Medicinal Plant Scavenger Hunt

Essential Question(s):
What are some plants that can be used for medicine?

At A Glance: Learners gain understanding of the use of plants in medicine historically and today as they participate in a scavenger for cures for various ailments.

Background Information:
Plants are made up of many different components. There are physical components that we can see that make up plant structures like the stem, leaves, and roots, or adaptations like thorns, hairs or a waxy coating. There are also structural components inside of plants like tiny tubes that draw water up from the ground or send energy from leaves to roots.

In addition, inside of plants there are components such as pigments that, although we can tell they exist, we cannot actually see without a strong microscope. Pigments reflect light, allowing us to see plants as certain colors, and also absorb solar energy in the plant’s process of making its own food called photosynthesis.

Other “invisible” components of plants are chemicals often produced as defense against herbivores or fungal diseases. Because of these chemicals, many of these plants have been used historically and are used today as medicine by humans.

Learning uses for plants based on their chemical properties provides us with a closer look inside the world of plants and the animals with which they cohabitate and a different perspective of the rich biodiversity present on our school site.

*Extreme caution should be used when dealing with all medicines, including medicinal plants.*

Getting Ready
Prior to the hunt, flags with names of plants needed as remedies for assigned ailments should be placed in the designated scavenger hunt area.

Procedure:
1. Each learner, or group of learners, will receive a sheet of paper with a small story about an individual who has a specific ailment.
2. Learners will then look up the ailment in the School Site Herbal. They will find out what plant or plants can be used to treat that ailment.
3. Learners will then look for flags with the name(s) of the plant(s).
4. After retrieving all the appropriate flags, learners then start to fill out the work sheet provided by filling in the blanks with names of plants used to treat their specific ailment.

5. Whoever finishes first wins!

**Discussion/Assessment:**

Have any of the learners heard of, seen, or used these plants before?

Is anyone surprised at the amount of biodiversity present on their school site?

How does it compare with outside areas at home or in other places they frequent?

Did anyone notice any pollinators or make other observations at the site?

**Going Beyond:**
The hunt can be conducted in an opposite manner by picking up the flag, looking up the plant and writing down ailments it can be used to treat. Learners can also research the medicinal history, geographical history or scientific applications of a plant and give a small presentation to the class.
Medicinal Plant Scavenger Hunt Ailments

Bruises

Bronco Betty has been suffering from bruises on her arms since the last rodeo. Use your School Site Herbal to determine what plants can be used to treat her ailment. Three of the plants used are found in the Forest and Field Scavenger Hunt game area. Seek out the flags for those plants and list them below.

1. ____________________________________________________________
2. ____________________________________________________________
3. ____________________________________________________________

Cuts and Scrapes

After playing too hard on the jungle gym, Mary and John have cuts and scrapes on their elbows and knees. Use your School Site Herbal to determine what plants are good to use for skin ailments. Three of the plants used are found in the Forest and Field Scavenger Hunt game area. Seek out the flags for those plants and list them below.

1. ____________________________________________________________
2. ____________________________________________________________
3. ____________________________________________________________

Skin Rash

Willie has developed a skin rash after weeding his garden. Use your School Site Herbal to determine what plants can be used to bring him relief. Some of these plants are found in the Forest and Field game area. Seek out the flags for those plants in the garden and list their names below.

1. ____________________________________________________________
2. ____________________________________________________________
3. ____________________________________________________________
Diarrhea

After returning from her travels abroad, Maria has a case of diarrhea. Use your School Site Herbal to determine what plants can be used to treat her ailments. Some of the plants used are found in the Forest and Field. Seek out the flags for those plants in the garden and list the names below.

1. ________________________________________________
2. ________________________________________________
3. ________________________________________________

Constipation

Your cousin Danny is complaining of problems associated with constipation. Use your School Site Herbal to determine what plants can be used to help him feel better. Some of the plants used are found in the Forest and Field game area. Seek out the flags for those plants in the garden and list their names below.

1. ________________________________________________
2. ________________________________________________
3. ________________________________________________

Stomach Ache

Samuel ate too much in the tofu dog eating contest. Although he won, he would like to find something to make him feel better. Use you School Site Herbal to determine some plants that can be used. Some of the plants are found in the Forest and Field Scavenger Hunt area. Seek out the flags for those plants and list them below.

