

Leafy Spurge Activities

Icky Stuff: Safety First With
Noxious Weeds
Play Audio Track #2
(15 minutes)

Levels

Grades K-3

Subjects

Science, Language Arts

Skills

Examining, Describing

Concepts

Structure and functions of living things;
interactions among technology, science and society

Objectives

Students will learn mechanisms that plants use to
compete for needs.
Students will understand how to safely handle
noxious weeds.

Materials (20 student class-size)

What's in Your World? CD audio track #2
(inside the back cover) - 1 per class
20 total of 4 different plastic weeds available from
Montana State University Extension Services or
any plastic or fake plants - 1 plant per student
garden gloves - 1 pair per student

Time Considerations

Preparation - 2 hours
Activity - 20 minutes

Lesson Overview

- Safety First With Noxious Weeds (20 minutes)

Background

Icky Stuff is about plant saps that can be poisonous and how to properly handle noxious weeds. Many noxious weeds and even some native plants are poisonous to humans and animals. For example, leafy spurge is a noxious weed which produces milky sap that can irritate the skin and make some animals sick. Leafy spurge does not make sheep and goats ill and they have been trained to prefer to eat leafy spurge over native plants. Sometimes, a plant produces icky stuff on its stems and leaves that taste bad so animals won't eat it. Icky stuff can irritate your skin--making you itch and scratch.

For many reasons not limited to poisons and icky stuff, it is very important to always wear gloves when handling noxious weeds. *Safety First!*

ICKY STUFF LESSON DETAILS

STEP ONE. Pass out gloves for each student. Ask the students to put the gloves on their hands. Tell them that you will be asking them to handle fake plants or noxious weeds and they are required to wear their gloves.

STEP TWO. Give each student a fake plant to hold. Explain to the students about the milky sap produced by leafy spurge, a noxious weed. Explain to the students that many plants produce chemical compounds that help them compete for their needs. Explain the chemicals produced in spotted knapweed, another noxious weed.

STEP THREE. Next explain to the students about another noxious weed, yellow starthistle, and its thorns. Ask the students-- *Why do you think plants produce thorns and icky stuff?* (to compete with other plants for nutrients, sunlight, and space; and protection from predators that would have the plant for lunch) Next ask the students to name all the plants that are grown in their community that produce thorns.

STEP FOUR. Ask the students--*Do you know of any native plants that you should not touch?* (poison ivy, poison hemlock, larkspur) Next ask the students to talk about how each of the native plants use their poison (deter predators, competition for needs).

STEP FIVE. Then ask the students to discuss--*If you are a hungry plant and another plant is eating your nutrients and drinking your water while a bison nibbles at your shoots, what protective mechanism would you produce?*

Ask the students to answer using the plant's basic needs discussed in the Leafy Spurge Activity *Create a Fantasy Plant*.