

Tree Detectives
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very good!

Target Audience: Weeblos Cub Scouts

Length: 30-35 minutes

Site: Fish Lake Camp

Goal:

The goal of this lesson is to teach cub scouts how to identify five local tree species by using physical characteristics.

Objectives: The student will be able to-

- Identify five different trees by their physical characteristics
- Give at least 2 key characteristics of each tree
- Identify the trees being taught, in the field

Materials:

2 samples from each tree being taught (leaf, cone, seeds, etc) For this specific lesson we will use white cedar, quaking aspen, paper birch, red pine, and spruce.
1 clear ziplock bag per sample
large paper bag to hold individual bags in camp or area with all tree species being taught

Setup:

This will be team taught, with your partner find lesson specific individual trees around area, make sure they are located close to the meeting area, with partner become familiar with the surrounding area

Content:

Intro:

- Role-play with your team teacher about an anonymous phone call that brought you to the area. Make it sound like a mystery.
- Tell students the clues were left at the entrance to the camp (facility being used) in a bag.
- With much searching through the woods you found this bag of clues.
- Before you show the clues ask what a detective is, then facilitate the discussion to make sure they are on the right track.
- We need help because there are so many clues to look through. Ask if the students know of any people who would like to help be detectives with you. (You want the students to help you as detectives).
- (This is the grabber the students will want to be detectives rather than just a participant in another class. You may be competing with other fun activities – rifles, archery, boating etc so try to make it fun for them.)

Method:

- Allow each student to pull out one clue from the 'mysterious clue bag'. Try to have one clue per person in the ziplock bag.
- Have students look at the clues by themselves and without saying the name of the tree ask them to describe the tree sample. Ask for volunteers to describe to the rest of the group what their sample looks like. Make sure all students participate (help them out and accept all reasonable answers)
- Have students' partner up with another person who has a clue that might be from the same tree. (Not necessarily similar looking).
- Explain that to find out where the clues came from the phone call said we needed to hike through the woods. The students will need to try to find the tree which their sample came/comes from. {Make sure to keep the class together as a group and try to stay on maintained trails}.

-When students find their tree have them yell "WEEBLOS RULE" as loud as they can.

-After one group identifies a tree they think is their tree bring the entire group over to the tree and ask the two finding students questions about their tree. Make sure that the students who found the tree answer the questions first but keep it open so other class members can share their information too.

Why do you think this is your tree?

Describe other characteristics of the tree.

What else do you notice about the tree?

What is the name of your tree?

-When students have answered the questions or while they are answering them supplement their descriptions with your own knowledge found from books or other guides.

-Make sure to describe the shape, color, texture, smell, and any key distinguishing characteristics of the leaves/needles, bark, and appearance of the tree.

-Continue this process until all the leaves are found.

Conclusion:

-Praise the students for good detective work

-Ask for the clues back and put them into the paper bag

-Shake them up a little and pick them out randomly for the students to ID as a group

-When you are asking students to tell what tree it is make sure they ID other characteristics of the tree.

***If there is time you can play tree tag with the students.

-Walk as a group through the woods

-When the instructors call out the name of a tree, students are to run to the nearest tree before you as the instructor tags them out.

-Follow the students to the tree and while at the tree quiz them on the characteristics

-Repeat this for the other trees studied in this lesson.

Evaluation:

-You will be able to see what students learned from this lesson by the answers they give in the final quiz as outlined in the conclusion. Also if you have the time to play tree tag it will allow the students to make the decision of what kind of tree it is quickly because they are being chased. When pulling leaves out of the bag have at least 2 students give 2 key things to look for in the tree.

References:

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, The Forest Story Discovery Guide, MN DNR, St. Paul, MN

American Forest Foundation, Project Learning Tree, 1993 Washington DC.