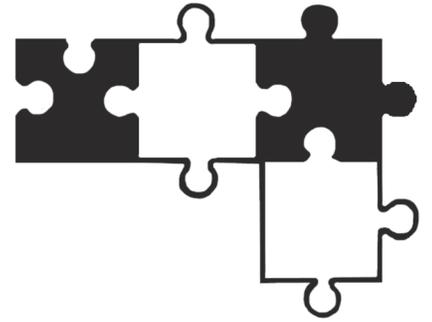


ACTIVITY 7

Take a Walk on the Weed Side



Activity:

Students will go out around the vicinity of the school collecting weed samples, and making note of where weeds are growing. Then, students will plant weed seeds in milk cartons trying to simulate conditions they found outdoors.

Curriculum Fit:

Grade Four - Science

- Topic E: Plant Growth and Changes
 - Describe common plants and classify them on the basis of their characteristics and uses

Agriculture Concepts:

Production, processing and marketing systems
Importance of soil and water

Cognitive Level:

Application, Analysis

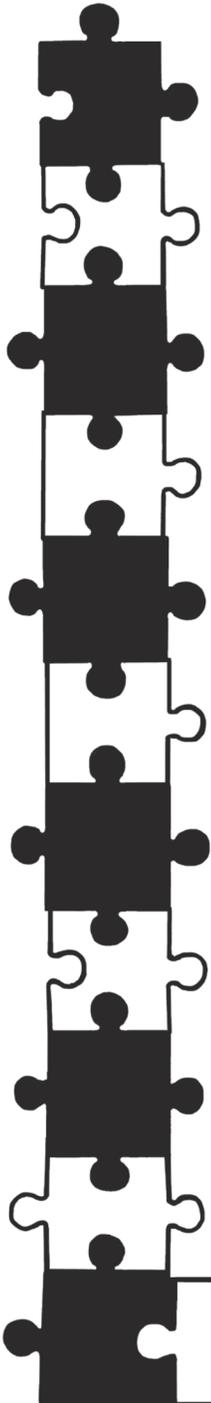
Materials Required:

Collecting bag or pail for weeds, 1 hula hoop for each group of 3 or 4 students, potting soil, milk cartons (cut in half), weed seeds, grass seeds, other garden seeds, potting tools.

Time Required:

One class period for “weed walk”; several class periods for rest of lesson.

Note: The best time to do this activity is probably late spring.



Background — For the Teacher

A weed can be described simply as a plant that grows where it is not wanted and that crowds out more desirable plants. In agricultural areas, as well as in urban areas, weeds cause a lot of problems. They cause a loss of income for farmers, affect the growth of other plants, are unsightly and cause fire hazards in some areas as well. Students need to become aware of why weeds grow where they do, the damage that is caused and what can be done about the problem. Weeds tend to grow in areas disturbed by machinery or animals, including man. On the undisturbed land there are very few weeds. On a healthy lawn also, weeds have a difficult time getting started. On the other hand, weeds flourish in cultivated areas that are without a natural vegetation cover. This lesson will take a look at local areas around the school where weeds grow well and compare this to areas where weeds do not. By observation, inference, experimenting, interpreting data and hypothesizing, students may develop an awareness for this topic and may even be able to propose ways to control weed growth. Students will:

- 1) Discover that weeds are plants that are very well adapted for survival.
- 2) Develop an appreciation for the uniqueness of all plants, including weeds!
- 3) Develop a responsible attitude towards the care of our land.
- 4) Improve skills in group work.

Procedure

Preparation

1. Before class begins, identify areas around the school to take the students to.

Have students bring to class cut-off milk cartons (show them a sample). Have on hand potting soil, water, potting tools, grass seeds and other seeds, magnifying lenses.

Introduction

2. Brainstorm, as a class, the names of plants that grow where we don't want them to. What are these plants usually called?
3. Divide into groups of 3 or 4. Pass out one hula hoop to each group of students. Use this to count the number of weeds in different areas. We will count each separate plant as one weed and record numbers in notebooks.

Hand out plastic grocery bags for collecting weed samples.

Activity

4. Head outdoors to selected locations. Note areas with; a) lots of weeds, b) a few weeds, and c) no weeds. After finding these areas, toss the hula hoop down and count the weed plants within the hula hoop. Record in notebook. Make a note of where the weeds grow best.
5. Collect some weed seeds and whole plants.
6. Return to class. Use magnifying lenses to sort weed seeds by size, color, etc.
7. Discuss question, "Where did you observe weeds growing?" Go over data collected and decide how we could simulate these conditions in the classroom.
8. Have the students plant their weed, grass and garden seeds and record what they have done so far.
9. Have the students arrange an area to leave their milk cartons, complete with recording materials, charts to be filled in, etc. We will check on progress at intervals over the next couple of weeks.

Conclusion

10. Once the weeds are growing in containers, have the groups get together again and get rid of the weeds. Discuss types of weed control.

Discussion Questions

1. Why are there lots of weeds in some places and not in others? Record what you think in your notebook.
2. Which container do you expect to grow the best weeds?

Related Activities

1. Choose and complete some crafts using weed seeds. A useful resource:

Seeds and Weeds, A Book of Country Crafts,

by Mary Alice Downie and Jillian Hulme Gilliland, (North Winds Press, Scholastic-Tab Publications) ISBN 0-590-71054-0

2. Interview farmers or agricultural fieldmen.
3. Summarize the results of your group's work in some form: poster, report, tape, etc.

*Original lesson idea by Marilyn Knippshild
Modifications by AITC*