



PLANT IDENTIFICATION

Skills Session: Plant Identification

Time Frame

1 hour

Materials

- Local plant guides
- Charts, posters, and handouts from state or federal conservation agencies

Resources

Boy Scout Handbook—chapter 3, “Tenderfoot Scout”; chapter 5, “First Class Scout”

Goals

By the end of this session, participants will be able to

- Discuss the seasonal plants in their area.
- Explain the use of plants in nature.
- Identify and explain the treatment for exposure to certain poisonous plants.
- Tell how they will help instill interest in and respect for trees, plants, and vegetation.

Assignments

- Identify local poisonous plants; tell how to treat for exposure to them.  T11
- Identify or show evidence of at least 10 kinds of native plants found in your community.  

Before You Begin

This session can be taught in the form of a discussion and leisurely walk through the camp and adjoining area, after the evening meal but still in daylight.

Lesson Plan: Plant Identification

Common Poisonous Plants

Among poisonous plants in the United States, **poison ivy**, **poison oak**, and **poison sumac** are the most common. The oily sap in their leaves, stems, and roots can irritate your skin and cause it to itch. This sap must remain on your skin for 10 to 20 minutes before it begins causing problems.

If you think you have touched a poisonous plant, immediately wash the area with soap and water. Since the sap also clings to clothing, change clothes and wash the outfit you were wearing. Calamine lotion helps relieve the itching; try not to scratch an affected area because that can cause the irritation to spread.

The *Boy Scout Handbook* contains illustrations and photographs of these plants.

Identifying Native Plants in Your Area

The ability to identify trees, shrubs, and grasses helps you more easily discover all the places they live, their uses, and their importance to the environment. Seek expertise from avid gardeners, botanists, or others who enjoy sharing their knowledge. They can show you how to recognize the shapes, sizes, and colors of different plants, the outlines of their leaves, and other clues that can lead to an identification.

Using a *field guide* also helps. Your local and school libraries might have copies, as might your troop or local council library. Many field guides include information about the roles that plants play in their surroundings.

The *Boy Scout Handbook* includes illustrations and photographs of types of plants to help you learn how to identify native plants. At all times in the outdoors, keep the principles of Leave No Trace in mind and leave plants as you find them.

Activity

Create a nature trail and walk through camp trail area to identify plants. In advance, identify plants along the trail that participants can handle and inspect up close. It may be possible to collect evidence—such as pressed leaves and leaf ink prints—from some types of common native plants to help you remember their characteristics. The *Boy Scout Handbook* tells you how.



Skills Session: Animal Identification

Time Frame

1 hour

Materials

- Local animal guides
- Charts, posters, and handouts from state or federal conservation agencies

Resources

- *Boy Scout Handbook*—chapter 4, “Second Class Scout”

Goals

By the end of this session, participants will be able to

- Demonstrate knowledge and respect for animals in their community.
- Explain how they will create the desire to learn more about animals.
- Discuss and identify signs, tracks, nests, and additional evidence of animal life in their community.

Assignments

- Identify or show evidence of at least 10 kinds of wild animals (birds, mammals, reptiles, fish, mollusks) found in your community.  **SS**

Before You Begin

This session can be taught separately or combined with the Plant Identification skills session in the form of a leisurely walk through the camp area.

Lesson Plan: Animal Identification

By using charts, posters, and other resources, participants will be able to identify signs of wildlife in their area. They will discover things like where animals live, what they eat, how they survive, how they raise their young, and whether they prey on other creatures.

Kinds of Wild Animals

A handy chart in the *Boy Scout Handbook* tells about the different kinds of wild animals: birds, mammals, reptiles, fish, amphibians, invertebrates (insects, spiders, crustaceans, snails, clams, oysters, mussels, squids).

How to Find Evidence of Animals

Observers use a number of techniques to find evidence of animals.

- Looking—tufts of fur caught on twigs, overturned stones, shells on a shore, a feather on the ground; movement in the brush, in the water, and in the sky
- Listening—the buzz of insects, croaking of frogs, birdsong, chatter of a squirrel or raccoon, slap of a beaver's tail, silence
- Smelling—the aroma of flowers, trees, earth, moss, stagnant water, saltwater
- Touching—vibrations in the air, changes in water temperature or activity

Most of all, finding evidence of animals takes patience.

Tracking

Every animal traveling on land leaves tracks—footprints, bent grass, broken twigs, chewed leaves, scat, rubbed bark, a shiny strip of slime—that teach you much about the creatures themselves. Tracking takes practice—in your yard, alongside rivers, and in parks, fields, and forests. Here's how.

- Find some tracks to follow left in winter snow, soft soil, or in pebbles and brush that have been disturbed.
- Study a single track and fix its details in your mind—even measure and sketch it.
- Track early in the morning or late in the day, when shadows cast in the prints make them easier to see.
- Think like an animal—where would you go if you were the animal?

See the *Boy Scout Handbook* for more details about tracking animals.

Activity

In conjunction with the nature trail and walk for the Plant Identification skills session, walk through the trail area and identify signs of animal life, as well as areas that animals would inhabit. Practice these Leave No Trace principles: Leave What You Find, and Respect Wildlife.