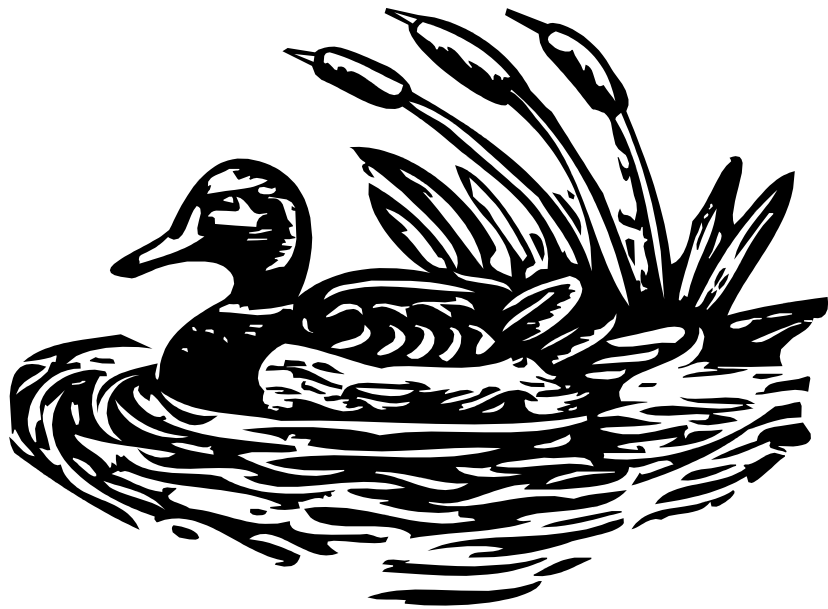




Placer
Nature
Center



Exploring With Senses

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For permission or information contact:

Placer Nature Center at
3700 Christian Valley Rd.
Auburn CA 95602
(530) 878-6053

www.PlacerNatureCenter.org
programs@placernaturecenter.org

This curriculum guide has been developed by the Placer Nature Center Curriculum Committee:
Linda Desai, Stuart Yaffe, Bob Gloyd, and Dorothy Gloyd. January 1993. Revision 2009

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Contents

About Us & Our Programs	4
Program Overview	4
Poison Oak	5
Description	5
Reactions	5
What Poison Oak looks like in each season.....	6
Pre-Visit Information	7
In The Classroom.....	7
On The Trail.....	7
Activity #1: Name Tags	8
Your Field Trip at a Glance	10
WaterShed: Water and Nature	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Water and Nature Outdoor Activity.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
WaterShed: Water and People	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Water and People Outside Activity.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Nature Trail.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Post- Visit Activity	11



About Us & Our Programs

Started as a project of the Placer Land Trust in 1991, today Placer Nature Center functions alone as non-profit organization. We share our 60-acre Auburn site, which is owned by the State of California, with the California Conservation Corps.

Placer Nature Center's mission is to provide educational programs that evoke a sense of discovery and wonder about our place on earth. The work of Placer Nature Center helps us understand that our daily choices impact the environmental, social and economic well being of the planet. This is essential, because a healthy world means the world to us.

Upon request, Placer Nature Center will provide schools with field tips to Placer Nature Center's campus, meet you out in the field and/or deliver presentations in the classroom.

Website: www.placernaturecenter.org
 Email: programs@placernaturecenter.org
 Phone: (530) 878-6053
 Address: Placer Nature Center
 3700 Christian Valley Road
 Auburn, CA 95602

Program Overview

A team of trained docents use a holistic perspective to present our programs. That is, the total environment – living and non-living – will be studied while students weave together the disciplines in relation to their program theme (represented schematically in Figure 1).

The Placer Nature Center provides a three-part program, including:

- ✎ Pre-visit activities
- ✎ Field trip
 - Exhibit Hall theme orientation
 - Hands-on activities
 - Nature Walk
- ✎ Post-visit activities

Plus other relevant information is also provided to enhance the student's field trip experience.

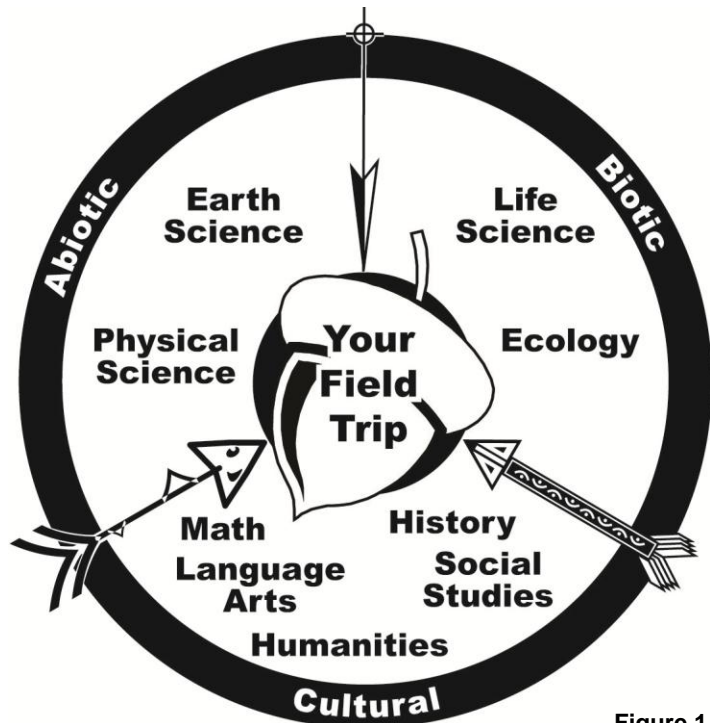


Figure 1.

