

PLANT PURSUIT GAME

Science and Engineering Education Center

Challenge

Go on a scavenger hunt of sorts for tree and plant life in your neighborhood or surrounding areas. With "plant power" working to push stems up through cracks or roots down into hard soil, some plants seem able to grow wherever their seeds have landed. Plants in unlikely places don't need rich soil or much space to live. Whatever rain falls is enough water for them. They are urban survivors! See what fascinating discoveries of life in action you can find and outscore competitors as you compare and contract ecosystems.!

Materials

Plant Pursuit Game Sheet
Pencil or Pen

Procedure

- 1. Go on a prowl for plants.
- 2. Search in downtown business areas, a shopping center, or other busy places to discover different kinds of plants surviving in unlikely places.
- 3. **Record** the type of plants that are found and earn extra points for the diversity that is discovered

Other things to think about...

The University of Texas at Dallas

Science Scoop

Plants are the only living things that can make food from the energy of the sun. Many animals get their energy from eating plants, so to attract wildlife, cities need a variety of plants. Plants also provide shelter and give off oxygen that wildlife and people need.

Plants have evolved in surprising ways to spread their seeds. The seeds travel to places away from the parent plant where they have room to grow. Maple and pine tree seeds have wings, lotus seed pods float like boats, dandelion seeds have parachutes, and some seeds travel with animals— on their fur or inside their bodies. Seeds that have been eaten might pass through an animal's stomach undigested and are then deposited with their droppings— often far away from the parent plant.

Because living things depend on each other, they interact with each other. Did you see plant-to-plant interactions like a large plant shading a small plant or a vine or lichen growing on a tree? Animal-to-plant interactions might be easier to notice. Squirrels depend on trees for food, shelter, and protection. A forgotten acorn buried by a squirrel might grown into another oak tree. At least 96 species of birds and mammals are know to use acorns as an important food source. Butterflies, bees, and hummingbirds pollinate flowers, which help the plant to make seeds. Other animals spread the seeds of plants when they eat berries or fruits. Violets depend on earthworms to keep the soil loose and fertile and rely on trees for shade. A rabbit might nibble those violets for dinner. Interactions are everywhere!



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Plant Pursuit Game Sheet

Name:

Location of Observation:

- * Earn 1 point for each type of plant or plant product found.
- * Get double points for plants in unusual places.
- * Get triple points for plant-to-plant interactions you can find.



Tally your score: _____ Try this in other places and compare your scores.

Scoring examples: If moss is in a crack, double the points. If it sound on a tree, triple your points. If vine is not found growing on a tree, you get only 1 point.