

Third Grade / Fall Walk / At A Glance

Native American Plants ⌚ 60 minutes

Goals

- Recognize Native Americans long ago knew how to use materials from nature to meet all their needs.
- Understand Native American children learned from elders how to identify useful and harmful Plants.
Understand Native American children learned how from elders how to use plants for food, shelter, medicine, tools, and toys.
- Learn about the Native tradition of offering thanks when taking a plant for use.

1. Introduction

⌚ 10 minutes

Ask (As you walk toward your first station):

- *What did your school's Big Backyard look like 500 years ago (Before Europeans/Just Native Americans)?* Woods, the stream, and maybe a small clearing for growing crops. *What was not here?* School, houses, telephone poles, streets.
- *What does "Native American" mean?* A Native American person is someone who is related to the people who lived here before the Europeans came. There are still Native Americans living in Massachusetts.
- *Where did these Native Americans get the things they needed to survive: food, shelter, water?* From nature! *How did they know what to use?* Get feedback from students.

Identify wild plants that were useful and harmful to Native American people; learning with an Elder

Say: *Native people living near Lexington did grow some crops like corn and squash, but they also gathered plants for food and medicine, and materials for building and crafts from the woods and fields.*

Ask:

- *Children helped their family gather these supplies, but how would they know which plants they could use for food and other needs?* Without schools, children learned from "elders". Elders took children into woods and fields and shared what they knew about useful and harmful plants.
- *Do you think some of the plants Native Americans used in those days might still be growing near the school?* Yes! Today we will pretend we lived in a Native American village near Lexington 500 years ago.

Say: *As the Elder I will teach you about useful and harmful plants and you will help me find the plants!*

Hand out Plant Identification Sheet. We will visit different areas of the backyard where several plants are marked and I will read clues to you. You will work together to decide which plant I am describing, but only one of the plants marked will fit the clues.

Native American children would learn the useful plants from the harmful plants so they could help their families.

Native Americans respect nature.

Say: *Traditional Native people took no more than they need from nature out of respect. They knew they need to care for the natural world because that is where they got all they need in order to live—food, clothing, shelter, and medicine. For example, if you pick part of a living plant, try to be make sure there are a number of other plants (at least 7) of the same type left.*

- *Often Native people speak of the Earth as a mother that cares for them. Native people often say "thank you" to the plant for its help in providing food, or medicine. We depend on nature even today for our food, clothing, shelter and medicine. **We all need to take care of nature.***

2. Harmful Plants

⌚ 5 minutes

POISON IVY: NEVER eat a wild plant unless a knowledgeable adult has identified it and knows the area where it is found. Many plants have look-a-likes. Even if you identify the plant correctly, you never know if some toxic chemical has been sprayed on it or if your neighborhood's dog has wet on it. **(This usually stops any thought of eating!)** Many of these plants are no longer used as food or medicine.

3. Visit each plant stations in any order: Use Map and ID sheet to give clues and plant uses

⌚ 40 minutes

What do you notice about this plant? Is this plant same/different from the last: looks, feel, size, leaves, fruits?

(Touch only if this plant is deemed safe to touch by an "elder") What parts of the plant do you think were used? Was this plant used for food or Shelter or Medicine?

4. Wrap up

⌚ 5 minutes

Ask (while walking back to the school): *Did you find food today? Did you find enough to make a meal? If you lived in those times how would your life be different?*

Ask: *Where do Native American families find food, clothes, and medicine today?* The same places we do—supermarket, clothing stores, and pharmacy.

Ask: *What did you find most interesting on your nature walk?*

This does not replace the Walk Guide. Activities, their order, and duration will vary depending on your group dynamics and weather.