

Ethno-Experts Game

Subjects: Ethnobotany, Science, History, Social Studies

Objective(s): Students will become familiar with different Native American and pioneer uses of various plants.

Material Needs:

Teacher handout: Examples of Ethnobotany

“Ethno-Experts” game board example

“Ethno-Experts” clue and answer sheets

Activity/Instructions:

1. Explain to the students that they will be playing an ethnobotany game. Explain ethnobotany again, if necessary. Pass out copies of the ethnobotany list for them to study. Divide the class into four teams and have the students come up with team names.
2. Each team may study differently. The group may divide the information up into equal sections or just have each team member study all of the information. Give the teams time to study. At least one day should be sufficient, but feel free to extend that if you think it is necessary. Remind the students that they will be asked to answer questions without the help of their study sheets, so they should take time and prepare well.
3. Two preliminary rounds will need to be played in order to establish which two teams will play for the championship. Have one game per day, or have both preliminary rounds on the same day. Then, give the two final teams time to study for the championship game. (Students from the two “losing” teams can be asked to function as members of the game show staff for the final game. They can help with the official game board, verifying questions, etc.).
4. For the game, you will need to draw a game board on the chalkboard. (See the example provided). You should also have the two teams playing sit/stand on opposite sides of the room near the front.
5. You might consider giving the teams something to play for – such as prizes or extra points.

† Adapted from an activity lesson by B. K. Potter.

Found in “Mounds State Park Field Trip Guides for Educators & Group Leaders,” 1998.

WARNING! Although Indians and pioneers used the following trees and plants for many reasons, that does not mean that they actually “work.” Also, many of these plants are actually very poisonous in certain forms and at certain times of the year. Therefore, please do not try these recipes or remedies today.

ETHNO-EXPERTS CLUES & ANSWERS

CATEGORY: TOTALLY TREES

1. Indians made a red dye from this tree. They also used its small branches/twigs for toothbrushes....FLOWERING DOGWOOD
2. The Plains Indians used the root wood of this tree for starting fire by friction....EASTERN COTTONWOOD
3. Pulverized nuts from certain of these trees were used to make venison broth thicker and more savory....HICKORIES
4. Resistant to termites, this tree was often used for log cabins....TULIP TREE
5. Canoes made from this tree's durable wood lasted for up to 30 years....SASSAFRAS
6. These trees were called "ghost trees" due to the fact that some tribes buried their dead in the hollow trunks....SYCAMORE
7. The Indians taught the early French settlers how to make sugar and syrup from the spring sap of this tree....SUGAR MAPLE
8. Nuts from these trees were made more palatable by boiling them in water....WHITE OAK
9. One of the heaviest of native timbers, the orange wood of this tree was much sought after for bow staves....OSAGE ORANGE
10. Ropes and mats were often made from the bark of these trees....ELMS
11. This tree was perhaps one of the best sources of woodland rope, string, thongs, and strips used for sewing birch bark....BASSWOOD
12. Salicin, the forerunner of today's aspirin is found in these trees....WILLOW
12. A "spring tonic" tea was (and still is) made from the roots of this tree...SASSAFRAS
13. The bark of these trees contain a compound used to tan animal hides/skins....RED OAK
14. The sharp spines of this tree made it a good one to plant in hedgerows around property boundaries....OSAGE ORANGE
15. A hot, thick tea made from the inner bark of this tree was used for sore throats, upset stomachs, coughs, indigestion, and ulcers....SLIPPERY ELM
16. Soap was often made using the wood ashes of this tree....SUGAR MAPLE
17. Because of the strength of this wood, ax handles and wheel spokes were made from these trees....HICKORIES
18. This tree's wood is soft and ideal for carving....BASSWOOD
19. This is the state tree of Indiana....TULIP TREE

ETHNO-EXPERTS CLUES & ANSWERS

CATEGORY: INDIAN USES

1. This plant was used for its powerful laxative effect, as a cure for warts, and as an insecticide....MAYAPPLE
2. Poultices from this plant were used for tumors and ulcers....TROUT LILY
3. Used by the Chippewa for convulsions and by the Potawatomi for basket dye....HEPATIC
4. This underground stem produced a red juice used for dye, war paint and insect repellent....BLOODROOT
5. Cherokee would bind the leaves of this plant to the head for a headache, and a poultice of crushed roots for boils....VIOLETS
6. Berries of this plant were eaten raw. Cherokee also held the fruit in their mouths to remove tartar from the teeth....STRAWBERRY
7. The tuber-like roots of these were eaten raw or cooked like potatoes....SPRING BEAUTIES
8. This entire plant was ground-up and mixed with cold water and applied to burns....YARROW
9. Indians chewed these roots or gargled a root tea for sore throats....SWEET CICELY
10. Chippewas would chew this for toothaches....HARBINGER OF SPRING
11. Leaves of this plant were cooked and eaten, but the roots were only eaten in time of scarcity....WATERLEAF
12. The big, soft leaves of this plant were used as a lining in moccasins and as toilet paper....MULLEIN
13. Root poultices from this plant were put on sprains and swellings....POKEWEED
14. Iroquois used these leaf ointments to make athletes' legs more limber....DUTCHMAN'S BREECHES
15. Crushed leaves of this plant were used as a poultice for poison ivy rash....JEWELWEED
16. The many species of this plant were used by many tribes, in many forms, for pain relief....GOLDENRODS
17. This plant's tannin-rich roots are highly astringent and styptic, were used to stop bleeding, diarrhea, dysentery, and gum diseases....WILD GERANIUM
18. Indians highly valued root tea from this plant for indigestion, gas, coughs, and "female ailments"....WILD GINGER
19. Cherokee used this for vomiting, stomach problems, and pneumonia....MINT
20. Milk from this plant was collected and rolled until firm enough to make chewing gum. Also used the woody fiber for string and fishnets....COMMON MILKWEED