Poison Oak

Description

Poison oak is a native shrub of the foothills and the Nature Center has many fine examples throughout the nature trail area and even atop the granite outcrop in our courtyard. Because many people react to the plant oil, it is important for our visitors to be able to identify this plant.



New Spring buds on Poison Oak,
pretty but not nice to touch!

Poison oak is not actually an oak although its leaves have an oak-like appearance. It is commonly found among oak trees. The species name, *Rhus diversiloba*, was well chosen as it describes the diversity of lobe shapes and sizes one can find on a leaf. Here is an identification checklist for poison oak:

1. Stems are smooth, with no spines.
2. Each leaf stem has three glossy leaflets.
3. Where the three leaves meet, there is a red spot.

A Nature Center docent will help you to identify this plant. Get to know the poison oak in all its forms: shrub, vine and seasonal variations (more pictures on the next page).

Foothill fauna depend on this native plant: deer browse on it; birds eat its berries; others den, burrow, nest or roost in it. Poison oak is an important part of the foothill ecosystem.

Reactions

Apparently only humans (and not all humans) react to urushiol, an oil found on the plant's stems, leaves, flowers and berries. Contact with this oil can result in a rash. The oil remains active for a long time. Thus, it can pass first onto clothing or animal fur before skin contact and still be capable of forming a rash.

The best prevention against contracting poison oak is to:

1. Learn to identify the plant
2. Avoid touching the plant
3. Wear long sleeves and long pants
4. Stay on the trail
5. Wash thoroughly and immediately upon returning home, both skin and clothes



Leaves of Three, Let them Be!

What Poison Oak looks like in each season



Fall

Mostly red – from bright crimson colors to brown dying leaves.



Winter

A little more tricky to spot! Look for bunches of straight, upright twigs growing near rocks, trees and amongst other shrubbery.



Spring

After the pretty red buds (see previous page), leaves turn a shiny green. May be inter mixed in black berry bushes and other shrubs, hiding under Oak Trees and around rocks.



Summer

Various shades of green, yellow and red all mixed together in the same bush and sometimes on the same leaf!

Pre-Visit Information

Before you arrive... Please take the time to go over the pre-visit information and activities. It helps the students and docents enjoy a more successful program!

In The Classroom

- 1) If there is a special needs student in your group, let us know how we can best meet her/his needs.
- 2) Divide your class into groups of 10-12 students with one adult each if possible. Make sure the students know which group they are in so they can be divided quickly after exiting the bus/car.
- 3) Make name tags and wear them to the Nature Center. Following is an activity for making name tags. (see Activity #1)
- 4) Review the information and accompanying images of poison oak. Although the docent will identify this native shrub for the students, it helps if they are aware of it before arriving.
- 5) Remind students to dress for the weather. The program will be conducted rain or shine. Closed toe walking shoes (no sandals) are a must.
- 6) Have a payment envelope ready to hand the docent as soon as you arrive. If possible, make payment by check. We are not able to make change.
- 7) If you choose to have lunch on site, please note we practice "Pack it In, Pack it Out!" All related garbage must leave with you. The Nature Center does not have a disposal service.
- 8) Please arrive 15 minutes before your scheduled time.

On The Trail

- 1) The docent will lead the group at all times on the trail, with a parent or other adult taking up the rear.
- 2) Stay on the trail.
- 3) No picking of plants or rocks or anything. Take only memories. Leave only footprints.

We are excited to share an enjoyable, educational experience with you and your students at the Nature Center. Have fun with the pre-visit activities!

Kindergarten Pre-visit Activity

ACTIVITY #1 - NAME TAGS

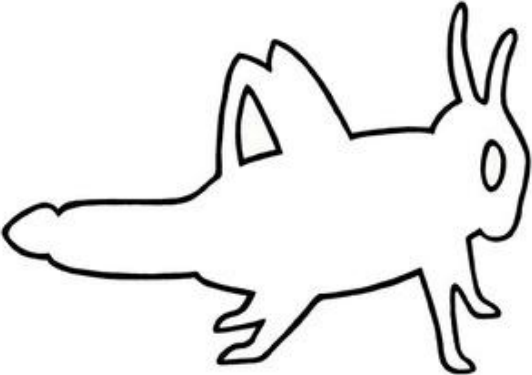
OBJECTIVE: Students will make name tags out of the grasshopper cut-outs and wear them to the Nature Center for their visit.

