

44. ALIENS in the GARDEN (WEEDS)

Overview: Students will be given an opportunity to become acquainted with plants that are not welcome in the Garden and the Sonoran Desert habitat, why they are not welcome and what can be done to eradicate or control them. They will have an opportunity to practice their map skills by using landmarks to locate approximate locations of identified plants.

Objective: Students will search and locate weeds in the Garden and mark their locations on a map.

Time Needed: 45 minutes to 1 hour

Group Size: any size

Age appropriateness: 4th grade and up

Site: Entire Garden

Background: Some plants found in the Sonoran Desert today do not belong here. They were introduced from other countries and are called alien or non-native species. For example, the tamarisk was planted as a shade tree and to control wind and erosion. It is native to the Mediterranean area and can tolerate salty soils. It was thought to be a perfect plant in our desert region, but there are no natural pests, insects or diseases to control its growth. It has grown voraciously and in many places where it is not wanted. It is very difficult to eradicate.

Materials:

Provided by the Garden
Plant identification sheets
Plastic Ribbon
Provided by classroom teacher
Garden Maps

Preparation: Run off copies of Garden Map, enough for each group of students.

Pre Activity: Weeds can be researched and searched for on the school site. Invite a guest speaker from the University Extension Office or a specialist that handles herbicides.

Procedure:

1. Divide class into small groups of 2 to 4
2. Hand out plant identification cards, plastic ribbon strips and Garden maps.
3. Deliver brief explanation of weeds.
4. Send students on a weed hunt.
5. If they believe they have found a weed, they are to tie plastic ribbon on it and mark the location on the Garden map.
6. After a reasonable amount of time, the class can walk to each identified location and discuss their findings.

Modifications: Plants could be pre identified by the teacher and/or Garden personnel and students can use their cards to identify the species.

Extensions: Additional field manuals can be used to look for additional species that may not be identified on the given cards.

A personal field guide can be made with student drawings of the plants with identification.

Reference List:

Weeds of the West by Tom D. Whitson, Editor isbn: 0-941570-13-4

The Growers Weed Identification Handbook Cooperative Extension
University of California Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources 40301

An Illustrated Guide to Arizona Weeds by Kittie F. Parker
Illustrated by Lucretia Breazeale Hamilton,
The University of Arizona Press, Tuscon, Arizona

Time of Year: any time

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