

NATIVE PLANTS & PEOPLE

Students find and examine native plants that early Coast Salish people could have sustainably harvested for a variety of uses.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Gain a basic understanding of human interaction with the environment, especially the interdependence of native Coast Salish people and ecological systems.
- Connect the health of natural habitats to the sustainability of human communities.
- Cultivate an interest in learning more.

PREPARATION

1. Select a natural park or natural section of a large park with well-maintained trails. Check that it has most or all of the plants on the worksheet and that it will be safe for your students.
2. Create a map of the habitat as a cover sheet for the worksheet, with stopping points clearly marked so teams stay within the study area.
3. Assign students to study teams (about 4/team).
4. Copy the worksheet (one per team).
5. Set aside enough worksheets and pencils for all the teams and a whistle or bell to use to reconvene students.
6. Recruit and brief one chaperone for each team and stopping point.

WHAT TO DO

Preparing for the field trip

1. Review the worksheet with students and give them their team assignments.
2. Tell them where they will be going and when everyone will be leaving and returning.

Exploring in the field

1. When you arrive at the study site, send one adult to each stopping point, form students into teams with one adult each, hand out worksheets and pencils, and explain where to reconvene and when.
2. Set students to work and circulate within the study area to address questions.
3. Reconvene when all teams are finished or when time is up.

Processing the experience

Back at school, process the lesson by asking students these or similar questions:

- Did you find everything or, if not, which plants couldn't your team find?
- Could you imagine some of the plants having more uses than the worksheet said?
- What might have happened to native people if, for example, the place we visited had a forest fire?
- What might have happened to them if they dug all the bulbs or cut down all the cedar trees?
- What more would you like to learn about native plants or Coast Salish people?

GRADE

4th

COMMON CORE

EALR 3: Geography

TIME

Before: 15 minutes

During: 30-40 minutes

After: 20 minutes

SPECIAL MENTION

- Because plants can be hard to spot when dormant, try to schedule your field trip April - October.
- A wooded habitat is a highly stimulating environment where even the most disciplined students can have difficulty staying on task. A few minutes to look around first may help them focus.

NOTE

If you are unable to go on a field trip, consider adapting the **Salmon Researching & Reporting** lesson plan for older students to the topic of native use of native plants. Teams might focus on

- native plants that Coast Salish people relied on for food
- native plants that had medicinal value to Coast Salish people
- native plants that helped Coast Salish people in their daily lives
- how Coast Salish people coped when food was scarce

Useful resources include

- www.wildernesscollege.com/coniferous-forest-plants.html (information and links)
- *The People of Cascadia* by Heidi Bohan (a wealth of information about native culture)
- *Plants of the Pacific Northwest Coast* by Jim Pojar and Andy MacKinnon (entries include information about Coast Salish use)

NATIVE PLANTS & PEOPLE

✓ _____



RED ELDERBERRY BUSH

Although poisonous when raw, the berries could be boiled, then the seeds and stems strained out to leave a tasty sauce.

✓ _____



SKUNK CABBAGE

Leaves lined berry baskets and pit ovens and held food on drying racks. Its flowers were cooked and eaten but only as "famine food."

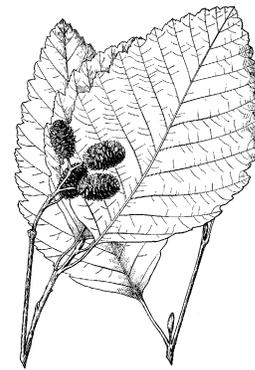
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INDIAN PLUM BUSH

Its tiny fruit was eaten fresh or cooked, plus dried for the winter. Chewed twigs were rubbed on sores. Bark tea was used for healing.

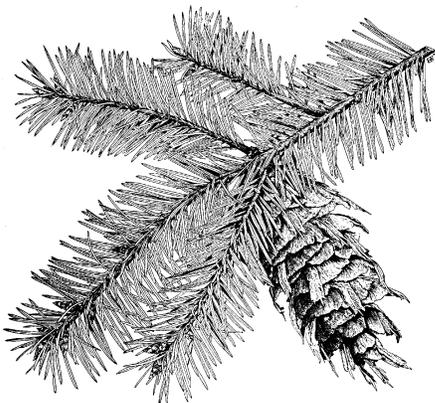
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RED ALDER TREE

The inner bark was used as a medicine and to make a red or orange dye. The wood continues to be prized for smoking salmon.

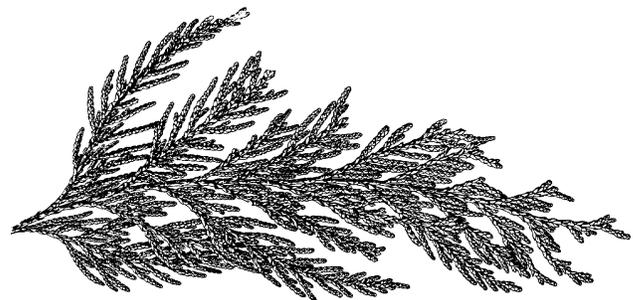
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DOUGLAS FIR TREE

The wood had many uses, from harpoon shafts to spoons and caskets. Its sap (pitch) was used for sealing canoes and as a salve for treating wounds.

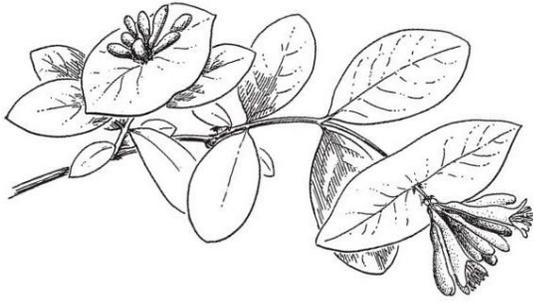
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WESTERN RED CEDAR TREE

Coast Salish people counted on this "tree of life" for canoes, houses, cradles, clothing, dishes, medicines, and many other things. They harvested fallen trees or parts of live ones so that they didn't have to kill a tree to use it.

✓ ____



ORANGE HONEYSUCKLE VINE

When stripped of leaves, the vines were used for weaving and like rope for tying. The orange and gold berries were known to be poisonous.

✓ ____



STINGING NETTLE

Young leaves and stems were eaten as spring greens. Stems were an important source of fiber for such things as fishing nets and snares.

✓ ____



EVERGREEN HUCKLEBERRY BUSH

Berries were highly prized because they could be picked over several weeks to eat fresh. They could also be dried, mixed with oil, and formed into cakes for eating in deep winter.

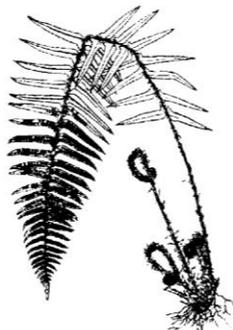
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RED HUCKLEBERRY BUSH

Berries were eaten fresh, dried like raisins, mashed and dried into cakes, or stored for winter in grease or oil. Single berries were used as fish bait. The juice, leaves, and bark were used as medicines.

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SWORD FERN

Leaves were used to protect food cooking in pit ovens, as racks for drying berries, and as floor mats and bedding. Large "runners" were eaten only as "famine food." Rubbing tender leaves on the skin still keeps stinging nettle from stinging.

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SALMONBERRY BUSH

Spring shoots were eaten as a green vegetable. Early berries were greatly enjoyed after a winter without fresh fruit. Families or individuals could own patches of salmonberry and harvest all they needed before sharing with neighbors.