MATERIALS:

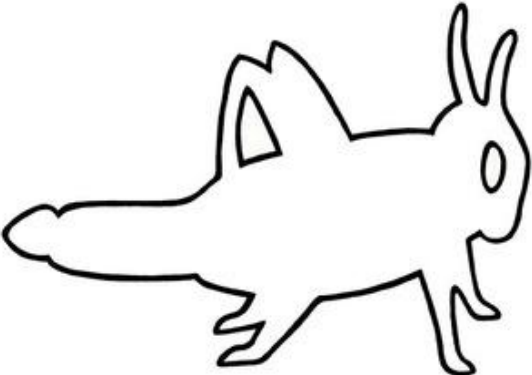
Crayons/felt tip pens
Grasshoppers (see next page)
String or pins to attach to name tag

PROCEDURE:

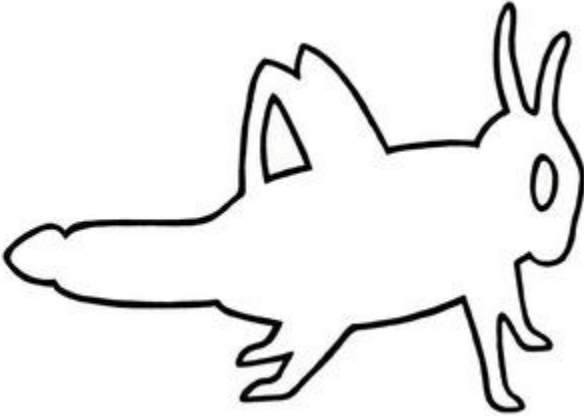
1. Make copies of grasshopper master on index card stock.
2. Pass out grasshoppers to students.
3. Have them cut out grasshopper.
4. Have student write his/her name on grasshopper.
5. Color or decorate name tag.
6. Place a string through top center of name tag or pin name tag to shirt.
7. Be sure to wear name tags to the Nature Center.



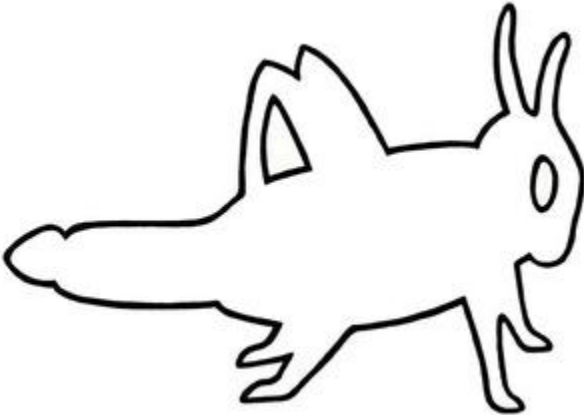
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Your Field Trip at a Glance

Correlations:

Common Core: W8, SL1a,b,SL2a, SL3, SL4, SL5

NGGS: K-LS1-1, K-ESS2-2, KESS3-3

A team of docents will meet your class in the parking lot, lead the group to the Nature Center courtyard, and point out restrooms and drinking fountains. Each docent will take a group of 10-12 students and begin their program at one of the following stations: WaterShed Exhibit Hall, Picnic Area for hands-on activities to reinforce the theme, or Nature Walk. The docent will rotate through all stations to complete the program. Following is an outline of what to expect at each program station during your field trip.

EXHIBIT HALL

15 MINUTES

The docent will introduce the theme of the visit. The docent will lead the children into naming the five senses and how they are used to help us identify living and non-living things at the Nature Center. The docent will have samples of several natural items for the students to explore with their senses. Following the docent theme presentation, students will be given some time to explore and interact with the other exhibits. A docent will answer any questions and/or ask leading questions to enhance student involvement.

DISCOVERY ROOM

15 MINUTES

The students will be involved in two activities using their senses. The Discovery Room activities are designed to further explore the use of their senses in identifying natural objects. The activities are described below.

1) FEELY BOXES – WHAT IS IT?

Each student will be given the chance to discover what's hidden in the Feely Box. The docent will lead the children in describing what they feel, what they think it is, and follow

2) LEAF PRINTS

Each student will make two different leaf prints which they will take home with them. The docent will ask the students to use their senses to describe the differences between these two leaves.

OUTSIDE ACTIVITY

15 MINUTES

A third outside station is added for groups of 40-60 students. At this station the students are guided on a short trail and asked to look for “un-nature”. The “un-nature” are objects hidden along the trail that shouldn't be there such as pencils, toys, paper, etc...

NATURE WALK

45 MINUTES

The docent will guide the students on the nature trail, discovering the foothill ecosystem. Docent will emphasize the use of their senses while exploring:

1. foothill colors
2. foothill textures
3. foothill sounds
4. foothill smells

Kindergarten Post-Visit Activity

Using the images below, have the students walk around the schoolyard and record through pictures what they hear, see, feel and smell. Take a "sense" walk!