1. ________________________________________________
2. ________________________________________________
3. ________________________________________________
Colic

Belinda’s baby sister has been crying during the night because of colic gas pain. What can Belinda do to help so she can get some sleep? Use your School Site Herbal to determine what plants can be used to treat her ailment. Some of these plants are found in the Forest and Field Scavenger Hunt game area. Seek out the flags for those plants and list them below.

1. _______________________________________________________________
2. _______________________________________________________________
3. _______________________________________________________________

Laryngitis

Larry has laryngitis. Is there something he can gargle with to help get his voice back in time for the choral concert? Use your School Site Herbal to determine what plants can be used to help him get his voice back. Some of the plants used are found in the Forest and Field Scavenger Hunt game area. Seek out the flags for those plants and list them below.

1. _______________________________________________________________
2. _______________________________________________________________
3. _______________________________________________________________

Cough

Connie has a persistent cough that is keeping her awake. Use your School Site Herbal to determine what plants she can use to stop coughing and fall asleep. Some of the plants used are found in the Forest and Field Scavenger Hunt game area. Seek out the flags for those plants and list them below.

1. _______________________________________________________________
2. _______________________________________________________________
3. _______________________________________________________________
**Arthritis**

Arnie’s grandmother has arthritis; he would like to do something to help her. Use your School Site Herbal to determine what plants can be used for this ailment. Some of the plants used are found in the Forest and Field Scavenger Hunt game area. Seek out the flags for those plants and list them below.

1. _______________________________________________________

2. _______________________________________________________

3. _______________________________________________________


Medicinal Plant Hunt Ailment Answers

**Bruises**
*Witch Hazel, Solomon’s Seal, Arnica*
Pages 10, 8, 1

**Cuts and Scrapes**
*Plantain, Self Heal, Yarrow*
Pages 6, 7, 10

**Skin Rash**
*Chickweed, Nettle, Jewel Weed*
Pages 2, 5, 4

**Diarrhea**
*Sumac, Goldenrod, Ground Ivy*
Pages 8, 3, 3

**Constipation**
*Dandelion, Yellow Dock, Senna*
Pages 2, 10, 8

**Stomach Ache**
*Queen Anne’s lace, Sweet flag, Peppermint*
Pages 6, 9, 5

**Colic**
*Chamomile, Dill, Lemon Balm*
Pages 1, 2, 4

**Laryngitis**
*Purple Coneflower, Sage, Rosemary*
Pages 6, 7, 7

**Cough**
*Wild Lettuce, Passionflower, Elderberry*
Pages 9, 5, 3

**Arthritis**
*Willow, Meadowsweet, Celery*
Pages 10, 5, 1
Arnica – Arnica montana or A. fulgens
An effective plant in ointments or compresses in treatment of bruises, sprains and muscle pains. Application of this plant to the sore area increases blood flow, reduces swelling and speeds healing.

Celery – Apium graveolens
Seeds of this common vegetable can be made into a tea that is helpful in the treatment of arthritis. It is an antiseptic (kills germs) in addition to cleansing the body and improving circulation.

Chamomile – Matricaria recutita
Dried flowers from this plant can be made into a tea that is mild enough for babies. It has relaxing properties, and because of this can be used to put a child with colic back to sleep.

Chickweed – Stellaria media
This common plant can be made into an ointment that soothes irritated skin. It is good for the treatment of skin rashes.

Dandelion – Taraxacum officinale
The healing properties of this common weed have been known for centuries. Leaves can be eaten raw or made into a tea along with the root to cleanse the body. It has many uses, one of which is to relieve constipation.

Dill – Anethum graveolens
The Nourse meaning of the name dill is “to soothe”. This plant has many uses, one very important of which is for colic in babies. A tea from its leaves has anti-spasmodic (stops spasms) effects on the intestines.

Elderberry – Sambucus nigra
The flowers of this large shrub that grows near water can be made into a tea to treat coughs and colds. Its relaxing effects calm the bronchial passages and help the body rid itself of sickness-causing germs.

