Exploratory Hike and Plant Identification

Lesson 8

**Purpose:** To learn about indigenous, edible plants in our area. Knowing what plants are edible, can help students to learn basic survival skills but also that not everything we eat needs to come packaged.

**Materials:**

\*Pacific Northwest Plant Knowledge Cards

**Procedure:**

1. Sort through the cards to find the ones in our area that kids would be able to identify from the picture and/or summary.

2. Hand out a card to groups of 2-3 students.

3. Students go on a hunt to find their plant.

4. Once they have found their plant, they read the back of their card and decide on two facts that they will share with the class.

5. Gather students. Groups take turns showing the class their plant. They must also share their two facts.

**Extension:**

1. Students choose any edible plant/herbs from a list (I had over a hundred on the board).

2. They make their own Plant Knowledge Card. These cards can be gathered to create a class resource or library resource.

See Example below. I chose a picture to illustrate the card, but I had students draw and colour the plant they had chosen.

See below for a list of websites that have good information about edible plants. I also included my notes for a walking edible plant field trip I took with my class.

**Rosemary**

\*Cut out a piece of cardstock roughly 10 cm by 10 centimeters and give it to the students.

\*Students draw a picture of their plant on the front.

\*They type the name, family and uses of their plant.

\*Print out their information. Students cut it out and paste it to the back of their card.

You can use this page as an example by cutting and pasting the picture and information together.

**A close-up of a plant

Description automatically generated**

**Rosemary**

\*Rosemary belongs to the mint family.

\*It is a perennial plant.

\*People believed rosemary improved memory.

\*Rosemary adds flavour to many types of food

such as meats like lamb, chicken or duck, soups,

stews, stuffing, vegetables, dressings,

fish/seafood and salads.

\*Rosemary also has oils that are used to make

perfumes, shampoos and soaps.

\*It is very good for the skin and fights hair loss.

\*It can help relieve pain, particularly muscle and

joint pain.

\*Rosemary is naturally anti-bacterial.

Information on Edible Plants

Edible Plants of Vancouver Island

<https://northernbushcraft.com/guide.php?ctgy=edible_plants&region=bc>

Five Edible Trees

<https://woodlandwoman.ca/edible-trees/#:~:text=Needles%3A%20Pine%20needles%20can%20be,vitamin%20C%20than%20an%20orange>!

Douglas Fir

<http://nwconifers.com/nwlo/douglas-fir.htm>

<https://www.goodgrub.org/post/plant-of-the-month-douglas-fir#:~:text=%E2%80%8DFood%3A%20Douglas%20fir%20spring%20tips,freeze%20them%2C%20or%20dry%20them>.

Firs

<https://ediblevancouverisland.ediblecommunities.com/food-thought/foraging-flavours-forest#:~:text=%22Most%20of%20the%20region's%20fir,that%20will%20blow%20you%20away.%22>

Gifts of the Pine

<https://honest-food.net/edible-pine-tree-nuts-pollen-tips/>

Maple

<https://www.specialtyproduce.com/produce/Maple_Blossoms_12078.php>

<https://woodlandwoman.ca/edible-qualities-maple-trees/#:~:text=The%20Edible%20Parts%20of%20Maple,differ%20from%20tree%20to%20tree>.

Tree Book (Great Resource)

<https://www.for.gov.bc.ca/hfd/library/documents/treebook/treebook.pdf>

Edible Plants (Information I used To Help Me on an Edible Hike)

In spring, plants are harvested for their tender properties. Often as they age, they get bitter or harder to use and are then more often steeped as teas.

Maple Trees

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/new-brunswick/maple-trees-wild-edible-1.3215989#:~:text=Our%20wild%20edibles%20guy%20Greg,helicopters%2C%22%20are%20also%20edible>.

The young spring leaves of maple trees are edible raw or cooked.

You know those little ‘helicopters’? They are called samara fruit. You can peel away the outside layer and eat the tiny seeds inside either raw or roasted. Soaking them in water first will take away some of the bitter taste. You can roast them with a little salt and oil.

Big Leaf Maple Blossoms are edible. They only last for a short while and are usually harvested before the leaves appear.

Fiddleheads

<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/food-safety-fruits-vegetables/fiddlehead-safety-tips.html>

The new, curled shoots of ostrich ferns are edible. They are only available in the spring. However, if not cooked properly or stored properly, they can cause food poisoning. Remove hair/wool from fiddleheads and wash thoroughly in several changes of fresh cold water to remove dirt and any residual husks. Soak in salt water to remove bitterness. Cook fiddleheads in a generous amount of boiling water for 15 min or steam for 10-15 min until tender. Discard water used for cooking. Be sure to cook fiddleheads before frying, baking or using them in soups, etc.

Can be frozen for storage. They need to be blanched first and cooked thoroughly after being thawed.

Other types of ferns like bracken ferns should not be eaten as they may be carcinogenic.

