

"Who Am I ?" Freshwater Plant Puzzle Activity



Purpose: Students will be able to identify characteristics of native and invasive plants, as well as their habitats.

Step 1 Matching Plant Terminology

Review the words in the left-hand column. Match them with the correct description or definition from the right-hand column. This can be done by individuals, small groups or as a problem solving activity for the class.

- | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ___1. emersed plants | A. Plants that were here before the time of Columbus |
| ___2. submersed plants | B. Plants that live in, on or near the water |
| ___3. floating-leaved plants | C. Plants that are not attached to the sediments and float |
| ___4. free floating plants | D. Plants that live on dry land |
| ___5. aquatic plants | E. Plants that grow primarily below the water surface |
| ___6. terrestrial plants | F. Plants with leaves that float on the water surface |
| ___7. native plants | G. Non-native plants that cause environmental or ecological harm |
| ___8. invasive plants | H. Plants that grow out of the water; they are rooted to the bottom but their stems, leaves and flowers are above the water. |

Step 2 Put the Freshwater Plants Puzzle together.

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Step 3 "Who Am I ?"

Directions: Using the Freshwater Plants puzzle, the teacher will **read the plant description** only (not the name of the plant). In order to identify the plant, the class is allowed to ask questions about each plant; teachers may answer only with a "yes" or "no."

Plant Descriptions (for the teacher to read aloud)

alligator weed: I can grow in a variety of habitats, including dry land, but I am usually found in or near water. I may form sprawling mats over the water or along shorelines. A beetle often eats my leaves. I have a small white flower.

cat-tail: I am one of the most common native plants found in wetland and aquatic habitats. I have long, brown cylindrical flower spikes and provide protective covers and nesting habitat for many animals.

coontail: I am a submersed plant. I am free-floating. My fan-shaped leaves resemble a raccoon's tail. They look feathery because each leaf is divided into many narrow segments. I provide excellent habitat for fish.

duck potato: I am an emersed plant. My large leaves and conspicuous flowers make it easy to find me in the wild. I grow commonly in swamps, ditches, lakes, and stream margins. My flowers are extended on thick stalks that are often a foot or more above the leaves. The flowers have three petals.

hydrilla: I am a non-native submersed plant. Because I can grow in low light conditions, it's easy for me to crowd out all the native plants and take over a lake. This makes me an extremely invasive plant. My stems are slender, branched and grow up to 25 feet long. My leaves grow in whorls of four to eight around the stem.

water hyacinth: I am a floating plant. I often jam rivers and lakes with uncounted thousands of tons of floating plant matter. I vary in size from a few inches to over three feet tall. My leaves are rounded and leathery, attached to spongy and sometimes inflated stalks. The plant has dark feathery roots.

saw grass: I am a large sedge, or immersed plant. My leaves are long, narrow and serrated. I am the dominant plant of the Everglades. I provide food and shelter to water birds and other animals. I grow from 4-10 feet tall.

tape grass: I am a native submersed plant that is common in still or fast flowing waters. My leaves are only one inch wide and can be several feet long. Snails love to eat the algae that live on my leaves and I provide excellent fish habitat.

wild taro: I am an emersed plant. I am not native to Florida, having been imported from the Pacific Islands. I occur in and out of water. My leaves are medium to large-size and arrowhead-shaped. The leaves can grow to two feet long. They are dark, velvety green and water repellent.

yellow water lily: I have floating leaves. My leaves are nearly circular in shape. They are notched to the center. My leaves arise on stalks from long rhizomes in the mud. My flowers are colorful.

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