Goldenrod – Solidago candensis
This plant with beautiful yellow fall flowers has astringent properties good for treatment of diarrhea. It is mild enough for children and also has many other important uses including the treatment of internal infections.

Ground Ivy – Glechoma hederacea
This ground-hugging plant can be made into a tea to treat many mucous membrane problems and disorders of the digestive system, including diarrhea. It is mild enough for children.
**Jewel Weed** - *Impatiens capensis*
The juices from the stem of this plant can be used to soothe skin rashes, even poison ivy.

**Lemon Balm** - *Melissa officinalis*
The leaves of this plant smell like lemon when they are crushed, and when they are made into a mild tea, they can be used to treat many ailments. This plant has calming properties for the digestive tract, muscles and nerves. It is mild enough for a baby with colic to use.

**Meadowsweet** - *Filipendula ulmaria*
Flowers and leaves of this plant can be made into a tea to treat arthritis. It has anti-inflammatory effects like aspirin but also protects the lining of the intestines and the stomach.

**Nettle** - *Urtica dioica*
Although this plant is known for its sting, its leaves can be made into an ointment that is good for skin rashes. It has anti-allergenic properties (stops the body’s allergic reaction) even for allergic reactions to nettle.

**Passionflower** - *Passiflora incarnata*
This beautifully flowered vine is a gentle sedative and an antispasmodic (calms spasms). Flowers and leaves can be made into a tea that soothes coughs.

**Peppermint** - *Mentha x piperita*
The country this plant came from is a mystery. It has been used as a remedy for ages. A tea made from its leaves increases the flow of digestive juices and relaxes the muscles of the gut. It is very good for a stomach ache and tastes good too.

**Rosemary** - *Rosmarinus officinalis*
This evergreen shrub smells great and is used in cooking. A tea of its leaves mixed with Echinacea and Sage is also used to treat a sore throat and laryngitis. It stimulates blood flow and thus helps ailing areas of the body to rid themselves of toxins.

**Sage** - *Salvia officinalis*
This herb has antiseptic and astringent properties. A tea made from its leaves can be used to treat laryngitis and soothe a sore throat.

**Self Heal** - *Prunella vulgaris*
The leaves and flowers of this plant can be made into an ointment for wounds, such as cuts and scrapes. It is an astringent and helps stop bleeding and speed healing.

**Plantain** - *Plantago major*
The leaves of this plant can be placed on cuts and scrapes to help draw out infection. This plant is very common and has other important uses as well.

**Purple Coneflower** - *Echinacea purpurea*
This plant stimulates the immune system. It also has anti-inflammatory (soothes swelling) and antibiotic (kills germs) properties. It is good for sore throats, laryngitis and many other ailments.

**Queen Anne's Lace** - *Daucus carota*
This pretty roadside flower is really a wild carrot. Leaves and seeds or a tea made from them relieve gas and thus help stomach aches feel better.
Senna – Cassia senna
This plant has seed pods that look like snow peas. A tea made from them acts as a laxative relieving constipation.

Soloman’s Seal – Polygonatum multiflorum
A poultice of this plant can be used for bruises. It helps tissues repair themselves and speeds healing.

Sumac – Rhus glabra, R. typhina, R. aromatica
The bark of this plant can be made into a tea to treat diarrhea. It has astringent properties that tighten and strengthen the lining of the intestines.

Witch Hazel – Hamamelis virginiana
The leaves of this small tree are distilled and used to treat bruises and other ailments of the skin and veins. It is an astringent and tightens membranes and tissues.

Yarrow – Achillea millefolium
The leaves and flowers of this plant can be made into a poultice to stop bleeding, therefore it is good for cuts and scrapes.

Yellow Dock – Rumex crispus
The dried root of this common plant can be made into a tea. Its mild laxative action is good for constipation.

Sweet Flag – Acorus calamus
The dried rhizome (underground stem that looks like a root) of this water-loving plant can be made into a weak tea that is good to ease stomach aches.

Wild Lettuce – Lactuca virosa
This common plant is mild sedative that is safe for use with children. It can be used to treat coughs when taken as a weak tea.

Willow – Salix nigra
Teas and tablets made from the bark of this popular tree can be used to ease the pain of arthritis. This plant is considered to be “nature’s aspirin”.

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