific information in the field, including recording the date, time of day, location, weather, a detailed description of the organism(s) and the surrounding habitat, and any other potentially relevant observations.

PROCEDURE

1. Take the class outside on a Plant Safari (this can be done in the schoolyard or other location), asking that each student make their own special plant discovery. Provide examples to students, such as evidence that something has been eating or otherwise using a plant they find. Students will use their ***kNOweeds Journal*** or a field notebook to record the information outlined in the **Schoolyard Safari Data Collection Sheet**, or they can use copies of the data collection sheet in the field and later insert or copy the results into their notebook or journal.

2. Back in the classroom have students share their discoveries and discuss why the information they recorded could be important as they continue their studies of plants. The class can identify the plants they found and label their drawings with the plants' scientific and common names.

Extensions

Use the plant data collected to add the discoveries to the schoolyard map made in ***Lesson 28: Map Mysteries*** found in this guide.

Students can make homemade plant presses and press a plant specimen (see ***Lesson 10: Know Your Neighbors*** found in this guide) to go with their drawings or photos they make during the schoolyard safari.

Name _____

Schoolyard Safari Data Collection Sheet

1. Plant Discovery – Description

2. Draw your discovery here or take a picture!

3. What's the story behind your discovery?
   a. Is it a plant you have seen before?
   b. Does it have flowers?
      Does the plant have seeds on it?
   c. What color is it?
      What size?
   d. Where did you find it?
      Is there a water source nearby?
      Is the location sunny or shady?
   e. Are there others like it nearby?
   f. Is there any evidence that insects or other animals have used the plant?
   g. Is there anything else you observe that you find interesting about the plant?

4. Now answer these questions about your discovery. Circle one of each:
   a. Native ***or*** Exotic
   b. Planted ***or*** Arrived some other way

5. Circle the time of day.

early morning late morning

noon early afternoon

late afternoon evening night

6. What's the temperature outside?_____

Circle the kind of current weather *(circle all that apply)*:

bright sun sunny cloudy

light shower rainy heavy rain

light snow heavy snow snowstorm