

Sketching Plant Relatives



Activity Purpose

Since time immemorial, people have learned from our plant relatives. Taking time to get to know plants who live around you will help you better understand the world. This activity is designed to help you get to know our plant relatives by sketching them.



Activity Overview

- ◇ Go on a walk and find a plant relative to sketch. Zoom in to the tiniest details of the plant, then zoom out to what's around the plant. As you make observations, talk about what you will include in your drawing.
- ◇ After you've spent time with your plant relative, draw them. Discuss the details that are included in your drawing. What colors, shapes, parts of the plant are in your drawing? Are other relatives or surroundings included in the drawing? You might draw outside while observing the plant. Or you might draw inside and take it outside to compare.

Roles, Relations, Responsibilities & Gifts

- ◇ What relations are reflected in your drawing? Consider relations among plants, insects, sun, water, earth, humans etc.
- ◇ Consider your relationship with your plant relative before you draw it. How does the quality of relationship with your plant relative, or how well you know them, affect your drawing? You might make multiple drawings over time and observe how they change as you deepen your relationship.
- ◇ You might first ask the plant relative for permission to draw them and offer water, tobacco, corn meal, or another gift as thanks.

Learning Across Generations & with Other Families

- ◇ Everyone in your family can be a part of this activity. The beauty of learning with multiple generations is that you can gain many different perspectives of the world. An elder might have some insight about how things have changed over time. A small toddler might force us to slow down and look carefully at a small ant or flower. A teenager might be thinking about the state of the world and imagining new futures.

Supporting Learning & Wellbeing

- ◇ Be sure to recognize your relationships with the peoples, homelands & waters where the plant lives. Look for what tribes are nearby or have homelands in the area.
- ◇ Remember that Native people have always been scientists, engineers, artists, and created technologies in our own ways. Drawing plants not only helps you make scientific observations, it's also a work of art!
- ◇ Explore new roles and responsibilities as you raise your family to be good elders. Help them think forward to healthy, resilient futures for many generations to come.

Making Connections with Stories

- ◇ Tell a story before you leave and connect back to it as you walk and observe. Check in with your own tribe, what stories make you think of the place you are in? Make connections to local stories.
- ◇ Check in with elders, family and friends to see if they have any stories about your plant relative. You might draw that story.

Making Relations with Lands & Waters

- ◇ As you observe your relative over time, you will start to notice the relationship between the plant and the lands and waters around. Drawing can help you pick up on these relational details.
- ◇ Zoom in to the tiny details of the plant and zoom out to look at the plant's surroundings. Consider how to reflect all of these details in your drawing. You might make multiple drawings at different scales.
- ◇ Consider what the plant was like a long time ago and consider what it will be like far into the future. You might draw the past, present and different future possibilities of the plant.

Decolonization, Resurgence & Good Relations

Grounding our families in indigenous knowledge and stories will help our children feel empowered in our tumultuous world. Recognizing that our ancestors have been engaging in sophisticated science inquiry since time immemorial is important to building a healthy sense of identity for our children. Even if you are unsure about your family history and stories, you can look to the future and begin to build traditions with who is around now. Walking with your family and paying attention to the world around you will help build confidence and knowledge needed to face uncertain futures.