ETHNO-EXPERTS CLUES & ANSWERS

CATEGORY: PIONEER PLANTS

1. Teas made from this plant were used for liver ailments and coughs. A “liver tonic” boom resulted in the consumption of 450,000 pounds of these dried leaves in 1883 alone....HEPATIC
2. These flowers were dipped in water and rolled in sugar for candy, the leaves were also eaten as a “spring green”....VIOLETS
3. This plant’s fresh root was used in minute doses as an appetite stimulant. It was also an ingredient in cough medicines....BLOODROOT
4. Leaf tea from this plant was used as a nerve tonic, for kidney and bladder ailments, jaundice, scurvy, diarrhea, and gout....STRAWBERRIES
5. A tonic for coughs and stomachaches was made from this plant....SWEET CICELY
6. A “blood purifier” was made from the fresh root of this plant. It also was used in poultices for sharp pains, cuts, bruises, and sores....SOLOMON’S SEAL
7. Skin ailments were treated with leaf poultices of this plant....DUTCHMAN’S BREECHES
8. The root of this plant was used as a remedy for toothaches. Root teas were also gargled for sore throats and hoarseness....CUT-LEAVED TOOTHWORT
9. This plant was used as a substitute in baking/cooking....WILD GINGER
10. Dried root teas were used for asthma and bronchitis, and used internally for rheumatism and swellings from snakebite....JACK-IN-THE-PULPIT
11. This plant produced an antispasmodic for epilepsy, coughs, and asthma....SKUNK CABBAGE
12. Herbal teas from this plant were used for colds, fevers, and internal bleeding. Also produced a styptic to stop external bleeding....YARROW
13. Used as a poultice for snakebite. You might get “Milk Sickness” from drinking the milk of cows that have grazed on this plant....WHITE SNAKEROOT
14. Berries of this plant were crushed and used for ink. Berries were also used in a tea for rheumatism, arthritis, and dysentery....POKEWEED
15. Produces a pleasant-tasting tea which was also used for stomach cramps, fevers, diarrhea, and measles....GOLDENRODS
16. Tea from the leaves and flowers of this plant were used for chest colds, kidney infections, and coughs....MULLEIN
17. Teas made from this were used for colds, fever, sore throats, and gassy indigestion. It is also a very popular tea because of its taste....MINT
18. Tea from these roots prevented urinary stones and intestinal worms....QUEEN-ANNE’S-LACE (Wild Carrot)
19. All parts of this plant served as food. Dried leaf teas worked as a laxative, while root tea was used for the liver, gall bladder, and kidney ailments....DANDELION
20. This plant’s root was used to induce sweating in typhus fever....JOE-PYE-WEED

ETHNO-EXPERTS CLUES & ANSWERS

CATEGORY: MISCELLANEOUS

1. Bachelors would rub a piece of this root on the palm of their hands as a love potion....BLOODROOT
2. Chewing the root of this plant and spitting into the river was supposed to make the fish bite....TROUT LILY
3. A wad of these leaves was put into the ear to cure headaches....YARROW
4. Fibers from the stalk of this prickly plant were harvested after the first hard freeze and used to make cordage....STINGING NETTLE
5. Indians boiled this plant and drank it for sore throats....STINGING NETTLE
6. The tendency to use bad language and even mild mental disturbances were supposedly cured by smoking this plant....MULLEIN
7. An orange-yellow dye was made from this plant. It was also used to neutralize the sting of nettles....JEWELWEED
8. The tops of these plants can be used as natural tinder....GOLDENRODS
9. A root tea of this plant was used as a laxative....MILKWEED
10. These stems were used as straws for sucking water from low springs....JOE-PYE-WEED
11. Pioneer women would use these plants to scrub their iron pots....HORSETAILS
12. Indian and pioneer children would snap apart sections of this plant and put them back together as a puzzle....HORSETAILS
13. These tree seeds were thought to cure arthritis or bring good luck (if carried in one's pocket)....OHIO BUCKEYES
14. Root poultices from these plants were used on burns and wounds. The fuzzy flowerheads were used to pad cradles and to prevent chafing in babies by Miami and Potawatomi Indians....CATTAILS
15. The inner bark from this tree was used in cough syrups. Its pitch was also poulticed to "draw out" boils and abscesses....WHITE PINE
16. "Female," kidney, and stomach ailments were treated with root tea from this plant. Crushed leaves were also used on insect and spider bites....SPIDERWORT
17. A folk remedy for colds, tea made with this plant and Peppermint induced sweating and nausea....ELDERBERRY
18. Indians dried and ground these (seeds and all) and used them to thicken soups. Leaves were also used in poultices for headaches, fevers, and rheumatism....GRAPES
19. During the American Revolution, these berries were dried, powdered and used as a substitute for Allspice (which could no longer be imported from Britain)....SPICEBUSH
20. This tree's bark was chewed for toothaches, its inner-bark was used as a laxative, and its leaves were used in insecticides against bedbugs. Both the Indians and pioneers used the husks to produce a dark brown dye....BLACK WALNUT