



Lesson 6: Eco-Treasure Box (Grades 1– 4)

Objective

To encourage students to look more closely at native plant species and to create a special eco-treasure box for your class by organizing a project to press plants.

In this box each week the teacher may hide a natural object that the students try to guess as part of a lesson. Objects may include natural objects such as a butterfly cocoon, a pinecone, a leaf, a mushroom, etc. Or you may decide to place quotations from literature in the box as topics for group discussion.

What do you need?

A box with a removable lid, hairspray to secure flowers to the lid of the box, glue

A natural glue source: Dandelions and milkweed contain natural latex that can be used as glue. This can be used for small amounts. It is important to wash hands immediately after using it as long exposure to it can cause a rash.

During the art class you will have the opportunity to ask students: Why would a plant be so sticky? The answer is that chemicals are often a defense mechanism when plants do not have thorns or other physical defenses to prevent them from being eaten by animals or insects.

What do you do?

Make one finished example of a decorated sheet of paper or cardboard to show the students before class.

Plan to visit a schoolyard, nearby park, or forest. Walk with the children in the yard or along a quiet road with little traffic. You may be able to find flowering weeds along the roadside or in the schoolyard. If it is springtime look for flowers to use, but if there are no blooms look for plants with interesting leaves and colors. Vines can be used like roping for additional decoration.

Make the children's artwork an important part of decorating your classroom. Be sure to have some assignments sent home as gift for their parents to encourage parental interest in the class.

Provide the following instructions to the students:

- Ask the children to collect flowers and leaves, looking for different colors and shapes.
- You may assign small groups/teams of students to decorate different sides of the Eco-Treasure Box.
- The lid should be a picture made from the plants, glued and set with hairspray. Spraying flowers with hairspray will help preserve them a little longer.

Conclusion

Tell students that there will be a special item hidden in their Eco-Treasure Box at the next class session.

Assignment

Visit a nearby pharmacy and find out what herbal medicine they have. Make a list of plants with names and pictures.

* Adapted from Creating Activities Program, Discovering Me and the Rest of the Universe. Children's Press 1974.