

Dandelion Tea Anyone?
Composite Family
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Overview: Basic knowledge of botany and what grows in the Cove area. Identifying plants that are native or invasive to the area.

Objectives: Students will have an understanding of how plants are used medicinally even though by today's standards are considered a weed.

Key Concepts: Food Webs, Predator-Prey Relations, Ecological Niches, etc.
Subjects: Social Studies, biology, Ecology, Geography, Botany, etc.
Duration: 4 class periods (80 minutes)
Setting: In the field, outdoor natural landscape
Season: Spring – early, just at budburst
Interdisciplinary Connections
Frameworks:

Environmental Education @ the Cove River Site, and other coastal Connecticut settings.



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Introduction | Engagement: Any particular plant can be found anywhere depending on type of species and its environment and habitat. Dandelions are found in open fields, meadows, front lawns, and in wooded habitats. They spread through seed dispersal when their flower goes to fruit in a form of a white feathery puffball. Wind comes

along and disperses the seed by the thousands everywhere.

Materials: The materials needed for this lesson are:

- ❖ Peterson's Guide to Wild Flowers
- ❖ Pad and pencil
- ❖ Containers with lids of very hot water.
- ❖ Small pieces of broad cloth or canvas type of cloth for dyeing
- ❖ Cheesecloth for straining the dandelion tea
- ❖ Small plant shovel or small spade to remove dandelion from soil
- ❖ Recipes
- ❖ Small frying pan
- ❖ Onion - chopped
- ❖ Olive Oil
- ❖ Garlic – cloves – chopped

Preparation: Handout a copy of the Peterson Field Guides to be used while at the Cove site. Begin looking for dandelion in the field. Bug proof everyone for mosquitoes and ticks

Explanation: Native American Indian culture is a large factor when it comes to discovering various plants that were introduced to the white man for medicinal purposes as well as for other means plants could be used.

Explore: Using a common weed, i.e. dandelion, for medicinal and coloring components was common in the colonial days especially amongst the Native Americans who in turn taught the white man. From the roots to the leaves to the flowers nothing is wasted on a plant. Everything on the plant has a purpose.

Activity #1: Walk through the Cove and pick as many dandelions as possible to make different recipes at the site. Using a small plant shovel or small spade, extract the dandelion from the soil keeping intact the root. Express the importance of using a weed or a plant free from herbicides. Exam the plant from the flower to its roots. Smell the aroma from the dandelion especially when placed in boiling water. Watch the water as the various parts of the plant changes color for different purposes.

Activity #2: In the classroom in the economics classroom, cook up the dandelions with onions and garlic and olive oil. Have the class sample this delicacy. Discuss how many plants have multipurposes – food, wine, tea, dyes, and medicinal.

Evaluation: Strain the tea through cheesecloth into a mug. Have students describe what they are tasting. Let the students dye a piece of cheesecloth or broadcloth in the root water. Have them give their own hypothesis of what color the cloth will become using the dandelion root.

Reference: A Handbook of Native American Herbs, Hutchens, Alma R.
Peterson's Field for Wild Plants
Eastern/Central Medicinal Plants,
Duke, James A; Foster, Steven

<http://www.botanical.com/botanical/mgmh/d/>

<http://www.devonian.ualberta.ca/pwatch/tarax01.htm>

<http://www.bellaonline.com/articles/art1904.asp>

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<http://www.wildmanstevebrill.com/Plants.Folder/Dandelion.html>