Lodgepole Pine

<https://www.for.gov.bc.ca/hfd/library/documents/treebook/treebook.pdf>

Human Uses

First Nations Peoples found a use for almost every part of the tree, from trunk to roots. As the name implies, these trees were used as poles to support lodges and teepees. The wood was considered a good fuel sources as it is very resinous and burns even when it is green. Large branches were fashioned into drills and arrow shafts while the hard knots were made into fishhooks. Lodgepole pine resin was used to waterproof canoes, baskets and moccasins, and also as a natural glue. Coil baskets were fashioned from the roots.

Medicinally, the fragrant lodgepole pine tea, an excellent source of Vitamin C, became important in curing or preventing scurvy.

First Nations and settlers ate the inner bark in the spring, chewed it like gum, cooked it like spaghetti, or dried it for future consumption. The nourishing seeds were also eaten. The resin was sometimes used to help stop infection, soothe sore throats, and cure toothaches. The inner bark was softened in water, used as a dressing for scalds, burns and skin infections. Poultices of dried, powdered pine needles were also used to sooth frostbite.

Today, lodgepole pine is important for timber, which is used in general construction and for wood pulp. After treatment with preservatives the timber is made into railway ties, poles, and mine timbers. Pine oil is extracted from the boughs, resin, and bark for commercial cleaners.

Miner’s Lettuce

<https://ucanr.edu/blogs/blogcore/postdetail.cfm?postnum=51940#:~:text=Miner's%20lettuce%20gets%20its%20name,other%20vitamin%20C%2Drelated%20issues>.

\*miner’s lettuce grows in moist, shaded woods and fields

\*it grows in early spring

\*the entire plant is edible

\* Miner's lettuce gets its name from the workers who traveled to California during the Gold Rush. Needing a source of vitamin C, gold miners learned from the Native Americans that this wild growing green would prevent scurvy and other vitamin C-related issues.

\*According to a study in the journal of the American Dietetic Association, 100 grams of miner's lettuce contains a third of your daily requirement of vitamin C, 22 percent of vitamin A, and 10 percent of iron.

Cattails

<https://www.farmersalmanac.com/cooking-wild-edible-cattails>

\*cattail pollen is bright yellow and can be gathered by shaking a pollen laden stem into a bag (pollen can be gathered before the plant develops its long, brown cylinder shaped tip.

\*the pollen can be uses as a flour to make pancakes, etc.

\*green flower spikes can be cooked and eaten like corn on the cob.

\*the white core can be boiled, baked or dried and ground into flour or boiled into syrup

“The roots (called rhizomes) are harvestable throughout the year, but they’re **best in the fall and winter**. To prepare a cattail root, clean it and trim away the smaller branching roots, leaving the large rhizome.  You can grill, bake or boil the root until it’s tender. Once cooked, eating a cattail root is similar to eating the leaves of an artichoke – strip the starch away from the fibers with your teeth. The buds attached to the rhizomes are also edible!  **To make flour**:  You can also use the roots to make flour, used as a thickening agent in cooking. Scrape and clean several cattail roots. Place roots on a lightly greased cookie sheet in a 200º F oven to dry overnight. Skin roots and remove fibers. Pound roots until fine. Let stand overnight to dry. Sift, and it’s ready to use.”

Stinging Nettle

<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9253158/#:~:text=It's%20a%20common%2C%20multi%2Dpurpose,herb%20soups%2C%20and%20sour%20soups>.

\*all parts of the stinging nettle plant are edible

\*leaves can be cooked and eaten or dried and made into a tea

\*roots can be cooked

\*stinging nettle has a host of health benefits including boosting the immune system, strengthening bones, helping balance blood sugar levels, reducing skin irritation and alleviating allergy symptoms

\*nettle is an antioxidant and anti-inflammatory

\*Fertilizer and insecticides can be made from the plants.

\*Considered a wonder plant for their vitamin content. You need about a bag for a meal as they reduce.

Dandelions

<https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/five_ways_to_eat_dandilions>

<https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/dandelions_for_food>

\*all parts of the dandelion plant are edible leaves, stem, flowers and roots. They can be eaten raw or cooked

\*One cup of dandelion greens contains almost twice as much iron as spinach, and over 500 percent of your daily intake of vitamin K, which may play a role in [fighting Alzheimer’s disease](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/11461163).

\*An extract from the root has been shown, in some [studies](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5341965/), to fight certain types of cancer.

\*the simplest way to eat dandelions is to throw young leaves into a salad (older leaves can be bitter)

\*cooking dandelions eliminates some of the bitterness-boil the greens for about 5 min than sautee in olive oil and garlic for 3-5 min

\*dandelions can be used to make tea

\*collect flower heads, remove petals and store in a plastic bag in the freezer-add petals to just about everything like muffins, bread, cookies, or savoury pies, even hamburgers