

Thoughts about Botany Block/Planning

1. First block in early Fall- focus on seasons of the plant, parts of the plant, polarities of climates, lower rung of the plant ladder: bacteria, algae, fungi, lichen, mosses, ferns, grasses, conifers
2. The second (Spring) block would focus on the deciduous trees, bulbs, and flowering/fruited plants (monocots and dicots) as well as the symbiotic relationship between the plant and insect worlds.
3. Song themes: Autumn, fun-lively, Michaelmas
4. Poetry: seasonal, harvest/autumn leaves, mosses, mushrooms, etc.
5. Main lesson book assignments: written portion- $\frac{1}{4}$ dictation, $\frac{1}{2}$ own compositions (perhaps one group composition), $\frac{1}{4}$ copied (poetry mainly)
6. Plant journal- each student identifies a plant on campus to "adopt" (one that should remain in place all year). In her Botany journal she should draw the plant and then describe its physical state. On the same page the student should note the date and current weather conditions. The student should visit the plant once a week over the course of the school year to document the changes that the plant undergoes- each visit should include a description of the plant, date, weather and every couple of weeks, the student should draw the plant in its current state.
7. Several additional assignments could come out of #5- plant journaling.
 - a) The student could write a poem about her plant
 - b) She could write a summary of her plant's journey over time
 - c) She could do a painting of her plant in the fall and then one in the spring (If this is done on the same size painting paper as the paper in the journal- the paintings could be affixed within the journal.)
8. Build a class terrarium
9. Give each student a plant as her birthday gift from me or give each student a plant on the first day of school to care for in the classroom- chart its growth over the year.
10. Take the class for a visual "journey" around the edge of the leaf. First take them outside and ask them to gaze at a nearby tree (one that is at least 25 feet away). Ask them to describe the leaves as they can see them from that vantage point- what color and size are the leaves? Then return to the classroom and hand out various leaves to the students- especially leaves that do not have smooth, straight edges. Ask the students to imagine themselves shrunken down to the size of

- a pin head- and then ask them to imagine being that size and having the job of walking the perimeter of their leaf- they are to start at the leaf stem and explore the edge of their leaf...this hones their observational skills- you can discuss the difference between these two observations (outside and inside).
11. Read Steiner's lectures 9 and 10 in Discussions with Teachers about Botany- design introduction to show the reverse nature of the plant to the human being.
 12. Prepare biographies of Johnny Appleseed, "The Man Who Planted Trees" and John Muir for this block.
 13. Consider using the stories of John Muir's life as the story portion of the block- The Wild Muir is filled with great stories about this naturalist. Also, bring in some of his quotes about the plant world.
 14. Give the students a number of poems about trees, let them choose one to memorize, write into their book and paint.
 15. Collect and make rosehip tea and other herb teas throughout the year. Note the tastes, smells and share with the students how these herbs were used by the Native Americans and even by people today.
 16. Ask your gardening teacher to take the students out into the garden every morning during your two botany blocks to learn more about what is happening that time of year- and to do special projects with them. You could even invite her in to do a special main lesson presentation or two.
 17. Have students paint a picture of a tree and then when it is dry, label the tree with the various "gifts" we get from the trees- somewhat like an environmental poster- this went into their main lesson book. (See "What Have the Trees Done for Us Lately?" for a sample...of course, I had the students do the labeling in colored pencil.)