

Adapted to Survive: Exploring Plants Through Nature Journaling Virtual Field Trip Lesson Plan

Explore the wild world of plants on a virtual adventure in the UCLA Botanical Garden. Be a scientist and create observations from home in your own nature journal!

Themes Explored

What is science? • Five senses • Connection to nature • Observations skills • Reflective journaling • Ecology • Plant biology • Biomes • Adaptation • Climate • Mindfulness

Background

Nature exists all around us, waiting for us to notice and appreciate it. Living in an urban environment can sometimes distract us from all the remarkable living things that also call our city home. This virtual field trip serves to engage students with the captivating world of plants and then invite them to observe plants through the practice of nature journaling. This practice develops skills in inquiry, observation, mindfulness, and interpretation.

Learning Objectives

Students will discuss what a scientist is and practice making their own observations and questions about the natural world around them. They will consider unique characteristics/traits plants have adapted to survive in the context of the larger ecosystem. Students will utilize art and writing to document plants and reflect on the function of characteristics they notice. They will explore the therapeutic mindfulness practice of nature journaling.

NGSS Curriculum Connections

A few standards are listed. Depending on where you place this in the context of your planning, you could make connections to others such as growth cycles, weather, etc.

2nd Grade

- 2-LS4-1: Interdependent Relationships in Ecosystems (Make observations of plants and animals to compare the diversity of life in different habitats.)

3rd Grade

- 3-LS3-2: Inheritance and Variation of Traits: Life Cycles and Traits (Use evidence to support the explanation that traits can be influenced by the environment.)
- 3-LS4-3: Interdependent Relationships in Ecosystems: Environmental Impacts on Organisms (Construct an argument with evidence that in a particular habitat some organisms can survive well, some survive less well, and some cannot survive at all.)

4th Grade

- 4-LS1-1. Structure, Function, and Information Processing. (Construct an argument that plants and animals have internal and external structures that function to support survival, growth, behavior, and reproduction.)

Teacher Resources

- Lesson plan webpage & videos
- *How to Teach Nature Journaling* — John Muir Laws and Emilie Lygren (Free download is available. Pages 236-244 have information about NGSS standards and curriculum planning)
- iNaturalist / Seek are great digital options to extend observation making and identification. Seek is a more user-friendly app created by iNaturalist that is a great option for young students.



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Student Materials

- Access to internet connection and a device to join the class
- Paper
- Writing utensil (pencil, colored pencils)

Format

This 50min - one hour session is led by a Garden Educator. The teacher must be present, but does not need to lead any portions of the lesson other than coordinating technology. After requesting a virtual field trip, teachers receive a password to access materials on the UCLA Botanical Garden website. The Garden Educator will either host the class over Zoom or join the teacher's virtual classroom space, whichever is preferred in the request. Platform details will be solidified in advance.

1. Live: Introduce Garden Educator to Classroom

2. Video: Welcome!

Start video. Pause when prompted.

3. Live: Garden Educator Discussion + Virtual Adventure Introduction

What is a scientist? What do they do?

4. Video: Botanical Garden Virtual Adventure

Play video tour (California Native Plants, Desert, Tropical Rainforest)

5. Live: Q&A Session + Nature Journaling Activity

Zoom in / Zoom out