

## Pre-Field Trip Activity: Plant Study

The Yerba Mansa Project: [yerbamansaproject.org](http://yerbamansaproject.org)  
Contact: Shannon Jones, [shannon@yerbamansaproject.org](mailto:shannon@yerbamansaproject.org)  
Dara Saville, [dara@yerbamansaproject.org](mailto:dara@yerbamansaproject.org)

## Plant Observation Lesson

**Objective:** Students will practice doing careful observations and do a drawing of a plant found on their school campus.

**Grade level:** K-5. Feel free to adapt the lesson as needed for your group.

**Materials needed:** Supplies to make necklace notebooks: thin paper such as copy paper, 1 page of thicker paper such as cardstock per student, string, stapler, and duct tape (optional, depending on the style of notebook you choose to make).

1. **Background knowledge (optional).** Depending on your student's background knowledge of plants, you may want to spend some time deepening their understanding of some botanical, ecological, and ethnobotanical characteristics. This background information will help give students ideas of what to look for when making their plant observations.

### Botanical information:

- [Parts of a plant](#)
- [Leaf characteristics \(veins, shape, margins, arrangement\)](#)
- [Parts of a flower](#)
- Seeds: [how seeds are spread](#); [parts of a seed](#)

\*Find lessons at [Kids Gardening](#)

### Ecological information:

- Identify and describe different plant habitats
- [Bosque Facts for Kids](#)
- [Rio Grande Bosque](#)

### [Ethnobotanical information:](#)

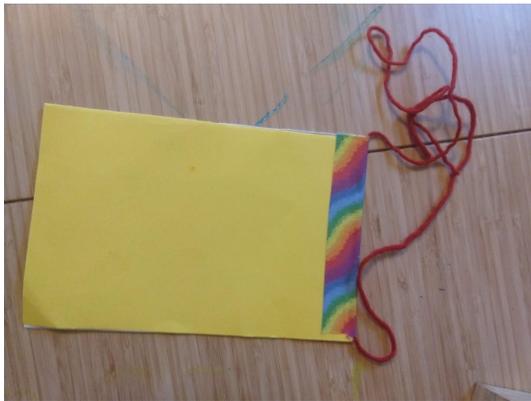
- Look at different ways people have historically and currently use plants
- [Native American Ethnobotany Database](#)

2. **Make necklace notebooks.** Students will use these in class to record information about their Bosque plant, then bring them along on the field trip. **Add enough pages so that there are 5 blank pages left for the field trip.** There are two options below, but feel free to create your own!

Matchbook necklace notebook: [instructional video](#)



Simple necklace notebook: [written instructions](#)



3. **Students choose a plant to observe.** Take students outside to choose a plant that is growing on your school's campus. Keep in mind that common weeds are plants, too, and suitable for observing. Students can work alone, in pairs, or small groups, do what works best for your group.

4. **Record observations about your plant.** Have your students draw pictures and/or write words or sentences to describe what they are observing in their necklace notebooks. Use the following questions to guide student observations:

- **Habitat:** Where is it growing? What is the soil like? Is the soil moist or dry? Is it sunny or shady?

- **Botanical characteristics:** Does it have a flower, fruit, or seed? If so, what does it look like? What does the leaf shape and leaf edge look like? Is it a tree, shrub, or herb? Is it sticky, hairy, or smelly when you rub it?
- **Ethnobotanical information:** Do you think people or animals eat this plant? (Remind students not to eat the plants!) What do you think people could make with this plant? Imagine this plant can be used to make medicine, what do you think the medicine would be used for? Encourage students to use their imaginations for this part!

5. **Repeat!** If possible, have the students choose another plant to observe another day!

### **Field Trip Notes:**

Students should bring their necklace notebooks on the field trip. They will have an opportunity to share what they observed about their plant during the field trip and will also use the notebooks for activities on the field trip.

During the field trip students will participate in three different activities: a plant walk and botanical drawing, an art-ecology project, and a group game. Please divide your students into three groups prior to the field trip. Each group needs to have one chaperone per 6 students.

Thank you! Let us know if you have any questions and we look forward to seeing you in the Bosque!