

How Do Plants Protect Themselves?

In this lesson, students will learn how poison ivy, oak, sumac, stinging nettle, and wild parsnip can affect the human body.

Grades: K-3		Subject(s): ELA & Science
Focus Standard(s)	RI.2 Identify the main topic and retell key details of a text. SL.5 Create audio recordings of stories or poems; add drawings or other visual displays to stories or recounts of experiences when appropriate to clarify ideas, thoughts, and feelings. 2-LS4-1 — Make observations of plants and animals to compare the diversity of life in different habitats. 3-LS3-2 — Use evidence to support the explanation that traits can be influenced by the environment.	
Learning Objective(s)	Students will be able to use evidence from the text to identify and explain how certain plant traits, such as oils, hairs, or sap, help the plants protect themselves in their environments.	
Materials/Resources	How to Spot Dangerous Plants Dangerous Plants Chart Plain white paper; crayons, markers, or colored pencils	
Vocabulary	bogs: marshes blisters: raised areas of the skin filled with fluid sap: fluid that flows through trees and plants	
Anticipatory Set	Ask students, “What words can describe plants? Does the word “dangerous” come to mind? Have you ever heard of a dangerous plant?” Allow time for students to respond. Then ask students, “Think about a rose; have you ever been stuck by a thorn? What about poison ivy?”	
Mini-Lesson/Guided Practice	1. Explain to students that today they will be reading an article about dangerous plants. Explain that these plants aren’t truly trying to harm people — instead, they have special ways to protect themselves from predators. 2. Give each student a copy of the Dangerous Plants Chart and review the directions together. Then, read the article <i>How to Spot Dangerous Plants</i> aloud as a class. Pause at key points in the text so students can stop and fill in their charts with information about each plant.	
Independent Practice	Activity Using an online drawing program, or a piece of plain paper, have students create a warning poster for one of the dangerous plants from the article. Their posters should include: • A picture of the plant • A brief description • An explanation of how the plant protects itself	
Closure/Assessment	Evaluate students’ posters for their ability to identify key details and use evidence from the text to show how specific plant traits help the plant survive.	
Differentiation	Adjust lexile® levels as needed; answer questions as a whole group; use accessibility features or Read to Me feature as needed; print copies of the article	

Name: _____

Article: How to Spot Dangerous Plants

Dangerous Plants

Directions: Describe each plant and explain how it protects itself, or what happens if a person touches it.

Plant Name	Plant Traits	Plant's Defense
Poison Ivy/Oak		
Poison Sumac		
Stinging Nettle		
Wild Parsnip		

Name: **Answer Key**

Article: How to Spot Dangerous Plants

Dangerous Plants

Directions: Describe each plant and explain how it protects itself, or what happens if a person touches it.

Plant Name	Plant Traits	Plant's Defense
Poison Ivy/Oak	Grows on the ground, on a vine, or a bush; has three leaves	Makes urushiol; causes itchy, bumpy rashes on human skin
Poison Sumac	Bush or small tree; usually has seven to 13 leaves	Makes urushiol; causes itchy, bumpy rashes on human skin
Stinging Nettle	Can grow to two feet tall; has long stems and green leaves with tiny hairs	Tiny plant hairs called trichomes poke skin causing skin to burn and itch
Wild Parsnip	Has yellow flowers	Produces a sap that burns and blisters skin when it comes in contact with sunlight